

THE SEASON OF PREPARATION

Christmas Advent



Kia Inoi Tatou

E te Atua o te tumanako,
No te putanga mai o tau Tama a te Karaiti kaua matou e mau e moe ana e noho
mangere ana ranei.
Engari e kakama ana e takatu ana ki ana mahi; ko Ihu Karaiti nei hoki to matou Kai
Hoko.

God of hope,
When Christ your Son appears
May he not find us asleep or idle,
But active in his service and ready;
Through the same Jesus Christ our Redeemer.
Amine

WHAT IS ADVENT?

Advent is the beginning of the Church Year. It begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day, which is the Sunday nearest November 30, and ends on Christmas Eve (Dec 24). If Christmas Eve is a Sunday, it is counted as the fourth Sunday of Advent, with Christmas Eve proper beginning at sundown.

The Colours of Advent

Historically, the primary sanctuary colour of Advent is **Purple**. This is the colour of penitence and fasting as well as the colour of royalty to welcome the Advent of the King.

The purple of Advent is also the colour of suffering used during Lent and Holy Week. This points to an important connection between Jesus' birth and death.

The nativity, the Incarnation, cannot be separated from the crucifixion. The purpose of Jesus' coming into the world, of the "Word made flesh" and dwelling among us, is to reveal God and His grace to the world through Jesus' life and teaching, but also through his suffering, death, and resurrection.

To reflect this emphasis, originally Advent was a time of penitence and fasting, much as the Season of Lent and so shared the colour of Lent. In the four weeks of Advent the third Sunday came to be a time of rejoicing that the fasting was almost over (in some traditions it is called Gaudete Sunday, from the Latin word for "rejoice").

The shift from the purple of the Season to pink or rose for the third Sunday Advent candles reflected this lessening emphasis on penitence as attention turned more to celebration of the season.

The Meaning of "Advent"

The word **Advent** means "coming" or "arrival." The focus of the entire season is the celebration of the birth of Jesus the Christ in his First Advent, and the anticipation of the return of Christ the King in his Second Advent. Thus, Advent is far more than simply marking a 2,000 year old event in history.

It is celebrating a truth about God, the revelation of God in Christ whereby all of creation might be reconciled to God. That is a process in which we now participate, and the consummation of which we anticipate.

Scripture reading for Advent will reflect this emphasis on the Second Advent, including themes of accountability for faithfulness at His coming, judgment on sin, and the hope of eternal life.

In this double focus on past and future, Advent also symbolizes the spiritual journey of individuals and a congregation, as they affirm that Christ has come, that He is present in the world today, and that He will come again in power.

That acknowledgment provides a basis for Kingdom ethics, for holy living arising from a profound sense that we live "between the times" and are called to be faithful stewards of what is entrusted to us as God's people.

The Advent wreath is the symbol of the beginning of the Church year in many churches as well as homes. It is a circular evergreen wreath (real or artificial) with five candles, four around the wreath and one in the centre.

The **circle of the wreath** reminds us of God Himself, His eternity and endless mercy, which has no beginning or end.

The **green of the wreath** speaks of the hope that we have in God, the hope of newness, of renewal, of eternal life. **Candles** symbolize the light of God coming into the world through the birth of His son.

The **four outer candles** represent the period of waiting during the four Sundays of Advent, which themselves symbolize the four centuries of waiting between the prophet Malachi and the birth of Christ.

The **light of the candles** itself becomes an important symbol of the season. The light reminds us that Jesus is the light of the world that comes into the darkness of our lives to bring newness, life, and hope. It also reminds us that we are called to be a light to the world as we reflect the light of God's grace to others (Isa 42:6).

The **first candle** is traditionally the candle of **Expectation** or **Hope**. This draws attention to the anticipation of the coming of an Anointed One, a Messiah that weaves its way like a golden thread through Old Testament history. The **remaining three candles** of Advent are Love, Joy and Peace.

The **third candle**, usually for the Third Sunday of Advent, is traditionally Pink or Rose, and symbolizes **Joy** at the soon Advent of the Christ. It marks a shift from the more solemn tone of the first two Sundays of Advent that focus on Preparation and Hope, to a more joyous atmosphere of anticipation and expectancy.

The **centre candle** is white and is called the **Christ Candle**. It is traditionally lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. The **central location of the Christ Candle** reminds us that the incarnation is the heart of the season, giving light to the world.

An Advent Reflection

We live in a world in which bigger and better define our expectations for much of life.

We have become so focused by super-size, super stars, and high definition that we tend to view life through a lens that so magnifies what we expect out of the world that we tend not to see potential in small things.

But as the prophet Zechariah reminds us (Zech 4:10), we should not "despise the day of small things," because God does some of his best work with small beginnings and impossible situations.

It is truly a humbling experience to read back through the Old Testament and see how frail and imperfect all the "heroes" actually are.

- Abraham, the coward who cannot believe the promise.
- Jacob, the cheat who struggles with everybody.
- Joseph, the immature and arrogant teen.
- Moses, the impatient murderer who cannot wait for God.
- Gideon, the cowardly Baal-worshipper. Samson, the womanizing drunk.
- David, the power abuser.
- Solomon, the unwise wise man.
- Hezekiah, the reforming king who could not quite go far enough.
- And finally, a very young Jewish girl from a small village in a remote corner of a great empire.

God often begins with small things and inadequate people. It certainly seems that God could have chosen "bigger" things and "better" people to do His work in the world.

Yet if God can use them, and reveal Himself through them in such marvellous ways, it means that He might be able to use us, inadequate, and unwise, and too often lacking in faith.

And it means that we need to be careful that we do not in our own self-righteousness put limits on what God can do with the smallest things, the most unlikely of people, in the most hopeless of circumstances.

That is part of the wonder of the Advent Season.

Kia kaha tatou, ahakoa nga piki, heke, o te Ao. Ma Te Atua tatou e manaaki.

Let us Pray

Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice. The Lord is at hand. Come quickly, Lord Jesus, and stand among us that we may welcome you today into every part of our lives and serve you joyfully, now and always.

AMEN

Kia Inoi Tatou

Kia hari tonu i roto i te Ariki: ko taku kapu ano tenei, kia hari. Kua tata te Ariki. Kia hohoro mai, e Ihu e te Ariki, a e tu ki waenga i a matou, kia powhiritia atu koe e matou i tenei ra, ki roto i o matou wahi katoa, a, kia mahi atu matou ki a koe, i runga i te hari koa, inaiane i ake tonu atu.

Amine

ADVENT RING LIGHTING CEREMONY 1

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT: HOPE

Advent means “*coming*” and in this season, we prepare for the coming of the Christ. One of the ways we prepare for his coming, is by laying out an Advent wreath and lighting its candles to remind us of the gifts that the Christ brings to the world.

The Advent wreath includes many symbols to help us think about Christ and his gifts. The wreath itself is in the shape of a circle, a circle that has no beginning and no end.

This reminds us that there is no beginning and ending to God and that God’s love and caring are forever.

The light from the candles – which grows stronger each Sunday, as more candles are lit, reminds us that Jesus is the light of the world. Today is the first Sunday of Advent, the Sunday in which we recall the hope we have in Christ.

The prophets of Israel all spoke of the coming of Christ, of how a saviour would be born, a king in the line of David. They spoke of how he would rule the world wisely and bless all nations.

On Christmas day the Christ of our hope was born. On Good Friday the Christ of our hope died. On Easter day the Christ of our hope rose from the dead.

He then ascended into heaven. On the last day, the Christ of our hope will come again to establish his kingdom over all things on earth.

As the follower of Christ, we await his return.

We light this candle to remember that as he came to us as humbly in the manger at Bethlehem and gave light to the world, so he is coming again in power to deliver his people. We light this candle to remind us to be alert and to watch for his return.

Light the First Candle

LET US PRAY - Loving God, we thank you for the hope you give us. Help us prepare our hearts for the Lord's coming. Bless our worship. Help us live holy and righteous lives. We ask it in the name of the one born in Bethlehem.

Amen.

ADVENT RING LIGHTING CEREMONY 2

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT: PEACE

Last Sunday we lit the first candle in our Advent Wreath, the candle of hope. We light it again as we remember that Christ will come again to fulfil all of God's promises to us.

(A person lights the candle of hope)

The second candle of Advent is the Candle of Peace. It is some times called the Bethlehem Candle to remind us of the place in which preparations were made to receive and cradle the Christ child.

Peace is a gift that we must be prepared for. God gives us the gift of peace when we turn to him in faith. The prophet Isaiah calls Christ "the Prince of Peace."

Through John the Baptist and all the other prophets, God asks us to prepare our hearts so that he may come in.

Our hope is in God, and in his son Jesus Christ. Our peace is found in him. We light this candle today to remind us that he brings peace to all who trust in him.

Light the Second Candle

LET US PRAY - Loving God, thank you for the peace you give us through Jesus. Help us prepare our hearts to receive Him. Bless our worship. Guide us in all that we say and do. We ask it in the name of the one born in Bethlehem.

Amen.

ADVENT RING LIGHTING CEREMONY 3

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT: WHITE GIFT SUNDAY – JOY

Last Sunday the candle of peace was lit. We light it and the candle of hope again as we remember that Christ will come again and bring to the world everlasting peace.

(A person lights the candle of hope, and peace)

The third candle of Advent is the Candle of Joy. It reminds of the joy that Mary felt when the angel Gabriel told her that a special child would be born to her – a child who would save and deliver his people.

God wants us all to have joy. The angel who announced to the shepherds that Jesus had been born told them:

"Do not be afraid. I am bringing you good news of a great joy for all people - for to you is born this day, in the City of David, a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord."

We light this candle to remember that Christ brings the promise of a new life - a life in which the blind receive sight, the lame walk, and the prisoners are set free. We light it to remember that He is the bringer of true and Everlasting joy.

Light the Third Candle

LET US PRAY - Loving God, we thank you for the joy you bring us. Help us prepare our hearts for this gift. Bless our worship. Help us to hear and to do your word. We ask it in the name of the one born in Bethlehem.

Amen.

ADVENT RING LIGHTING CEREMONY 4

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT: LOVE

Last Sunday we lit the candle of joy. We light it and the candles of hope and peace again as we remember that Christ will come again and bring us everlasting peace and joy.

(A person lights the candle of hope, and peace, and joy)

The fourth candle of Advent is the Candle of Love. Its light is meant to remind us of the love that God has for us. Jesus shows us God's perfect love. He is God's love in human form.

The bible says that "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Love is patient, love is kind and envies no one. Love is never boastful or conceited, rude or selfish. Love is not quick to take offence, it keeps no records of wrongs, and it does not gloat over other people's troubles, but rejoices in the right, the good, and the true.

There is nothing that love cannot face, there is no limit to its faith, to its hope, to its endurance. Love never ends.

We light this candle today to remind us of how God's perfect love is found in Jesus

Light the Fourth Candle

LET US PRAY - Loving God, we thank you for your gift of love - show to us perfectly in Jesus Christ our Lord. Help us prepare our hearts to receive Him. Bless our worship. Help us to hear and do your word. We ask it in the name of the one born in Bethlehem.

Amen

ADVENT RING LIGHTING CEREMONY 5

CHRISTMAS EVE: LIGHTING THE WAY

Words of Welcome & Lighting the Advent Candles:

L: We gather to celebrate the birth of the one who is the light of the world.

P: We are here to worship God - and his Son Jesus - born this night in Bethlehem of Judea.

L: We light the candle of hope to remind us of the promises made by all the prophets that God would raise up a saviour for his people Israel.

P: Christ is our hope and our salvation. He calls us to share our hope in him with each other.

L: We light the candle of peace to remind us that it is only with God and by following in his path that true peace can be found.

P: Christ brings the peace of God to us. He calls us to share the peace he gives with each other.

L: We light the candle of joy to remind us that God gives joy to every heart that abides in him.

P: As Mary rejoiced in the birth of Jesus - so his birth in us brings us joy. God calls us to share the joy he gives with each other.

L: We light the candle of love to remind us that Jesus is God's gift of love to us - and that in him, the light of love triumphs over darkness.

P: Love never fails - it transforms all those who give it and receive it. God calls us to share his love with each other.

Lighting the Christ Candle

L: We light the Christ candle to remind us that the light of the world was born this night.

P: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness - on them a light has shined.

L: You, O Lord, have multiplied the nation. You have increased its joy.

P: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder.

L: His name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

P: He is also called Emmanuel, for in him God is with us.

Unison Prayer of Approach

P: Almighty God - you have made this night holy by the gift of your son, born of the Holy Spirit and of Mary. Upon him rested all your grace, through him has come all your mercy. Let his light shine within our hearts tonight even more brightly than it shines from the candles in this place. Help us to hear your word and to celebrate your everlasting love through him.

Amen

ADVENT RING LIGHTING CEREMONY 6 FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

"There are two ways of spreading light; to be a candle, or the mirror that reflects it."

Lord God, as we light this candle to remind us of your hope, peace, joy, and love help us to witness to the Light of the World, your son Jesus who came as a babe at Bethlehem and will come again in glory.

Grant that we may be candles and mirrors of your light to a dark and waiting world. Come, Lord Jesus!

Light the Christ Candle: (Isaiah 9:2, 6)

L: We light this candle Lord to remind us of the hope, peace, joy, and love you gave us in the birth of our Saviour. As we look forward to and watching for his Coming again may your loving, guiding presence be with us. Make us to rejoice in the hope of our salvation. O come, O come, Emmanuel!