



**GATHERING AROUND
THE ADVENT WREATH**
Readings for Advent and Christmas
by Charles Wiessner
2006 (Year C)

Advent is a season of penitence, preparation, and anticipation for the Christ who came and will come again. As a child, as a sovereign ruler, Christ comes: God's gift to all people. During Advent we prepare for this sacred celebration in ways both personal and corporate. One of the ways we prepare together is by lighting the candles of the Advent wreath (simple circle of greens), a symbol of eternal promise. Each Sunday our focus is on the increasing crescendo of light as we approach the celebration of Jesus' birth. The white candle, known as the Christ candle, is lit with the other four on Christmas Eve and each of the following twelve days of Christmas to remind us that Jesus has come as the light of the world.

The following readings are presented here as a liturgy for use during the four Sundays of Advent and on Christmas Eve or Day in services of worship as the church gathers around the Advent wreath. The readings are based on the recommended Scripture selections in the Revised Common Lectionary, Year C.

These readings are used most effectively following the call to worship. Each week invite one household to come forward to lead the congregation in the readings and to light the appropriate candle(s) for that day. Include households of varying compositions: single parents, blended families, two-parent families, single persons, extended families, and households with special needs persons.

The suggested hymns can be found in *Sing! A New Creation (SNC)*.

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

(Based on Psalm 25:1 and Jeremiah 33:14-16)

Litany

"The days are coming," says the Lord, "when I will fulfill the gracious promise I made to my people."

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust.

"In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right in the land."

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust.

"In those days my people will be saved and my city will live in safety."

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust.

Today we light the first Advent candle. It is the candle of hope. Our hope is based on our trust that God's gracious promise will be fulfilled. We light the candle in hope, looking forward to the time when all of God's people will safely live in God's city.

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust.

Prayer

Gracious Lord, we wait for that time when your promises will be fulfilled. We look forward to all people finding shelter under your Branch. Give us patience and trust as we wait. Help us, O Lord, to share your hope and your salvation with others. Amen.

Suggested Hymns

Choose one hymn/song for the entire season:

- "He Came Down" SNC #92
(add one verse each week; sing all five on Christmas Eve/Day)
"Song of Zechariah / Blessed Be the God of Israel" SNC #104
(Week 1, v. 1; week 2, vs. 1 and 2; other weeks, vs. 1, 2, and 3)
"Come, Lord Jesus" SNC #103

For this day:

- "Awake! Awake and Greet the New Morn" SNC #91
"God of Justice Ever Flowing" SNC #101
"Psalm 25" SNC #199

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

(Based on Malachi 3:1, Luke 1:68, Luke 3:4b-6)

Litany

"See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty.

Praise be to the Lord, because God has come and redeemed the people.

"A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make the paths straight.'"

Praise be to the Lord, because God has come and redeemed the people.

"Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth."

Praise be to the Lord, because God has come and redeemed the people.

"All humankind will see God's salvation."

Praise be to the Lord, because God has come and redeemed the people.

Today we light two candles on the Advent Wreath. The first candle is the candle of hope; during Advent we wait in hope. The second candle is the candle of peace. Because the way was prepared, because God has come and redeemed the people, we can be at peace.

Praise be to the Lord, because God has come and redeemed the people.

Prayer

Almighty God, we are thankful that you sent the prophets to prepare the people to receive Jesus. We are thankful that you sent John the Baptist to cry in the wilderness that the Messiah was coming. We ask today that you help us prepare the world for Jesus. Where there are roadblocks of hatred and prejudice, help us to remove them. Where there are barriers of indifference, help us to breach them with love. Where we humans have made things crooked, help us to begin to straighten them out. We pray for the day when all humans will see God's salvation. Amen.

Suggested Hymn

"Song of Zechariah / Blessed Be the God of Israel"

SNC #104

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

(Based on Isaiah 12)

Litany

I will praise you, O Lord. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me.

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord is my strength and my song; God has become my salvation.

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

Give thanks to the Lord, call on God's name; make known among the nations God's mighty deeds, proclaim that the Lord's name is exalted.

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

Sing to the Lord, for God has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy, great is the Holy One among you!

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

Today we light three candles. The first candle is the candle of hope. During Advent we wait in the hope that God's promises will be fulfilled. The second candle is the candle of peace. We can have peace because God's preparations have brought forth the fulfillment of the promises. Today's candle is the candle of joy. God has given us the waters of salvation! Let us rejoice.

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

Prayer

Gracious Lord, as we wait during Advent for the coming of your Son, fill our lives with joy. Fill us with joy because we will draw from the waters of salvation. Fill us with joy at the coming of your Son. And fill us with joy as we serve a world that needs the joy that comes from knowing Jesus Christ. Amen.

Suggested Hymn

"Soon and Very Soon"

SNC #106

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

(Based on Psalm 80:1-7 and Micah 5:2-5a)

Litany

Hear us, O Shepherd, you who leads us like a flock. Awaken your might, come and save us.

Restore us, O God; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved.

But you, Bethlehem, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come from me one who will be ruler over my people.

Restore us, O God; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved.

He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.

Restore us, O God; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved.

The people will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be their peace.

Restore us, O God; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved.

Today we light four candles. The first candle is the candle of the hope that we have as we wait in Advent. The second candle is for the peace that comes from God. The third candle represents our joy in God's promises. And the fourth candle is the candle of love. During Advent we wait in love, knowing that the Good Shepherd loves his sheep and gives his life for them.

Restore us, O God; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved.

Prayer

In love, O Lord, we wait for you to restore us. In love we wait to celebrate the coming of the Good Shepherd. Help us to be your sheep, depending upon you for food, assurance, and protection. Watch over us and keep us safe. May we live securely with you forever. Amen.

Suggested Hymns

"Psalm 80"

SNC #100

"Song of Mary / My Soul Proclaims with Wonder"

SNC #102

CHRISTMAS EVE/CHRISTMAS DAY

(Based on Psalm 98 and Luke 2:11a)

Litany

Sing to the Lord a new song, for God has done marvelous things; God's right hand and holy arm have worked salvation.

Today in the city of David a Savior has been born to you.

The Lord has made salvation known and revealed righteousness to the nations.

Today in the city of David a Savior has been born to you.

God has remembered his love and faithfulness to the people; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of God.

Today in the city of David a Savior has been born to you.

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; make music to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing.

Today in the city of David a Savior has been born to you.

Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy; let them sing before the Lord, for God comes to judge the earth. The Lord will judge the world with righteousness and the people with equity.

Today in the city of David a Savior has been born to you.

We light the four outside candles of the Advent Wreath one last time.

The first candle reminds us of our hope. The second candle is the candle of peace. The third candle represents our joy. The fourth candle is for love, our love of God, and God's love for us. We now

light the center candle, the Christ candle. Jesus Christ is our Hope.

Jesus Christ gives us peace. We can have joy because Jesus has come to us. Jesus is God's greatest gift of love. And because of God's

loving gift of Jesus Christ, we can have life now and forever.

Today in the city of David a Savior has been born to you.

Prayer

Loving God, we are thankful that the waiting of Advent is over. We rejoice that today in the city of David a Savior is born. We rejoice that our hope is fulfilled, and God's peace has come to earth. We rejoice that we can fully know God's love in Jesus Christ. Help us to celebrate today and always that a Savior has been born to us. Amen.

Suggested Hymn

"Psalm 98"

SNC #112