

# How to: **ADVENT**





# What is Advent?

Advent is the season of waiting and preparation leading up to Christmas. The word “Advent” means “coming” or “arrival.” During this time, we journey in reflection, preparing our hearts for the birth of Jesus.

## THE WORD ADVENT MEANS COMING OR ARRIVAL

It’s a time to pause from our busy lives, remember God’s promises, and look forward to the hope, peace, joy, and love Jesus brings.

Advent is a tradition that begins four Sundays before Christmas, marking each week leading up to Christmas Day.

Each week, typically on Sundays, we light a new candle, symbolizing;



Hope  
Peace  
Joy  
Love

On Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, we light the final candle—**the Christ Candle**—celebrating the birth of Jesus.

# Advent Candles

The colours of Advent candles can vary depending on tradition, but they always symbolize the same themes. At Sherwood Park Alliance Church, we use the following candle theme:

## Blue Candles

Representing Hope, Peace, and Love, symbolizing Christ's royalty.

## Pink Candle

Representing Joy, signifying celebration and rejoicing.

## White Candle

Representing the Christ Candle, symbolizing Jesus' kingship and purity.



Some traditions use purple candles instead of blue, but the meaning remains the same.

Additionally, the order of themes can occasionally vary, at SPAC we are following most traditional sequence; Hope, Peace, Joy, Love and Christ.

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## **ADVENT IS ABOUT THE PROCESS OF PREPARATION, NOT PERFECTION,**

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The colors and types of candles used for Advent are less important than the heart and intention behind the practice. Whether you use traditional Advent candles, any candles you have on hand, or even no candles at all, the focus is on reflecting on Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and the coming of Christ. Advent is about the process of preparation, not perfection, so use what you have and let the meaning guide your heart.



## Historical Note

The exact date of Jesus' birth isn't recorded, but Christmas has been celebrated on December 25th for centuries. Some scholars suggest that early Christians chose this date due to symbolic reasons, as it's about nine months after Good Friday, reflecting Mary's waiting period as she carried Jesus.

# PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS FOR ADVENT

## **Daily Reflection**

Set aside time each day for quiet reflection, reading scripture, or prayer. Use an Advent calendar or devotional to guide you in daily meditation on God's promises.

## **Acts of Kindness**

Reflect God's love by serving others. Consider small acts of kindness, such as donating to a food bank, visiting someone who may be lonely, or writing a note of encouragement.

## **Family Time**

Make Advent a family celebration by lighting the Advent candles together each week, discussing the theme, and praying as a family.

## **Advent Prayers**

Start each day with a short prayer, inviting God's hope, peace, joy, and love into your life and the lives of those around you.

## **Community Connection**

Attend services, join a small group, or find ways to connect with others in the church community. Advent is a time to celebrate and prepare together as the body of Christ.

## **Rest in God's Presence**

Slow down and take time to appreciate the quiet moments. As you prepare for Christmas, rest in the assurance of God's love and salvation.

# WEEK ONE

## HOPE

In the first week of Advent, we light the candle of Hope. This candle represents our longing and anticipation for a Savior, reminding us that God promised to send a Messiah. Jesus is our hope, fulfilling God's promises to bring light and salvation to a world in darkness.

### Reflect

Hope is more than just wishful thinking—it is a confident expectation in God's faithfulness. As we light this candle, we remember that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise and our ultimate source of hope. We trust that, just as God was faithful to send His Son, He will also be faithful to us today.

### Pray

Lord, as we light the candle of Hope, remind us that your light overcomes darkness. Let us reflect your hope to those around us. Amen.



*Read Isaiah 9:2, 6-7*

**"The people walking in darkness  
have seen a great light; on those  
living in the land of deep  
darkness, a light has dawned."**

**— Isaiah 9:2 NIV**





HOPE

## What is Hope?

Hope is believing something good is coming, even if we can't see it yet. During Advent, we hope and get excited for Jesus' birthday!

## Activity

Light the candle and imagine you're waiting for a special guest—Jesus! Talk about what it feels like to wait for something amazing, like Christmas morning.

## Questions

What are you most excited about for Christmas?  
How does it feel to know that Jesus is coming?

# WEEK TWO

## PEACE



In the second week, we light the candle of Peace. This candle reminds us that Jesus came to be the Prince of Peace, bringing reconciliation and calm to our hearts, our relationships, and our world. In Him, we find lasting peace that surpasses understanding.

### Reflection

True peace comes from knowing that God is in control and that He is with us. As we light this candle, we're invited to let go of our worries, trusting that Jesus brings peace into every situation. May His peace fill our lives and flow through us to others.

### Prayer

God of peace, calm our hearts as we prepare for Jesus' coming. Grant us peace within ourselves and in our relationships. Help us be peacemakers, showing the world Your love. Amen.





*Read Zechariah 9:9-10*

**He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.**

**-Zechariah 9:10**

PEACE

# KID'S CORNER

## PEACE



### What is Peace?

Peace is feeling calm and safe, even when things are busy or noisy. Jesus came to help us feel peace in our hearts, like a big, warm hug.

### Activity

After lighting the candle, take a few quiet breaths together. Imagine wrapping a blanket around yourself, feeling God's peace and love.

### Questions

What makes you feel peaceful and safe?

How can we help others feel safe and loved like Jesus did?





*Read Micah 5:2-5*

**And he will  
be our peace.**

**- Micah 5:5**

PEACE

# WEEK THREE

## JOY

The third week of Advent is dedicated to Joy. This candle, sometimes called the “Shepherd’s Candle,” represents the joy of Jesus’ coming, as announced to the shepherds on the night of His birth. Our joy is a response to God’s incredible gift of Jesus.

### Reflection

Advent joy is not just happiness but a deep, enduring delight in God’s love. As we light the candle of Joy, we remember that Jesus’ birth brings joy to all people. No matter our circumstances, we can find joy in knowing that God is with us.

### Prayer

Thank You for the gift of Jesus, which fills our hearts with gladness. Help us to share this joy with others, especially those who need it most. Let Your joy overflow in our lives. Amen.





*Read Isaiah 35*

**... They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.**

**- Isaiah 35**

### What is Joy?

Joy is feeling really happy and excited inside! Advent reminds us of the joy Jesus brings to us and the world, like when you hear great news.

### Activity

Light the candle and share something that makes you feel joyful. Then, take turns saying “Thank you, Jesus!” for all the joyful things He gives us.



### Questions

What's something that makes you really happy?  
How can we spread joy to other people?





The desert and the parched land  
will be glad; the wilderness will  
rejoice and blossom. Like the  
crocus, it will burst into bloom; it  
will rejoice greatly and shout for joy.  
- Isaiah 35



# WEEK FOUR

## LOVE



In the fourth week, we light the candle of Love. This candle symbolizes the boundless, sacrificial love God showed by sending His Son to be our Savior. Jesus' birth is the ultimate expression of God's love, inviting us to love Him and others in return.

## Reflection

Advent reminds us that God's love is steadfast and enduring. As we light this candle, we celebrate the selfless love of Jesus, who gave His life for us. We're invited to let His love transform our lives and to share His love with everyone around us.

## Prayer

God of Love, we are humbled by the gift of Jesus and Your endless love. Teach us to love as You love, selflessly and completely. Help us to be a reflection of Your love in the world. Amen.





*Read Deuteronomy 10:17-19*  
**..the great God, mighty  
and awesome..**  
**- Deuteronomy 10:17a**

### What is love?

Love is caring for others like God cares for us. Jesus is God's way of saying, "I love you so much!" We can show love by being kind and helpful.



### Activity

Light the candle and think of one way to show love to someone this week—like sharing, helping, or giving a hug.

### Question

Who do you love? How can we show love like Jesus did?





Though the mountains be shaken  
and the hills be removed, yet my  
unfailing love for you will not be  
shaken nor my covenant of peace  
be removed..

— *Isaiah 54:10*

LOVE

# WEEK FIVE

## CHRIST

Christmas Eve is a special culmination of our Advent journey. Throughout the past four weeks, we have reflected on Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love, each represented by one of the four Advent candles. On Christmas Eve, we light the fifth candle, the Christ Candle, which symbolizes the arrival of Jesus, the Light of the World.

### Reflection

As we gather around the Christ Candle, we are reminded that Jesus' birth is not just a historical event but a living reality. Jesus came into the world as a baby in a manger, yet He was also God's eternal Word, come to bring hope, peace, joy, and love to each of us. This is a time to pause, reflect, and give thanks for God's gift of Jesus, who came to save and transform lives.

### Prayer

Thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, who came to be our Savior. As we light the Christ Candle, may His light fill our hearts and shine in our lives. Guide us to share His hope, peace, joy, and love with others, reflecting Your grace to all. We celebrate the birth of our King and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.





*Read Isaiah 9:6-7*

**For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, .... And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

**- Isaiah 9:6-7**

**CHRIST**



# Call Him Immanuel.

*- Isaiah 7:14*

CHRIST

# KID'S CORNER

## CHRIST

### What Does the Christ Candle Mean?

The Christ Candle reminds us that Jesus was born on Christmas! It's the brightest candle because Jesus is the light of the world, and He came to bring us all hope, peace, joy, and love.



### Activity

When you light the Christ Candle, sing “Happy Birthday” to Jesus! Then, say a short prayer together, thanking Jesus for coming to be with us.

### Question

What would you say if you could talk to Jesus right now?

# Frequently Asked Questions about Advent

## **I've seen wreaths at advent, what is that about?**

The wreath is symbolic, representing eternal life with its circular shape and evergreen branches, but the most important part of the tradition is the lighting of the candles and the reflection on each theme: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. The Advent wreath is traditional, but you don't have to use one to observe Advent. Some people simply use four candles without a wreath, or even an Advent calendar, to mark the days of Advent in meaningful ways.

## **Why do we celebrate Advent?**

Advent is a time to prepare our hearts for Christmas, focusing on the hope, peace, joy, and love that Jesus brings. It's a way for Christians to slow down, reflect on God's promises, and remember the reason for the season: the birth of Jesus.

## **How long does Advent last?**

Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve. The exact start date varies from year to year but typically begins in late November or early December. The four Sundays leading up to Christmas Eve.

## **What are the themes of Advent?**

The four themes of Advent are Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. Each week, we light a candle to represent one of these themes and reflect on its meaning as we prepare for the birth of Jesus. These themes remind us of the gifts Jesus brings and the hope He offers the world. You may see candles of different colours, but any colour works! Sometimes you'll see purple or blue but they're pretty interchangeable as they symbolize the same things. Blue candles represent Christ's royalty. Pink represents Joy. White represents his kingship and purity and Hope is represented using blue. The order of the words can be changed sometimes, but at SPAC we follow the most traditional order.

## **What is the significance of the Christ Candle?**

The Christ Candle is the fifth candle in the Advent wreath, traditionally lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. It symbolizes the arrival of Jesus, the “Light of the World.” By lighting the Christ Candle, we celebrate His birth and His role as the fulfillment of God’s promises.

## **Do I need to attend church to celebrate Advent?**

Celebrating Advent doesn’t require church attendance, though joining services can enrich the experience. Advent can also be observed at home with family or friends through prayers, reflections, lighting candles, or using an Advent calendar. Many find that gathering with a church community helps deepen their understanding and appreciation of the Advent season.

## **What is an Advent calendar?**

An Advent calendar is a fun, interactive way to count down the days to Christmas. Traditionally, it includes 24 small doors or windows, each revealing a verse, a small gift, or part of the Nativity story. Many families use Advent calendars to help prepare for Jesus’ birth and build excitement for Christmas Day.

## **Can children participate in Advent?**

Absolutely! Advent is a wonderful tradition to share with children. Lighting candles, reading stories, using an Advent calendar, and talking about each theme in simple terms can make the season meaningful for all ages. It’s a great opportunity to teach children about the true meaning of Christmas.

## **Is Advent celebrated the same way in all Christian traditions?**

While Advent is observed by many Christian denominations, practices can vary. Some traditions may focus more on certain themes, use different colors for the candles, or emphasize specific customs. The underlying focus on waiting, preparing, and reflecting on Jesus’ birth, however, is shared across most traditions





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