

Advent is the first season of the Christian year. The word “advent” is derived from a Latin root which means *coming* or *arrival*, and in our Church, it is a time of waiting for the birth of Christ, the coming of God Incarnate. Advent finds us in the dark of winter, when days are short and darkness envelops us. While our secular world moves quickly to Christmas, Christians are called to sit in the darkness, preparing the way of the Lord in our lives, and waiting for the joyful moment of Christ’s birth.

One way we prepare is through prayer. Prayers in Advent call us to ready our hearts for the Christ Child. Advent wreaths have their origin in pagan practices of bringing a wagon wheel indoors during the cold, winter month at the end of the year, adding evergreens, and lighting more and more candles as the days get darker (sort of a reverse Tenebrae, a service which we pray in Church during Holy Week, where we extinguish candles as we move closer to Easter). In the 17th and 18th centuries, German Protestant churches co-opted the tradition as a way to ritualize Advent prayers at home. The Advent wreath, however, was largely unknown in America until the 1950’s, when some candle companies marketed the idea to Sunday School classes. Now, Advent wreaths are found in homes and churches across denominations.

Advent candles can be blue, purple, or in some cases, unbleached (off-white). Candle color doesn’t matter; the prayers are why we gather. You may have your own prayers for use with your Advent wreath. Some may choose to pray Evening Prayer in the Daily Office (found in the Book of Common Prayer, pages 61-73 or 115-126) or Compline (Book of Common Prayer, pages 127-135). Others may choose to sit in prayerful silence or listen to Advent music. Others may use the prayers found in this booklet.

However you pray Advent prayers - spending time during these long nights, giving some time to God in prayer and silence, and gathering around the growing lights of Advent – we are waiting, preparing, and hoping for the coming of the Son. We are preparing the way of the Lord.

The First Week of Advent - Hope

The first candle is lit.

Officiant Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

Officiant Let us pray. Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

The Reading

Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set your people free;
from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.
Born your people to deliver, born a child and yet a King,
born to reign in us forever, now your gracious kingdom bring.
By your own eternal spirit rule in all our hearts alone;
by your all sufficient merit, raise us to your glorious throne.

Prayers may be offered for ourselves and others.

The Lord's Prayer

Closing Prayer

God of hope, when Christ your Son appears, may he not find us asleep or idle, but active in his service and ready to do his will in our daily lives. Amen.

Officiant Let us bless the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.



The Second Week of Advent - Peace

The first and second candles are lit.

Officiant Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

Officiant Let us pray. Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

The Reading from the Prophet Isaiah

The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

Prayers may be offered for ourselves and others.

The Lord's Prayer

Closing Prayer

God of Israel old and new, write in our hearts the lessons of your law of love and mercy and prepare our minds to receive the Gospel of love made visible in your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

Officiant Let us bless the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.



The Third Week of Advent - Joy

The first, second, and third candle are lit. If your Advent wreath has a rose candle, it is lit this week.

Officiant Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

Officiant Let us pray. Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

A Reading from the Gospel according to Luke

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name. He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has come to the help of his servant Israel, for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children for ever.

Prayers may be offered for ourselves and others.

The Lord's Prayer

Closing Prayer

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. *Amen.*

Officiant Let us bless the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.



The Fourth Week of Advent - Love

All four candles are lit.

Officiant Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

Officiant Let us pray. Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*



A Reading from the Gospel according to Matthew

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. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. 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. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Prayers may be offered for ourselves and others.

The Lord's Prayer

Closing Prayer

Welcome Jesus Christ our infant savior. May we, like Joseph, listen to the whispers of the angels guiding our actions. May we, like Mary, offer our selves and souls to the will of God. May we open our hearts and minds to serve the King of Kings. Amen.

Officiant Let us bless the Lord.
People Thanks be to God.

Praying with the Advent Wreath

Gather at the table or wherever you have your wreath. Invite a few moments of silence before beginning. Begin by lighting the candle(s) – each week you will light an additional candle until all four are lit.

If you are gathering as a family or with friends, allow everyone to be involved. Everyone, regardless of age, can pray. *Officiant* simply refers to the person who begins the prayers. Different people can say the opening prayer, read the reading, lead the Lord's Prayer, and pray the closing prayer.

During the time of offering prayers for ourselves and others, we can pray for those who are sick, for those who are sad, for those stories we see on the news, and any concern, big or small, we encounter in our daily life. This is a wonderful time to remind all of us that God is listening. We can also offer thanksgivings. Too often, we forget that offering thanks is a form of prayer, as well.

If your family or prayer group sings, you may sing a hymn after the Lord's Prayer.

To involve children in the readings, each person gathered may say a word or phrase that they liked after the readings are read. Maybe draw a picture of what comes to mind or find something in the home that reminds each person of the reading. Use your imagination to engage in the readings and prayers.

In the busy season that is December, we hope that praying each night (or most nights – if you miss a few, that's okay) will bring a time of quiet reflection on the profound beauty that is waiting for the birth of the Christ Child.

Blessed Advent from St. Michael's.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Advent and Christmas at St. Michael's

Because of the global Coronavirus pandemic, our Advent and Christmas seasons will look a bit different this year. They will still, however, be a time of prayer, of sharing, of joy, and of love.

We have several Advent resources on our webpage www.saint-michaels.org for individuals and families to use as they keep the season of Advent.

We are also offering online worship each Sunday on our YouTube Channel. We will have special services for Christmas, as well.

In this season of love, we are especially called to reach out to those in need. At St. Michael's, we have several opportunities to share comfort and joy this season. You may donate in-kind or financially to support the residents of GreenHouse 17 and The Fayette County Juvenile Detention Center. We are also part of The Commonwealth Forgiveness Project, a coalition of 5 faith communities seeking to buy and forgive \$3.5 million dollars of medical debt in Appalachia this December. You may also support our ongoing ministries including our Backpack Ministry which provides food to schoolchildren in need, especially in the midst of this pandemic, and our support of recovery ministry.

Information on how to support these giving opportunities may be found on our website or in our weekly e-newsletter St. Michael's Matters (sign up is on our website).

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