

a fresh look at christmas advent resource



why advent?

As the year draws to a close, we want to take a fresh look at some of our Christmas traditions and embrace a shared weekly rhythm that helps us to prepare for Christmas. We are entering into what church tradition calls the 'season of advent' and it's one of our favourite times of the year.

Advent gives us the opportunity to remember that we do not worship a God who is far off, but one who draws near and enters into the messiness of our world so He can bring us true hope, peace, joy and love.



what is advent?

The word 'advent' comes from the Latin 'adventus' which means the coming or the arrival. The season of advent creates a space for us to draw our attention to and build our anticipation for Jesus' coming. We look back and look ahead simultaneously as we remember the first Christmas and look forward to when He returns. Advent serves as a time to prepare our hearts by setting aside time each week to press into the four themes of advent - hope, peace, joy and love.



what is an advent wreath?

The advent wreath acts as a symbol for the passage of the four weeks in advent. The idea was birthed in the 16th century among German Lutherans and gradually evolved over about three centuries into the design we recognise today.

Traditionally, a circular, evergreen wreath surrounds four candles representing the four Sundays of advent. One candle sits in the centre. The circle represents the endless love, mercy and good will of God towards us. The colour green symbolises the hope of renewal and the potential for new life offered to us in Jesus.

Each candle points us to a different aspect of advent - hope, peace, joy and love - and is lit on each Sunday of the advent season as we draw ever closer to celebrating the day of Jesus' arrival. The centre candle - the Christ candle - is lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas day and symbolises the arrival of Jesus and His light in the world. The colours of the candles vary with different traditions and with different symbolism (which you may enjoy researching) but the Christ candle is always white representing the purity of Jesus.

Lighting the candles, one by one, each week, gives us the opportunity to lean into and explore the four themes of Advent - hope, peace, joy and love. It also increasingly pushes back the darkness until a fully illuminated wreath radiates brightly on Christmas Day.

This serves as a wonderfully visual reminder that Jesus' arrival brought light into the world and defeated darkness forever as He dwells with His people. Jesus himself told us, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12



how to make an advent wreath

The essentials for creating your own wreath include five candles, a circular frame or wreath, and evergreens or something similar. You can keep it traditional or you can experiment and create something unique, personal and meaningful to you.

Once you've built your wreath, place it on a table where it can become a central point for your Christmas preparations, decorations and reflections. This is something you can enjoy for the whole of the Christmas season, so have fun with it.



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creating a family tradition

Each family creates and practices its own traditions and rhythms at Christmas. These rhythms can nurture us and build our sense of belonging within our families and communities. Our traditions have the ability to connect us to our past; help us to celebrate and remember where we come from and what is important to us, and share this with younger generations.

What has been a meaningful tradition for you in past Christmas seasons? How can you practice it this year? Does the season of advent offer you something new to add to your Christmas practices?

Sharing your Christmas traditions with others may create an opportunity for deeper connections and conversations about the hope, peace, joy and love of Jesus in your life. What a gift that could be! Is there someone you want to share your Christmas traditions with?



celebrating with your kids

Advent is the perfect time to introduce, teach and remind our children about the true meaning of Christmas. Advent wreaths can help us to explain and remember the history of God's people, the prophecies leading up to Jesus' arrival and the story of his birth. It also helps us to create hopeful anticipation in them for His return.

There are other ways to make advent captivating and fun for kids. You can get a Jesse tree, advent calendar or bring out your precious nativity set that enables you to engage with the Christmas story. Your Christmas decorations may be purposeful and helpful in reminding us of the advent season or you may read stories designed for children that help them interact with advent in new and fresh ways.

Possible story books for little ones: Song of the Stars; The Crippled Lamb; Room for a Little One; Tonight You Are My Baby.

For young readers: Tabitha's Travels; Jotham's Journey; Bartholomew's Passage

Involve your teenagers in the conversations about how you want to celebrate Christmas, engage with the advent season and make Jesus the centre of all you do. What is important to them? What ideas do they have about how your family can bring the hope, peace, joy and love of Jesus into your family and neighbourhood this year?







advent weekly guide

Candle of Hope - Sunday December 3rd

Candle of Peace - Sunday December 10th

Candle of Joy - Sunday December 17th

Christ Candle / Candle of Love - Sunday December 24th

(Thanks to Church of the City, New York for
some of the material in this Advent resource)

Each week we will publish a guide that you can use to
reflect on the theme of the week.

You can collect these on Sundays at church
or you can find these on our website.

We also have a booklet available online for your
younger primary + preschool children.

You can find these here:

coast.org.nz/resources