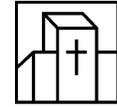
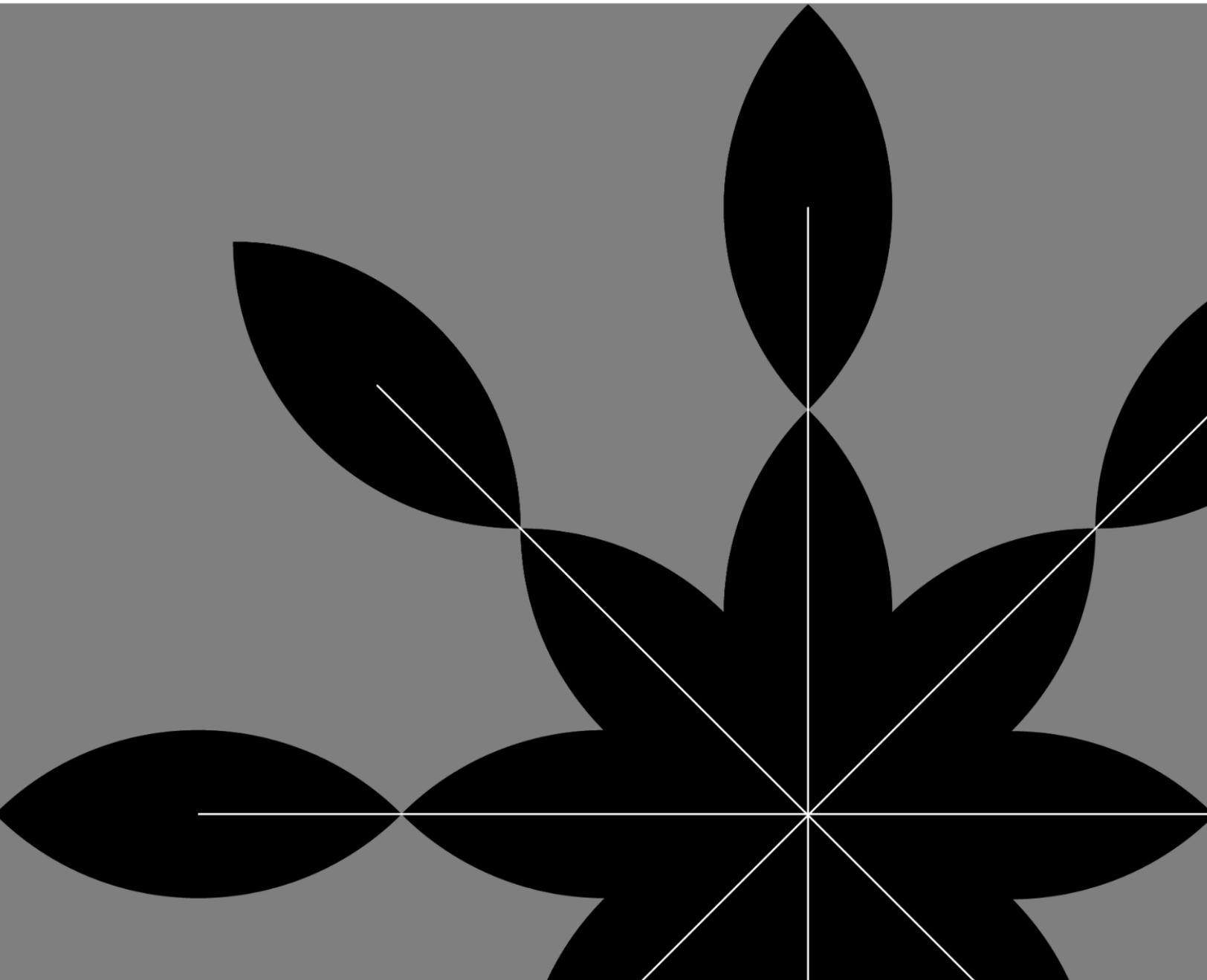


Lighting the Candles



Lincroft
Bible
Church

A Devotional Guide Through the Season of Advent



Introduction

THE MEANING OF ADVENT

The word “advent” means coming to a place. The word signifies the “coming” or “advent” of Jesus into our world. Since Jesus’ incarnation (becoming human) is such a monumental event in the story of the Bible, the church has long devoted a season of its calendar to celebrate and remember this amazing miracle. Thus, the season of Advent was born. Although the exact starting date of when churches began to celebrate Advent is unknown, it is an ancient practice.

During the Advent season, LBC focuses on the truth of Jesus’ coming into our world. When Jesus came to us as a baby, it means that God was “with” us. Jesus was designated Immanuel which means God with us. He fulfills the ancient prophecy (Isaiah 7:14). Humanity cannot save itself so God himself got involved. He is with us.

Celebrating Jesus’ coming also means that God is “like” us. Jesus fully took on all aspects of humanity minus sin (Hebrews 4:15). Early Church Father Gregory of Nazianzus wrote, “That which He has not assumed, He has not healed.” If Jesus was only half-human, his redemption would be only half of us. Jesus has become like us in every way. He took on a fully human nature. So he can redeem everything about you: body, mind, emotions, and will!

Advent is also a time to remember that God is “for” us. Because God sent Jesus into the world, he is on our side. He is working all things together for our good (Romans 8:28). Christmas can certainly be painful for many people. It can bring back memories of lost loved ones, disappointing childhoods, and broken lives. But amidst the sin and pain, God is on the side of those “in Christ.” In Advent, we look not only to the “is” but also to the “will.” We use this season not only to reflect upon God’s work in the past, but also upon Jesus’ coming in the future. Jesus will come again to right all things and redeem us fully. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

How to Use This Guide

This guide pulls together the weekly readings, Scriptures, and songs LBC uses in our Advent services on Sunday mornings so that you can take these things home with you. God communicates to us through visible signs (like baptism and the Lord's Supper), so lighting Advent candles in your own home can be a powerful way to be reminded of the truth.

This guide is meant to be used weekly. Designate a time every week when you will light the Advent candle, do the readings, and sing the song. It shouldn't take you more than ten minutes. Most importantly, let these sink into your heart and remind you of what Christmas is really all about.

How to Make an Advent Wreath

Making an Advent wreath does not need to be a complex thing. Most simply, all you need is five candle holders. Light the candles, do the readings, and you're done. If you'd like to make an actual wreath, many tutorials exist online to walk you through step by step.

One of the most common ways to make a wreath is to get a styrofoam wreath ring and attach candle holders and greenery to it. More complex wreaths can be made out of wood. If you have children, the actual making of the wreath would be a good way to involve them deeper into the advent season.

ADVENT WEEK 1

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Hope

Light

First Purple Candle

Read

Today is the first Sunday of Advent and so we will be lighting the first candle of the Advent wreath. The candles of the wreath, which we light one at a time as we go through each week of Advent, represent the growing light of Christ as we approach Christmas and this week we will light the first candle which represents hope.

When Adam and Eve gave into Satan's temptation and sinned, all of humanity was plunged into darkness with them—the present darkness that this world finds itself in today. But from the very beginning God promised that One would come, born of a virgin, to destroy Satan, sin and death. Today, as we light this first candle, we look forward in hope to this coming Savior, Jesus Christ.

Scripture

Isaiah 9:2–7

2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. 3 You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. 4 For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. 5 For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. 6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Pray

Father, you make this holy night radiant with the splendor of Jesus Christ our light. We welcome Him as Lord, the true light of the world. Bring us to eternal joy in the kingdom of heaven where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

(International Committee on English in the Liturgy (ICEL))

Sing

O COME, O COME EMMANUEL

O come, o come Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appears

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny
From depths of hell Thy people save
And give them victory o'er the grave

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's dark shadows put to flight

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

O come, Thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heavenly home
Make safe the way that leads on high
And close the path to misery

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high
And order all things, far and nigh
To us the path of knowledge show
And cause us in her ways to go

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

O come, desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind

Bid Thou our sad divisions cease
And be Thyself our King of peace

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

ADVENT WEEK 2

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Love

Light

Second Purple Candle

Read

Today is the second Sunday of Advent and so we will be lighting the second purple candle of the Advent wreath. The first candle, which was lit last week, represented hope in a coming Savior. This week, as the light of Christ grows, we will light the second candle which represents God's love.

Though the world sits in darkness because of sin and has no way out, God has not abandoned us. Out of his incredible love He sent his only Son to be born in poverty, to live in adversity, and to die alone on the cross. And all of it to rescue us. In Christ, we are more loved than we could ever possibly hope for.

Scripture

Isaiah 40:1–5

1 “Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. 2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. 3 A voice cries: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. 5 And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

Pray

God our Father, you loved the world so much you gave your only Son to free us from the ancient power of sin and death. Help us who wait for his coming and lead us to true liberty. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen (Advent Prayer for Hope in Christ's Coming)

Sing

COME THOU LONG EXPECTED JESUS

Come, thou long expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.

Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a King,
born to reign in us forever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.

By thine own eternal spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all sufficient merit,
raise us to thy glorious throne.

Come, Thou long expected Jesus
Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us,
Let us find our rest in Thee.

Israel's strength and consolation,
Hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver,
Born a child and yet a King,
Born to reign in us forever,
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.

By Thine own eternal Spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all sufficient merit,
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

ADVENT WEEK 3

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Joy

Light

Pink Candle

Read

Today is the third Sunday of Advent and so we will be lighting the pink candle of the Advent wreath. The first two candles, which are already lit, represent hope and love. Today, as Christmas draws near and the light of Christ continues to grow, we will light the third candle, which represents joy.

In a world where difficulty and suffering are commonplace, happiness can be fleeting and hard to find. But God is faithful and so regardless of the circumstances, our hearts rejoice as we remember that in Christ the penalty for sin has been paid, the power of Satan has been broken, and the fear of death has been abolished. In Jesus Christ, our joy is made complete.

Scripture

Luke 1:39–45

39 In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, 40 and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41 And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, 42 and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”

Pray

Let the just rejoice, for their justifier is born. Let the sick and infirm rejoice, For their savior is born. Let the captives rejoice, For their Redeemer is born. Let slaves rejoice, for their Master is born. Let free men rejoice, For their Liberator is born. Let All Christians rejoice, For Jesus Christ is born.
(St. Augustine of Hippo - AD 354-440)

Sing

JOY TO THE WORLD

Joy to the world! The Lord is come
Let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare him room
And Heaven and nature sing
And Heaven and nature sing
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing

Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns
Let men their songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy

No more let sins and sorrows grow
Nor thorns infest the ground
He comes to make his blessings flow
Far as the curse is found
Far as the curse is found
Far as, far as, the curse is found

He rules the earth with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness
And wonders of His love

And wonders of His love
And wonders, wonders, of his love

ADVENT WEEK 4

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Peace

Light

Third Purple Candle

Read

Today is the fourth Sunday of Advent and so we will be lighting the last purple candle of the Advent Wreath. The first two purple candles, lit on the first two Sundays of Advent, represent hope and love and last week we lit the pink candle, which represents joy. Today we will light the fourth candle, which represents peace.

The world is in rebellion against God. We are His enemy because of our sins and so we stand condemned before Him. But in Christ the war is over, the rebellion is crushed and by faith in Him, we are reconciled to our Creator. Peace now reigns through the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Scripture

Luke 2:25–33

25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, 28 he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, 29 "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; 30 for my eyes have seen your salvation 31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." 33 And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him.

Pray

Heavenly Father,

We thank you that you made peace with us through the blood of your son Jesus, whom we celebrate this Advent season. May your peace fill our lives so that we may live at peace with others. May we live at peace with those in your church family. May we live at peace with our family, friends, and neighbors. May we live at peace even with our enemies. May we show others where we can find true peace, only in your Son, amen.

Sing

HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING

Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled
Joyful, all ye nations rise
Join the triumph of the skies
With angelic hosts proclaim
Christ is born in Bethlehem
Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the newborn King!

Christ by highest heav'n adored
Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come
Offspring of a Virgin's womb
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see
Hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with man to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel
Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the newborn King!

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!

Hail the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings
Ris'n with healing in His wings
Mild He lays His glory by
Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth
Born to give them second birth
Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the newborn King!

ADVENT WEEK 5

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Christ

Light

White Candle

Read

Today, as we celebrate Christmas Eve, we will be lighting the final candle of the Advent wreath. In the prior four weeks we lit the four outside candles, which represent hope, love, joy and peace. And tonight we will light the center, white candle, which represents Christ, the light which has come into the world.

Into our darkened hearts, stained by sin, the glory of Christ has come. His life becomes the light of our lives and His purity takes away our sins. The light of Christ has shone in our hearts and they have become white as snow.

Scripture

Luke 2:1–14

1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And all went to be registered, each to his own town. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. 6 And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. 8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. 10 And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” 13 And suddenly there was

with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 14 “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

Pray

O Key of David, O royal power of Israel, controlling at your will the gate of heaven. Come, break down the prison walls of death for those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and lead your captive people into freedom.

O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice. Come, shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.

O Ruler of all the nations, the only joy of every human heart, O keystone of the mighty arch of humankind. Come and save the creature you fashioned from the dust.

O Emmanuel, ruler and lawgiver, desire of the nations, savior of all people. Come and set us free, Lord our God.

- The "O Antiphons" of Advent

Sing

SILENT NIGHT

Silent night, holy night
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child
Holy Infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
Sleep in heavenly peace

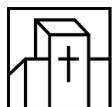
Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight

Glories stream from heaven afar
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia
Christ, the Saviour is born
Christ, the Saviour is born

Silent night, holy night
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth

From all of us at LBC,
wishing you and yours
a joyous Advent and
Christmas season!

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