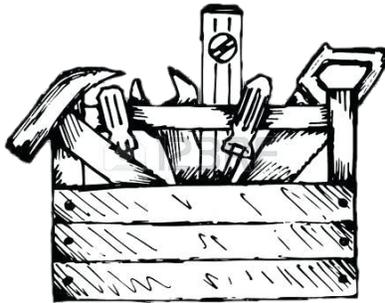


[View this email in your browser](#)



Advent Toolkit 2020



In This Special Issue of Keeping Connected

**- Advent Traditions - About the Advent Wreath - Make Your Own Advent Wreath -
Meaning of the Candles - How About a Jesse Tree? - Another Kind of Advent
Calendar - Prayers for Advent -**

Advent Traditions - The Advent Wreath

From Rev. Jonathon

If you have been to any service at St. Paul's during Advent, you will have noticed that near the beginning of our liturgy we light candles on an Advent Wreath. You may even have an Advent wreath at home. This Advent tradition has an interesting history and is full of rich Christian symbolism.

Unlike other Christian traditions, the Advent wreath is a relatively recent addition to our culture. The first wreath was developed by a Lutheran pastor in Germany in 1839. He was working in a mission with impoverished children and wanted to help them patiently wait for Christmas using a very tangible symbol. So he used an old wheel from a cart which he placed on a flat surface. He then placed different candles in the wreath. There were over twenty red candles representing the six days of the week in each of the four weeks of Advent. He then used four larger white candles to represent the four Sundays of Advent.

The wreath that we use at St. Paul's usually has five candles - four candles around the outside of the wreath representing the four Sundays of Advent, and one candle in the centre of the wreath representing Christmas. The first, second, and fourth Sundays of Advent are represented by blue candles, although some churches use purple candles. The colour blue is traditionally associated with hope, and the colour purple is traditionally associated with penance, although it can also be associated with Christ's royalty. The third Sunday of Advent is represented by a rose coloured candle. This is traditionally associated with joy. Christmas is represented by a white candle and is traditionally associated with purity and divinity. This is often called the Christ candle.

Each of the four Sundays of Advent has a traditional theme associated with it, although this varies between Christian denominations and has also varied over time. Anglicans typically identify the themes as being hope, faith, joy, and peace. A fifth theme is sometimes added for Christmas - that of love.

The traditional materials used in an Advent wreath have been interpreted to have profound Christian meaning. The wreath (often made from evergreen branches) symbolizes the continuation of life at a very dark time of year, when much of the natural world seems to be dead. The circular shape of the wreath symbolizes eternal life or God's endless love for us. It also anticipates the crown of thorns that Jesus wore on Good Friday. The red berries often present in Advent wreaths symbolize Christ's blood and sacrifice for us. The pine cones symbolize burial and resurrection. The light of the candles symbolizes Jesus Christ, the light of the world who has overcome the darkness of sin and death (see the Gospel of John, Chapter 1). And the fragrant odour of the wreath reminds us of incense, which is associated with prayer. So in a very real sense, the wreath is a very tangible and multi-sensory expression of our Advent prayers to God.

The lighting of candles in an Advent wreath - whether at home or in Church - is a deeply significant event. In doing so, we are affirming our belief in the Christian values of hope, faith, joy, peace, and love. We are marking our time in Advent with expectant hope as we remember God's actions in the past and as we wait faithfully for Christ's return in the future. And we are surrounding ourselves with love and light at a very dark time of year, in what is often a very dark world. In doing so, we are living out our faith as Christians in a very concrete way.

Advent wreaths are an excellent activity which can be enjoyed by adults and children alike. They can be used by families or by those living alone. The lighting of candles can be accompanied by prayers, songs, and other activities. Or it can be an opportunity for quiet personal prayer and reflection. Advent wreaths have an important teaching function, as well as being visible reminders of our faith. They can be a longstanding family tradition passed down to new generations. Or they can be a new tradition. Like the other Advent traditions I will be discussing, they are a way for us to slow down, stay grounded, and reconnect with the real reason of the season, in what can otherwise be a very busy and often stressful time of the year.

<p>ALL ABOUT THE <i>Advent Wreath</i></p>	<p>Usually made up of evergreen branches or boughs placed in a circle, topped with four candles</p>	<p>Used as a prayerful way to reflect the passage of the Advent season</p>
	<p>The wreath is blessed and one candle is lit on the first Sunday of Advent; another candle is lit every Sunday until all four candles are burning brightly</p>	<p>The EVERGREENS remind us of the everlasting life promised to us by the gift of Jesus Christ, who came among us to save us from sin and death</p>
	<p>PURPLE CANDLES symbolize our waiting, hoping, longing expectation for the arrival of Christ</p>	<p>A PINK CANDLE for the third Sunday reminds us that the time of Christ's arrival is fast approaching and we must prepare</p>
	<p>The act of LIGHTING THE CANDLES banishes the darkness: a reminder of Jesus Christ, the Light who has come into the world through his birth, and who continues to shine brightly through his Church</p>	
<p>  Archdiocese of Toronto www.archtoronto.org    archtoronto #AdventTO </p>	<p>PRAYER: O God, as light comes from this candle, may the blessing of Jesus Christ come to us, warming our hearts and brightening our way. May Christ our Saviour bring life into the darkness of this world, and to us, as we wait for his coming. Amen.</p>	

Making an Advent Wreath

You need the following supplies (likely available from a Dollar Store)

- 12" natural vine, wire or plastic wreath frame
- Soft greenery garland
- Purple poinsettia flowers (or other artificial flowers)
- 4 candle holders
- Candles that fit your candle-holders: 3 purple and one pink
- White Christmas ribbon (i.e. stiffened)
- Greenery ties or green (or black) bag ties
- Glue gun

How to Put it Together

This wreath is incredibly simple to make.

- Take your garland and wrap it around your wreath form until it is completely covered. Use hot glue to hold it in place.
- Take your white ribbon and wrap it around until you've found your desired placement. Secure it with small dabs of hot glue.
- Space out the candle holders as evenly in place as possible and secure in place using a little bit of floral wire or green ties.
- Fill in empty areas of the wreath with artificial flowers and use a little bit of hot glue to hold them in place.
- Add your candles and voila!



From: Joyfully Domestic: <https://joyfullydomestic.com/make-advent-wreath/>

The Meaning of the Candles

- The **first candle** symbolizes **hope** and is called the "Prophet's Candle." The prophets of the Old Testament, especially Isaiah, waited in hope for the Messiah's arrival.
- The **second candle** represents **faith** and is called "Bethlehem's Candle." Micah had foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, which is also

the birthplace of King David.

- The **third candle** symbolizes **joy** and is called the "Shepherd's Candle." To the shepherd's great joy, the angels announced that Jesus came for humble, unimportant people like them, too. In liturgy, the color rose signifies joy.
- The **fourth candle** represents **peace** and is called the "Angel's Candle." The angels announced that Jesus came to bring peace--He came to bring people close to God and to each other again.
- The (optional) **fifth candle** represents **light and purity** and is called "Christ's candle." It is placed in the middle and is lit on Christmas Day.

From: Crosswalk.com

Prayers for Lighting the Advent Wreath Candles

First Week

All-powerful God, increase our strength of will for doing good that Christ may find an eager welcome at his coming and call us to his side in the kingdom of heaven, where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Second Week

God of power and mercy open our hearts in welcome. Remove the things that hinder us from receiving Christ with joy so that we may share his wisdom and become one with him when he comes in glory, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Third Week

Lord God, may we, your people, who look forward to the birthday of Christ experience the joy of salvation and celebrate that feast with love and thanksgiving. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Fourth Week

All-powerful God, your eternal Word took flesh on our earth when the Virgin Mary placed her life at the service of your plan. Lift our minds in watchful hope to hear the voice which announces his glory and open our minds to receive the Spirit who prepares us for his coming. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

from JesuitResource.org:

How About a Jesse Tree?

Isaiah chapter 11 1 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. 3 and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

What is it? You can think of it as a sort of Advent calendar taking you through the story of Jesus from Creation to His birth. Ornaments representing the daily readings are hung on a small Christmas tree the shape of a Christmas tree. Alternatively, some people use a vase

of branches, some use a paper tree taped to the wall, some buy ornaments (sets can be purchased online), and some make their own ornaments.

The tradition of decorating Christmas trees actually predates the arrival of Christianity in western Europe and was adopted by the early Church. In order to associate the custom more clearly with Christianity, people made Jesse trees, which are Christmas trees with decorations related to the events of Jesus' birth and the prophecies about him in the Old Testament. Many parishes and families make Jesse trees during Advent to remind them of these events as they prepare for Christmas. It helps to connect the Advent season with the faithfulness of God across four thousand years of history.

You can use a normal Christmas Tree or a banner in the shape of a tree. Each day through advent (or sometimes just on the four Sundays of advent) a special decoration or ornament that tells a story of the spiritual heritage of Jesus, is hung on the tree.

How Does It Work? Beginning on the first Sunday of Advent (or on December 1, if you prefer) each evening, hang a simple ornament on a small Christmas tree. The ornaments correlate to bible readings which take you chronologically day by day through the bible—from Creation to the Birth of Christ. (Jen Mercklingjenmerckling.com)

Where do I find the readings? A free downloadable ebook is available here: <http://images.rca.org/docs/resources/JesseTreeFamilyDevotions.pdf>. It includes daily readings, and devotions as well an image associated with each daily reading. These images can be used as ornaments for your Jesse Tree.



Another Kind of Advent Calendar
Acts of Gratitude and Kindness

It doesn't have to be about chocolate! You can make your own Advent calendar filled with **gifts of yourself**. Take a pause daily for an act of thankfulness or kindness.

Here is a list of **small acts of kindness or prayers of thanks** that you could pick from daily (or *ad lib* your own, of course!). Write them down in the squares on your December calendar, then do them as they come up.

- Write a thank you note to someone special.
 - Send flowers to someone you miss.
 - Thank God or something good in your life today
 - Pay for the coffee of the person behind you at the coffee shop.
 - Bring in your neighbour's garbage cans.
 - Let 3 people know how thankful you are that they are in your life
 - Pay a compliment to yourself.
 - Plant something to say "thank you" to the Earth
 - Donate some clothing or household items you no longer need to charity
 - Give someone a big (virtual) hug.
 - Reach out to someone you haven't connected with in a while
 - Donate old towels or blankets to an animal shelter.
 - Let someone who only has a few items go in front of you in line
 - Practice self-kindness and spend 30 minutes doing something you love today
 - While you're out, compliment a parent on how well-behaved their child is
 - Keep an extra umbrella around, so you can lend it out when it rains.
 - Look out your window and give thanks for the beauty around you
 - Write an inspirational note to someone who needs inspiration
 - Ask someone if you can help
 - Say something nice to everyone you meet today
 - Do a favour for someone
 - Leave baked goods on a neighbour's porch.
 - Leave a post-it note on a mirror that says "You're worth it".
 - Volunteer your time or make a donation to help someone in need.
 - Open a door for someone today.
 - Compliment a stranger.
 - Smile at someone.
 - Give thanks that you live in Canada.
 - Forgive someone who has hurt you and send them love.
 - Be kind to your body - move to the music!
 - Let it go! Release all that negativity and be filled with grace and ease.
 - Notice and be thankful for all the goodness in the world.
 - Post inspirational sticky notes around your neighborhood, office, school, etc
 - Leave a note on someone's car telling them how awesome they parked.
 - Try to make sure every person in a group conversation feels included
 - When you're throwing something away on the street, pick up any litter around you and put that in the garbage can too.
 - Purchase extra dog or cat food and bring it to an animal shelter.
 - Pull out someone's chair for them at the dinner table.
 - When you hear that discouraging voice in your head, tell yourself something positive — you deserve kindness too!
 - Transport someone who can't drive
-

Prayers for Advent

Through prayer, we can ask God to prepare our hearts the way He prepared all of history to receive the gift of His Son. We can ask the Father to use this time during Advent to cut away the distractions and make our life a place of warmth and openness. Here are some prayers you may find help you make "room at the inn" of your heart this year.

Lord Jesus, Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.

We who have so much to do and seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day,

We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us.

We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom.

We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence.

We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.

To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!" Amen.

- *Henri J.M. Nouwen*

Lord God, we adore you because you have come to us in the past.

You have spoken to us in the Law of Israel.

You have challenged us in the words of the prophets.

You have shown us in Jesus what you are really like.

Lord God, we adore you because you still come to us now.

You come to us through other people and their love and concern for us.

You come to us through men and women who need our help.

You come to us as we worship you with your people.

Lord God, we adore you because you will come to us at the end.

You will be with us at the hour of death.

You will still reign supreme when all human institutions fail.

You will still be God when our history has run its course.

We welcome you, the God who comes.

Come to us now in the power of Jesus Christ our Lord.

- *Caryl Micklem, "Contemporary Prayers for Public Worship"*

Lots of other prayer resources are available on line. Here are some examples:

- [Advent Prayers](#) (Faith and Worship)
- [15 Powerful Advent Prayers](#) (Christianity.com)
- [One Prayer a Day for Advent](#) (Online Ministries)
- [Powerful Advent Prayers For Hope, Peace, Joy and Love](#) (BibleTools.com)

And of course...

St Paul's is offering a group study over Zoom - see this week's regular weekly edition of *Keeping Connected* (in your email or on our website) for details in the **Resources for Advent** article.