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Advent

at

Home

2013

Stores are covered in Christmas decorations earlier and earlier each year. Halloween pumpkins are barely put away before the first strains of Christmas music come on the radio. Santa Claus competes with turkeys on table top displays. The headlong rush into Christmas can be a source of stress and anxiety. Christmas marks the end of the year according to the secular calendar; however, on the sacred calendar, Christmas is near the beginning of the year’s holy seasons.

The Christian calendar begins at the end of November with the season of Advent. The name Advent is derived from the Latin word, *adventus*, which means “coming.” Rather than the rush of the secular, commercialized holiday season, the season of Advent allows us to slow down, to reflect on the seasons past and season to come, and to prepare our hearts to receive Christ, not only in the form of the Christ child on Christmas day, but also in the Second Coming. This is a season of anticipation, reflection, and expectation. It is a season of longing – not for the gifts under the Christmas tree, but for the ultimate gift – Christ. Advent is a season of both joyful and solemn anticipation of deliverance.

The four Sundays before Christmas comprise Advent. The weeks are often marked using an Advent wreath. Traditionally, an Advent wreath is made of evergreens. Both the evergreens and the circular shape of the wreath represent everlasting life or the promise of eternal life in Christ. The wreath includes five candles: one candle for each of the four Sundays plus a Christ candle that is lighted on Christmas Eve or Christmas day.

The liturgical color for Advent is purple, the same as the color for Lent, which reflects the penitential nature of preparing ourselves for Christ’s coming. Some traditions use blue candles rather than purple. The four candles represent Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. The candle representing the third week, Joy, is sometimes pink or rose-colored. Just as Sundays during Lent are considered mini-Easters, the Joy candle in the Advent wreath reminds us that awaiting the Lord is a joyful time as well as a time of penance. The Christ candle is white, and it’s usually the largest candle in the wreath. It is sometimes decorated with gold or jewels to reflect Christ’s royalty.

This Advent guide is meant for home use among family and friends. Consider creating your Advent wreath together, gathering the supplies and placing it in a prominent location where you will see it throughout the season of Advent. On the first Sunday, you will read the first lesson and light the candle. As the week progresses, you may make a ritual of lighting the first candle each evening, perhaps before supper, to remind you of hope. As always when using candles, please be sure not to leave a burning candle unsupervised, especially around children, and don’t forget to extinguish the candles before bedtime! The second week of Advent, you will read the second lesson and light the candles of Hope and Peace. Again, throughout the week you may light these two candles as reminders. On the third Sunday, you will read the lesson and light the candles of Hope, Peace, and Joy. The fourth week, you will light the candles of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. On the fifth week of the study, which corresponds with Christmas, light all four candles plus the Christ candle. You may chose to do this either on Christmas Eve or Christmas day.

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2013 Advent Wreath Meditations

First Sunday of Advent

**by Dean McIntyre**

**First Sunday of Advent: December 1, 2013**

**Isaiah 2:1-5 (NRSV)**

***Take turns reading the following verses.***

1. 1. The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.
2. 2. In the 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.
3. 3. 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.
4. 4. 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.
5. 5. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

**Pray:** O God, this year people all over the world have known hardship, poverty, sickness, loss of work; and some have known war. So many have suffered, some have died, while others have mourned. It has been a difficult time in our nation and around the world.

We thank you for your promise of a time when swords will be exchanged for shovels and when tanks will be replaced by tractors.

We look forward to the promised day when nations will live together in peace; and when we learn, not about war, but about you and one another.

***(Light the first candle.)***

Lord, may the light of this first candle shine bright and clear, reminding us of your promise of peace on earth.

**Sing:** "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear," stanza 4 (*United Methodist Hymnal,* 218):

For lo! The days are hastening on, by prophet seen of old, When with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold When peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling, And the whole world send back the song which soon the angels sing.

**(All): Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.**

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2013 Advent Wreath Meditations

Second Sunday of Advent

**by Dean McIntyre**

**Second Sunday of Advent: December 8, 2013**

***(Light the first candle.)***

We light the first candle, reminding us of God’s promise of peace on earth.

**Psalm 72:1-7 (NRSV)**

***Take turns reading the following verses.***

1. 1. Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king’s son.
2. 2. May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice.
3. 3. May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness.
4. 4. May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor.
5. 5. May he live while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.
6. 6. May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth.
7. 7. In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no more.

**Pray:** O God, we remember that you sent Jesus to the whole world, and especially to the poor and those in need.

We remember that Jesus healed the sick, comforted those who mourn, and went out of his way to love even little children.

***(Light the second candle.)***

Lord, may the light of this second candle, as it dispels the darkness around it, help to remind us that we are to dispel the darkness of sickness, poverty, injustice, and suffering all around us.

**Sing:** "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear," stanza 3 (*United Methodist Hymnal,* 218):

And ye, beneath life’s crushing load, whose forms are bending low, Who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow, Look now! For glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing. O rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing.

**(All): Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.**

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2013 Advent Wreath Meditations

Third Sunday of Advent

**by Dean McIntyre**

**Third Sunday of Advent: December 15, 2013**

***(Light the first candle.)***

We light the first candle, reminding us of God’s promise of peace on earth.

***(Light the second candle.)***

We light the second candle, reminding us that we are to dispel the darkness of sickness, poverty, injustice, and suffering all around us.

**James 5:7-10 (NRSV)**

***Take turns reading the following verses.***

1. 7. Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains.
2. 8. You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.
3. 9. Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors!
4. 10. As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

**Pray:** O God, you command us to be patient in our waiting for Jesus’ coming. As the farmer prepares the field and waits for the harvest in patience, may we also prepare our lives and wait for your coming in patience.

***(Light the third candle.)***

Lord, may the constant light of this candle serve as an example of the kind of constant patience we are to have in our living and in our relationships with one another.

As we rush about with shopping, parties, cooking, decorating, and the busyness of these days, may we not forget the true reason why we do these things; and may we not grumble against one another.

Our hearts are strong, Lord, for your coming is near.

**Sing:** "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear," stanza 2 (*United Methodist Hymnal,* 218):

Still through the cloven skies they come with peaceful wings unfurled, And still their heavenly music floats o’er all the weary world; Above its sad and lowly plains, they bend on hovering wing, And ever o’er its Babel sounds the blessed angels sing.

**(All): Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.**

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2013 Advent Wreath Meditations

Fourth Sunday of Advent

**by Dean McIntyre**

**Fourth Sunday of Advent: December 22, 2013**

***(Light the first candle.)***

We light the first candle, reminding us of God’s promise of peace on earth.

***(Light the second candle.)***

We light the second candle, reminding us that we are to dispel the darkness of sickness, poverty, injustice, and suffering all around us.

***(Light the third candle.)***

We light the third candle, reminding us to be constant and patient in our relationships and in our living.

**Matthew 1:18-25 (NRSV)**

***Take turns reading the following verses.***

1. 18. Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.
2. 19. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly.
3. 20. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.
4. 21. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.
5. 22. All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:
6. 23. "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means "God is with us."
7. 24. When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife,
8. 25. But had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

**Pray:** O God, we can only admire the righteousness and trust of Joseph, who — in the face of public scorn and humiliation — took upon himself the responsibility of caring for Mary and her unborn child, and who was faithful to your call.

***(Light the fourth candle.)***

Lord, may the light of this candle illumine our path through life, so that our way is the way of righteousness, trust, and faithfulness.

**Sing:** "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear," stanza 1 (*United Methodist Hymnal,* 218):

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old, From angels bending near the earth, to touch their harps of gold: "Peace on the earth, good will to men, from heaven’s all-gracious King." The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.

**(All): Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.**

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2013 Advent Wreath Meditations

Christmas Eve

**by Dean McIntyre**

**Christmas Eve: December 24, 2013**

***(Light the first candle.)***

We light the first candle, reminding us of God’s promise of peace on earth.

***(Light the second candle.)***

We light the second candle, reminding us that we are to dispel the darkness of sickness, poverty, injustice, and suffering all around us.

***(Light the third candle.)***

We light the third candle, reminding us to be constant and patient in our relationships and in our living.

***(Light the fourth candle.)***

We light the fourth candle, reminding us that the way of following Jesus is the way of righteousness, trust, and faithfulness.

**Luke 2:1-20 (NRSV)**

***Take turns reading the following verses.***

1. 1. In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered.
2. 2. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.
3. 3. All went to their own towns to be registered.
4. 4. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David.
5. 5. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.
6. 6. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child.
7. 7. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.
8. 8. In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.
9. 9. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.
10. 10. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people:
11. 11. To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.
12. 12. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."
13. 13. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,
14. 14. "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace, good will among people."
15. 15. When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us."
16. 16. So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.
17. 17. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child;
18. 18. And all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.
19. 19. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.
20. 20. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

**Pray:** O God, we have watched for your coming with longing and with expectation, with patience and with hope.

Now, as the prophets promised so long ago, you have come to us once again; and with the shepherds, we are filled with wonder and amazement.

***(Light the white Christ candle.)***

Lord, you come as a tiny, fragile baby; yet we know that you are God and you are with us.

May the flame of this candle remind us that you are the light of the world and that if we follow you, we will never walk in darkness, but will have the true light of life.

**Sing:** "O Little Town of Bethlehem," stanza 4 (*United Methodist Hymnal,* 230)

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray; Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today. We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell; O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!

**(All): Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.**