# Advent Candlelighting

*To mark* [*Gathering*](http://www.ucrdstore.ca/magazines/gathering)*’s 30th anniversary, the following resources have been gleaned from the “best loved” material of earlier Advent/Christmas/Epiphany issues.*

## The Symbolism of the Wreath

Lori Megley-Best writes: We are enjoying the attendance of a number of unchurched people at our church, so I wanted to use this service partly to explain the symbolism of the Advent wreath. Also, I wanted to include a contemplative aspect to the worship. One worship leader spoke (did not read) the following words and walked around at the front of the sanctuary in an informal way, while another leader helped the children to light the candles. Many people told me they appreciated the opportunities for quiet time included for each Sunday.

### Advent 1

Welcome! Today is the first Sunday of Advent. Advent includes the four weeks before Christmas, and it is the time when we as Christians get ready for the birth of Jesus, the coming of Jesus’ light into the world. During Advent we have the practice of lighting the Advent wreath. We light the candles to remember that Jesus’ light is born into the world and is all around us. Each Sunday, we light a candle. Today we light the candle of hope. We hope that Jesus’ light will come again and again into our world.

(*The candle has been lit; the children return to their places.*)

So let us go inward, let us be quiet. Close your eyes, or focus on the candle, and find the hope that is inside.... Where is that hope that is inside of you? If you can’t find it today, ask God to help you find it. Sit quietly and notice the hope....

(*a few moments of silence*)

Jesus, help your light to shine in us as hope.

(*sound of a chime or gong*)

**Hymn:** (*unannounced*) “Hope is a candle” by Linnea Good in *The Good Book* (Borealis Music), verse 1

### Advent 2

Good morning! Today is the second Sunday of Advent. As Christians, we light the Advent wreath to remind us that we wait for Christ’s light to be born into the world. The wreath is in the shape of a circle to remind us that God’s love for us is never-ending. Today we are lighting the candle of peace. We remember that Jesus brings the promise of peace: peace in our hearts, peace between family and friends, peace between nations, peace between human beings and all of creation.

(*The candle has been lit.*)

Let us quiet our hearts and minds. Close your eyes, or focus on the candle....

Notice your breathing...be aware of your breath as it enters and leaves your body....

As you breathe in, say to yourself, “Jesus.”

As you breathe out, say, “Send your peace.”

(*a few moments of silence*)

Jesus, help your light to shine in us as peace.

(*chime or gong*)

**Hymn:** (*unannounced*) “Hope is a candle” verses 1 and 2

### Advent 3

This is the third Sunday of Advent. Today we will light one more candle on our wreath to show that we are waiting for the birth of Jesus, for Christ’s light to be born into the world. The Advent wreath is always clothed in green. The greenery is a symbol of life and growth. The green on the Advent wreath reminds us that God’s love for us is very special—it is alive and is always growing. This Sunday we light the candle that symbolizes joy. The joy that we talk about when we think of Jesus is not merely the feeling of happiness, rather it is the experience—which includes many feelings—that comes from falling deeper and deeper in love with this world.

(*The candle has been lit.*)

Let us quiet our hearts. Take the time to go deeper. Close your eyes, or focus on the candles. Breathe gently. Let us look for the joy that lives in all of us, the joy that comes from knowing that Jesus loves and cares for us and offers us hope for better things to come in this world. Notice the joy. Let it grow in you; let it spread throughout your being. Relax in that joy right now.

(*a few moments of silence*)

Jesus, help your light to shine in us as joy.

(*chime or gong*)

**Hymn:** (*unannounced*) “Hope is a candle” verses 1, 2, and 3

### Advent 4

Today we are lighting the fourth candle on our Advent wreath. We have almost finished our waiting. Jesus is going to be born soon! We talked about the wreath being a circle to remind us of God’s unending love. We note, too, that it is covered in greenery to symbolize God’s love for us that is always growing. The four candles are blue. We use blue to signify expectancy. Mary’s robe is often coloured blue, and we think of Mary waiting to bear a child that she knew was special. The candle we light today is the candle of love. It is hard for us to imagine that God loves us no matter what. It is even harder to imagine that God is love.

(*The candle has been lit.*)

Today, let us turn inside to remember that love. Close your eyes, or focus on the candle…. Think of love; go to the place inside your body where you find love. Find love, enjoy it, rest in it, offer thanks for it. Take this time to be with the love that God offers.

(*a few moments of silence*)

Jesus, help your light to shine in us as love.

(*chime or gong*)

**Hymn:** (*unannounced*) “Hope is a candle” verses 1, 2, 3, and 4

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## Lighting the Advent Candles

*These litanies have been used for the past several years at Camrose United Church, Camrose, Alberta.*

### Instructions and Suggestions for Advent Candle-lighters

* Each time, one additional candle is lit in the following sequence:

Advent 1: blue (Hope)

Advent 2: blue (Peace)

Advent 3: pink (Joy)

Advent 4: blue (Love)

Christmas Eve: white (the Christ candle)

* Plan in advance the individuals who will speak and those who will light the candle. It is recommended that these be different people in order to avoid one person having to read and light a candle at the same time.
* Arrive a few minutes early and go to the wreath:
  + decide where each person will stand
  + find out where the lighter will be
  + find out where the microphone will be
* Notice and follow the timing instructions printed in italics in the litany; for example, allow pauses where indicated.
* When the time comes, do not be rushed: this is a peaceful and prayerful moment. And it is not performing; it is presiding, which means allowing yourselves to be channels through which the Spirit touches the worshippers.

### Advent 1

(*as one blue candle is lit*)

We light a candle for Hope.

(*pause*)

(*call to worship*)

As the flame of hope begins to burn,

let the promise of the ages

shine in our hearts

as the great star shone

so long ago in Bethlehem.

(*prayer of approach*)

For our prayer, let’s fold our hands

and close our eyes

and listen for God’s Spirit

in the silence.

(*pause*)

Let your Spirit burn in our hearts;

let your Light shine in our world;

and as we wait

through the Advent season

for the baby Jesus’ birth,

let your star of Hope lead us

to the place where the Christ

would be born today.

Amen.

### Advent 2

(*as the first blue candle is lit*)

On the first Sunday of Advent, we lit a candle for Hope.

(*as a second blue candle is lit*)

Today, we light a candle for Peace.

(*pause*)

(*call to worship*)

As the flame of peace begins to burn,

and you reach out with your hearts and hands

to touch those around you,

let your heart be touched

by the Sacred Spirit

who comes to us now

as the Holy Child of Peace.

(*prayer of approach*)

For our prayer, let’s open our hands

and close our eyes

and listen for God’s Spirit

in the silence.

(*pause*)

Let your Spirit burn in our hearts;

let your Light shine in our world;

and as we wait through the Advent season

for the baby Jesus’ birth,

let your ribbon of Peace

draw us together into a circle of love

where the Christ can be born today.

Amen.

### Advent 3

(*as the first blue candle is lit***)**

On the first Sunday of Advent, we lit a candle for Hope.

(*as the second blue candle is lit*)

Last Sunday, we lit a candle for Peace.

(*as the pink candle is lit*)

Today we light a candle for Joy.

(*pause*)

(*call to worship*)

As this flame begins to burn,

let the Joy and the Wonder

of the God-given Child

sing in our hearts

and let our voices share

the song of the Angels—

the song of heaven on earth.

(*prayer of approach*)

For our prayer,

Let’s hold our hands over our hearts

and close our eyes

and listen for God’s Spirit in silence.

(*pause*)

Let your Spirit sing in our hearts;

let your Song of Joy fill our world;

and as we wait through the Advent season

for the baby Jesus’ birth,

let the glorious Angels lead us

to the place where the Christ

would be born today.

Amen.

### Advent 4

(*as the first blue candle is lit*)

On the first Sunday of Advent, we lit a candle for Hope.

(*as the second blue candle is lit*)

On the second Sunday, we lit a candle for Peace.

(*as the pink candle is lit*)

Last Sunday, we lit a candle for Joy.

(*as the last blue candle is lit*)

Today, we light a candle for Love.

(*pause*)

(*call to worship*)

As the flame begins to burn,

let the love of God warm our hearts

as Mary’s love

welcomed the Christ child into the world

so long ago in Bethlehem.

(*prayer of approach*)

For our prayer, let’s put our hands together

and close our eyes

and listen for God’s Spirit

in the silence.

(*pause*)

Let your Spirit burn in our hearts;

let your Light shine in our world;

and as our Advent time of waiting

for the baby Jesus’ birth

comes to an end,

let the Flame of Your Love

warm the place where the Christ

would be born today.

Amen.

### Christmas Eve

(*as the first blue candle is lit*)

On the first Sunday of Advent, we lit a candle for Hope.

(*as the second blue candle is lit*)

On the second Sunday, we lit a candle for Peace.

(*as the pink candle is lit*)

On the third Sunday, we lit a candle for Joy.

(*as the last blue candle is lit*)

Last Sunday, we lit a candle for Love.

(*as the white candle is lit*)

Now the time has come to light a candle for Christ.

(*pause*)

(*call to worship*)

As the flame of the Christ candle begins to burn,

the angels sing, the shepherds draw near,

and the Magi offer their gifts...

we, too, are here with Jesus

to offer our gifts and to sing praise to God

as they did so long ago in Bethlehem.

(*prayer of approach*)

Let us bow in prayer now,

listening for God’s Spirit in the silence.

(*pause*)

Let your Spirit shine in our hearts;

let your Love shine in our world;

and let the wonder of this night

touch all of our hearts

as the Christ-child invites us

into God’s Love.

Amen.

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## The Gifts of the Season: Lighting the Advent Wreath

These Advent candlelighting readings were offered by two voices, with the congregation responding in song with the chorus of “A Light Is Gleaming” (Voices United 82).

### Advent 1 *Prophets*

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, and Joel, prophets of old, what gift do you bring to us this Advent season?

We bring the gift of dreams,

dreams of peace and justice,

dreams of a child born who would change the world.

Thank you, prophets, for your gift of dreams.

(*The first blue candle of Advent is lit.*)

### Advent 2 *Angels*

(One blue candle is lit.)

Angels, what gift do you bring to us this Advent season?

We bring the gift of a message,

a message of peace and joy,

a message of a child born to change the world.

Thank you, angels, for your gift of a message.

(*The second blue candle of Advent is lit.*)

### Advent 3 *Shepherds*

(Two blue candles are lit.)

Shepherds, what gift do you bring to us this Advent season?

We bring the gift of acceptance,

acceptance as we are, for who we are,

acceptance found in a child born to change the world.

Thank you, shepherds, for your gift of acceptance.

(The third blue candle of Advent is lit.)

### Advent 4 Mary and Joseph

(Three blue candles are lit.)

Mary and Joseph, what gift do you bring to us this Advent?

We bring the gift of love,

the love we offer to each other in difficult circumstances,

the love we offer to the baby Jesus who was born to change the world.

Thank you, Mary and Joseph, for your gift of love.

(*The fourth blue candle of Advent is lit.*)

### Christmas Eve *Jesus*

(Four blue candles are lit.)

Jesus, what gift do you bring to us this Christmas?

I bring the gift of knowledge,

knowledge that God is with us, we are not alone,

knowledge that within you and me is the ability to change the world.

Thank you, Jesus, for your gift of knowledge.

(*The white candle is lit.*)

### Epiphany The Wise Ones

(The four blue candles and the white candle are lit.)

Wise Ones, what gift do you bring to us this Christmas?

We bring the gift of treasure,

treasure that is better than gold, frankincense, and myrrh;

God-given treasure found within each of us so that we may change the world.

Thank you, Wise Ones, for your gift of treasure.

(*The Christ candle on the communion table is lit with flame from the white candle in the Advent wreath.*)

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