

Lighting the Advent Wreath

in the Tradition of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love

Many churches are used to lighting candles of hope, peace, joy, and love. This is written for that tradition, using scriptures for the day from the Revised Common Lectionary.

In places where the tradition is to use families to light the Advent wreath, it is advised that family be defined by Christ—as those groups seeking to follow the Lord—not just as biological family.

Even the smallest children, who cannot read yet, can participate by announcing why we're lighting the various candles.

These are designed to open the worship service.



The following is provided as something that might be helpful for the newsletter and/or bulletin:

In the ancient world, various peoples lit fires to mark the turning of the light into winter's season and to pray for the return of the light. The church has Christianized that practice in the lighting of the Advent wreath. To us, these candles are signs of the growing light of Christ who is coming again in all fullness into the darkness of our world. Until the dawning of that Great Day, we watch and wait in Holy Spirit for Christ's coming into the darkness of our world, lighting candles of hope, peace, joy, and love; and remembering the promises of God with prayer.

YEAR A:

First Sunday in Advent: Hope

After the greeting in the name of the Lord, the pastor says the following:

Watch and wait for Christ's coming!

Light candles of hope, peace, joy, and love,
remembering the promises of God with prayer.

We light this candle in hope. *Light the first candle.*

Hear God's promise of hope from Isaiah 2:2-4:

In days to come
the mountain of the Lord's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;

all the nations shall stream to it.
Many peoples shall come and say,
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.

Let us pray:

Faithful God,
out of war’s chaos,
you bring the order of peace.
Renew us in hope,
that we may work toward
Christ’s advent of peace
among all nations.

**God of promise, God of hope,
into our darkness come.**

*One verse of the [O Antiphons](#) may be sung or recited each Sunday. A sung version is the hymn
“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”*

And/Or

*You may want to sing the Cameroonian/Iona “He Came Down” #2085 in Sing the Faith, #137
in Glory to God. In the spirit of the folk song, you may wish to add “hope” as the first verse.*

CALL TO WORSHIP

Isaiah 2:5

Come, let us walk
in the light of the LORD!



Second Sunday in Advent: Peace

After the greeting in the name of the Lord, the pastor says the following:

Watch and wait for Christ’s coming!
Light candles of hope, peace, joy, and love,
remembering the promises of God with prayer.

We light this candle in hope. *Light the first candle.*
We light this candle for peace. *Light the second candle.*

Hear God's promise of peace from Isaiah 11:1-10:

Reader 1:

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear;
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

Reader 2:

The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.
The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.
They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

Let us pray:

Faithful God,
you are at work to restore all of creation
in its intended harmony.
Give us your shalom
that we may be reconciled to all enemies
in the peace that passes all understanding
through Christ Jesus our Lord.
**God of promise, God of hope,
into our darkness come.**

*One verse of the [O Antiphons](#) may be sung or recited each Sunday. A sung version is the hymn
"O Come, O Come Emmanuel"*

And/Or

You may want to sing the Cameroonian/Iona “He Came Down” #2085 in Sing the Faith, #137 in Glory to God. In the spirit of the folk song, you may wish to add “hope” as the first verse.



Third Sunday in Advent: Joy

This Sunday’s Advent wreath candle lighting varies because it is Gaudette (=“rejoice!”) Sunday. As a break from the heaviness of Advent’s penitential preparations, this Sunday offers a reprise from our dark longings to offer joy’s glimmer of light. The Latin word Gaudette is grammatically imperative, reminding us that even in the midst of darkness, we are called to rejoice. This is also why we light a pink candle—the color of joy in the penitential season of blue/purple. Only the Christ candle is white, also a color signifying joy in many cultures, because the fullness of joy is in the Lord.

After the greeting in the name of the Lord, the pastor says the following:

Watch and wait for Christ’s coming!
Light candles of hope, peace, joy, and love,
remembering the promises of God with prayer.

We light this candle in hope. *Light the first candle.*
We light this candle for peace. *Light the second candle.*
We light this candle in joy! *Light the third (pink, if used) candle.*

Rejoice! For our Lord is coming into the darkness of oppression’s exile to lead us home, as we hear in Isaiah 35:1-10:

Reader 1:

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the LORD,
the majesty of our God.

Reader 2:

Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.
Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
“Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God.
He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you.”

Reader 1:

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,

and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

Reader 2:

A highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Holy Way;
the unclean shall not travel on it,
but it shall be for God's people;
no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.
No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.
And the ransomed of the LORD shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Let us pray.

O Lord, our redeemer,
you lead us from languishing in sorrow's shadows
into laughter's joy over your abundant restoration.
Thank you that you are coming for us
to lead us home along your Way, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

*One verse of the [O Antiphons](#) may be sung or recited each Sunday. A sung version is the hymn
"O Come, O Come Emmanuel"*

And/Or

*You may want to sing the Cameroonian/Iona "He Came Down" #2085 in Sing the Faith, #137
in Glory to God. In the spirit of the folk song, you may wish to add "hope" as the first verse.*

*In the spirit of Gaudette Sunday, you may wish to sing the praise of "He Came Down" on this
Sunday even if you are singing the O Antiphons on the other Sundays.*

CALL TO WORSHIP

James 5:8

Strengthen your hearts,
for the coming of the Lord is near.



Fourth Sunday in Advent: Love

After the greeting in the name of the Lord, the pastor says the following:

Watch and wait for Christ's coming!
Light candles of hope, peace, joy, and love,
remembering the promises of God with prayer.

We light this candle in hope. *Light the first candle.*
We light this candle for peace. *Light the second candle.*
We light this candle in joy! *Light the third (pink, if used) candle.*
We light this candle with love. *Light the fourth candle is lit.*

Out of love for the people of God, the Lord speaks through the prophet Isaiah, as found in the seventh chapter, verses 10-14:

The LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test. Then Isaiah said: "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.

Let us pray.

God of hope,
Prince of peace,
Jubilee Judge,
and Lord of love,
your goodness is beyond our wildest imaginings.
You give us more than we can think to ask,
coming to us with impossible possibility
in the union of flesh and spirit.
Teach us to love this world and all people
as you love us in Jesus Christ, our Lord.
**God of promise, God of hope,
into our darkness come.**

One verse of the [O Antiphons](#) may be sung or recited each Sunday. A sung version is the hymn "O Come, O Come Emmanuel"

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You may want to sing the Cameroonian/Iona "He Came Down" #2085 in Sing the Faith, #137 in Glory to God. In the spirit of the folk song, you may wish to add "hope" as the first verse.



Christmas Eve/Christmas Day

We have watched; we have waited
in hope. *Light the first candle.*
for peace. *Light the second candle.*
in joy! *Light the third (pink, if used) candle.*
with love. *Light the fourth candle.*
Now our redemption draws near! *The Christ candle (the center white candle) is lit.*

Hear the Word of the Lord from Isaiah 9:2-7
The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness —
on them light has shined.
You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.
For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.
For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
For a child has been born for us,
a son is given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Glory to God in the highest!
Aleluia! Amen!

Proceed immediately into the first hymn of praise.

First Sunday in Advent: Hope

After the greeting in the name of the Lord, the pastor says the following:

Watch and wait for Christ's coming!
Light candles of hope, peace, joy, and love,
remembering the promises of God with prayer.

We light this candle in hope. *Light the first candle.*

Hear God's promise of hope from Jeremiah 33:14-16:

"The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

Let us pray:

Faithful God,
out of death you bring life.
Renew us in hope,
that we may be alert
to the burgeoning of Christ's advent among us.
**God of promise, God of hope,
into our darkness come.**

One verse of the [O Antiphons](#) may be sung or recited each Sunday. A sung version is the hymn "O Come, O Come Emmanuel"

And/Or

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Second Sunday in Advent: Peace

After the greeting in the name of the Lord, the pastor says the following:

Watch and wait for Christ's coming!
Light candles of hope, peace, joy, and love,
remembering the promises of God with prayer.

We light this candle in hope. *Light the first candle.*
We light this candle for peace. *Light the second candle.*

Hear Zechariah's song of hope for peace to the Christ child. A reading from Luke 1:76-79:

“You, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
to give knowledge of salvation to his people
by the forgiveness of their sins.
By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon us,
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Let us pray:

God of hope, Prince of Peace,
You speak peace into the world
in the Way of the Christ child.
Help us embody your peace
and live as peacemakers
that we may be called children of God.
**God of hope, God of peace,
into our darkness come.**

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We light this candle for peace. *Light the second candle.*
We light this candle in joy! *Light the third (pink, if used) candle.*

To those who live as exiles from home in a dark time, to those enslaved as exiles due to others’ oppression, to those who are sin’s exiles from their best God-promised selves, the Lord speaks the joy of good news. A reading from Zephaniah 3:14-20.

Reader 1:

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;
shout, O Israel!
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!
The LORD has taken away the judgments against you,
he has turned away your enemies.
The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;
you shall fear disaster no more.
On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:
Do not fear, O Zion;
do not let your hands grow weak.
The LORD, your God, is in your midst,
a warrior who gives victory;
he will rejoice over you with gladness,
he will renew you in his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing
as on a day of festival.

Reader 2:

“I will remove disaster from you,
so that you will not bear reproach for it.
I will deal with all your oppressors at that time.
And I will save the lame
and gather the outcast,
and I will change their shame into praise
and renown in all the earth.
At that time I will bring you home,
at the time when I gather you;
for I will make you renowned and praised
among all the peoples of the earth,
when I restore your fortunes
before your eyes,” says the LORD.

Let us pray:

Isaiah 12:2-4, Philippians 4:4

**Surely God is my salvation;
I will trust and not be afraid,
for the LORD is my strength and my might;
God has become my salvation.**

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

And you will say in that day:

**Rejoice in the Lord always;
again I say, Rejoice!**

Sing praises to the LORD, for God has done gloriously!

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In the spirit of Gaudette Sunday, you may wish to sing the praise of “He Came Down” on this Sunday even if you are singing the O Antiphons on the other Sundays



Fourth Sunday in Advent: Love

After the greeting in the name of the Lord, the pastor says the following:

Watch and wait for Christ's coming!
Light candles of hope, peace, joy, and love,
remembering the promises of God with prayer.

We light this candle in hope. *Light the first candle.*
We light this candle for peace. *Light the second candle.*
We light this candle in joy! *Light the third (pink, if used) candle.*
We light this candle with love. *Light the fourth candle.*

Hear again the Word of the Lord drawn from Zephaniah 3:17¹
The LORD your God . . . will rejoice over you with gladness; God will quiet you with
divine love like a child upon the breast. The Lord will exult over you with loud singing.

Let us pray:
God of hope, God of peace,
God of joy, and God of love,
Teach us how to love one another
as reflections of your light in the world.
**God of promise, God of love,
into our darkness come.**

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Christmas Eve/Christmas Day

We have watched; we have waited
in hope. *Light the first candle.*
for peace. *Light the second candle.*

¹ This is the lection for the preceding Sunday.

in joy! *Light the third (pink, if used) candle.*
with love. *Light the fourth candle is lit.*
Now our redemption draws near! *The Christ candle (the center white candle) is lit.*

Hear the Word of the Lord from Isaiah 9:2-7
The people who walked in darkness
 have seen a great light;
 those who lived in a land of deep darkness —
 on them light has shined.
You have multiplied the nation,
 you have increased its joy;
 they rejoice before you
 as with joy at the harvest,
 as people exult when dividing plunder.
For the yoke of their burden,
 and the bar across their shoulders,
 the rod of their oppressor,
 you have broken as on the day of Midian.
For all the boots of the tramping warriors
 and all the garments rolled in blood
 shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
For a child has been born for us,
 a son is given to us;
 authority rests upon his shoulders;
 and he is named
 Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
 Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
His authority shall grow continually,
 and there shall be endless peace
 for the throne of David and his kingdom.
 He will establish and uphold it
 with justice and with righteousness
 from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Glory to God in the highest!
Aleluia! Amen!

Proceed immediately into the first hymn of praise.