

Understanding the Church Seasons:

The Season of Advent

(Adapted from The Prayer Book Guide to Christian Education, Joseph P. Russell, Cowley Publications)

Advent means “coming” in Latin. It is the first season of the church year. It has four Sundays. This year Advent begins on November 30th. The last day of Advent is always December 24th. In the cycle of liturgical readings, Advent also marks the beginning of a new lectionary year. On November 30th, we will begin Sunday Lectionary Cycle A, outlined in the Prayer Book page 900. In the Daily Lectionary Cycle, we will begin Year Two, outlined in the Prayer Book page 934.

Advent themes: A season of preparation, to prepare the way of the Lord:

- ?? for the Messiah promised by God and foretold by the prophets;
- ?? for the expected coming of the baby Jesus, born of Mary at Bethlehem;
- ?? for Christ, the Prince of Peace, who is coming again at the close of this age to rule as Lord over the promised kingdom of God;
- ?? for each of us to pray the Lord’s Prayer with conviction: “*your* kingdom come, *your* will be done.” The constant question to ask is: If Jesus revealed God’s will and kingdom, how do we as individuals and the church witness to that reality?

Symbols and Traditions of Advent:

- ?? Color: purple or blue for preparation, penitence, and royalty;
- ?? Advent wreath: a green wreath with candles, one for each of the four Sundays;
- ?? Jesse tree: a tree with symbols of Old Testament prophecies of Jesus’ coming; compare the Jesse tree to your own family tree or one about your church;
- ?? Empty Crèche: awaiting the Christ child;
- ?? Advent calendar: to count the days to Christmas;
- ?? Light contrasted with darkness - Jesus is the Light of the world; at the time of Christmas, the days begin to get longer;
- ?? The “O Antiphons”: study the hymn “O come, O come, Emmanuel” with concordance and Bible;
- ?? An Advent Festival of Lessons and Carols: a traditional English service, found in The Book of Occasional Services.