

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.

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 C:

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. *The first candle is lit.*

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 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. In the spirit of the folk song, you may wish to add "hope" as the first verse.

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.**

This can be finished by reciting or singing one verse of the [O Antiphons](#) 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. 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 Gaudete (= "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 Gaudete 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.*

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!

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

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.*

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.**

*This can be finished by reciting or singing one verse of the [O Antiphons](#) each Sunday. A sung
version is the hymn "O Come, O Come Emmanuel"*

And/Or

¹ This is the lection for the preceding Sunday.

You may want to sing the Cameroonian/Iona “He Came Down,” #2085 in Sing the Faith. 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 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!
Alleluia! Amen!

Proceed immediately into the first hymn of praise.