



# Bringing Advent Home



*Advent is a season of preparation for Christmas - a time to reflect on how we can make room for Christ in our lives. There are many ways that we can make this preparation tangible through different practices, prayers, and symbols that remind us of the beauty and meaning of the Advent. Here are some ideas for how you can enter into this season as a family:*

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## Christmas Tree

After you have decorated your home for Christmas, set up the Christmas tree. When the tree is yet untrimmed (but the lights have been strung), recall that God has blessed you with life and that, just as the tree is evergreen, God's love for us is unending and never changes. Then as each ornament is placed on the tree, have the family member placing it share a particular personal or family blessing that has been received during the past year. After the tree is trimmed, plug in the lights and read this prayer together:

**O God, you made light shine out of darkness. Bless this tree that we decorated with lights in honor of Jesus Christ who has come to bring light to us. This Advent season, help us to show your light in our faces and be happy, radiant, and loving people. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.**

## Creche (Nativity Scene)

Prepare a creche as a centerpiece to remember that Advent is a season of preparation. Instead of putting up the traditional manger scene all at once, try putting out a few pieces each week. When you set out the animals, talk about God's concern for all of nature. As you place the shepherds and Mary and Joseph in the following weeks, Advent themes of joy, hope, and peace were emphasized. Finally, on Christmas Eve, baby Jesus was added to the scene—"Joy to the world, the Lord is come!" After Christmas the wise men (Magi) were added to help lead us from Christmas to Epiphany. Once you have it set up, pray this blessing together around the Nativity:

**God of every nation and people, from the very beginning of creation you have made manifest your love: when our need for a Savior was great you sent your Son to be born of the Virgin Mary. To our lives he brings joy and peace, justice, mercy, and love. Lord, bless all who look upon this manger; may it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus, and raise our thoughts to him, who is God-with-us and Savior of all, and who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.**

## Advent Chain

Make your own Advent chain with a link for each day from the first Sunday in Advent through December 25. On each link write one activity. After writing an activity on each link, attach the links to make a chain. Each day remove a link and do the activity as a family.

# Advent Wreath

Many churches and families light Advent candles to mark the progression toward the birth of Christ. Each week during Advent, a new candle is lit until all the candles burn on Christmas or Christmas Eve. The first, second and fourth candles are traditionally purple, with the third being pink (symbolizing joy). The final candle is lit either on Christmas or Christmas Eve and is known as the Christ candle; unlike the other candles, this candle is traditionally white. These Advent candle lighting readings can be used in worship or at home with your family. Consider pairing the readings with a prayer or song.

Some churches and families place the candles in an Advent wreath, with the Christ candle in the center. The Advent wreath's circular shape symbolizes God's constant and unchanging nature. On Christmas Eve or Christmas day, the full wreath of Advent candles is lit to symbolize that Christ, the light of the world, has arrived. Below are some prayers that can be used around the Advent wreath.

## BEGINNING THE SEASON: BLESSING OF THE WREATH

Lord our God, we praise you for your Son, Jesus Christ: he is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples, he is the wisdom that teaches and guides us, he is the Savior of every nation. Lord God, let your blessing come upon us as we light the candles of this wreath. May the wreath and its light be a sign of Christ's promise to bring us salvation. May he come quickly and not delay. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## WEEKLY PRAYERS (ON EACH SUNDAY OF ADVENT)

- Begin with the Sign of the Cross.
- As a candle is lit, read the corresponding prayer for the week from the list below.
- Pray an Our Father or Hail Mary and conclude with the Sign of the Cross.



### WEEK 1

*Lord, our God, we praise You for Your Son, Jesus Christ, for He is Emmanuel, the Hope of all people. He is the Wisdom that teaches and guides us. He is the Savior of us all. O Lord, let your blessing come upon us as we light the first (purple) candle of this wreath. May the wreath and its light be a sign of Christ's promise of salvation. May He come quickly and not delay. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.*



### WEEK 2

*Lord, our God, we praise You for Your Son, Jesus Christ, for He is Emmanuel, the Hope of all people. He is the Wisdom that teaches and guides us. He is the Savior of us all. O Lord, let your blessing come upon us as we light two (purple) candles of this wreath. May the wreath and its light be a sign of Christ's promise of salvation. May He come quickly and not delay. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.*



### WEEK 3

*Lord, our God, we praise You for Your Son, Jesus Christ, for He is Emmanuel, the Hope of all people. He is the Wisdom that teaches and guides us. He is the Savior of us all. O Lord, let your blessing come upon us as we light two (purple) candles and the third (pink) candle of this wreath. May the wreath and its light be a sign of Christ's promise of salvation. May He come quickly and not delay. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.*



### WEEK 4

*Lord, our God, we praise You for Your Son, Jesus Christ, for He is Emmanuel, the Hope of all people. He is the Wisdom that teaches and guides us. He is the Savior of us all. O Lord, let your blessing come upon us as we light all the candles of this wreath. May the wreath and its light be a sign of Christ's promise of salvation. May He come quickly and not delay. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.*