

Advent

Sights and sounds for a meaningful Christmas



In the following script, “the reader” reads the black text.

“**Things to do**” or “**things to say together**” are written in green.

Lyrics for suggested songs are included beginning on page 13.

For tips on preparing for Advent, constructing a simple wreath, and including more children, see page 12.

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Lighting a candle is a simple yet profound act. It is a testimony to the power of light over darkness. Even the light of one candle can reveal our faces as we stand near the candle. As we light the candle, we begin our journey to Christmas, a day of joy and celebration.

The first candle on the Advent wreath is called the Prophecy candle. It begins the time when we look forward to Christmas, and remember those who first spoke the promise of the coming Christ child.

[Youngest child: Light one of the colored candles.]

May this light remind us of Jesus who is the true Light of the world. Let us call upon him whose coming we await, for he is:

God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God. Amen.

[Say together]
One candle, burning bright,
Chasing away the darkness from night.
One candle, glowing light,
The blessing of God, giving new sight.

From the Old Testament

Scripture: Isaiah 2:2-5

2 It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it,

3 and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

4 He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

5 O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Prayer

God of light, place a candle in our hearts, so we may walk as children of the Light, treading gently on the paths of peace and ever ready to welcome the signs of new life. Amen.

From the New Testament

Scripture: Romans 13:11-14

11 Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. 12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Prayer

Dear God, as we celebrate the first coming of Jesus and anticipate his second coming, help us to be awake and ready to do battle. We battle against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil. Clothe us with Jesus Christ that we may walk in his light, which is able to banish darkness. In the Savior's name we pray. Amen.

Suggested Song: "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing"

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Waiting is hard in a fast-paced society. We want the stoplight to change quickly, the grocery line to move fast, and Christmas morning to arrive soon. We forget that before good things happen, preparations must be made.

Last week we lit the Prophecy candle and remembered those who first spoke the promise of the coming Christ child.

[Youngest child: Light the colored candle that was lit on your first week.]

The second candle on the Advent Wreath is called the Bethlehem candle. It is a symbol of the preparations being made to receive and cradle the Christ child.

[Oldest child: Light another colored candle.]

Father, help us to prepare the way of Jesus, the Light of the world. May we who believe he will come again always serve you. Let us proclaim this mystery of faith: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. Amen.

[Say together]

Two candles, burning bright,
Chasing away the darkness from night.
Two candles, glowing light,
The blessing of God, giving new sight.

From the Old Testament

Scripture: Isaiah 11:1-10

11:1 There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

2 And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

3 And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear,

4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

5 Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

6 The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them.

7 The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.

9 They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

10 In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

Prayer

Come, Holy God, come and save us. Come, Holy Christ, come and touch us. Come, Holy Spirit, come and revive us. Come and turn us around, and point us to your kingdom. Amen.

From the New Testament

Scripture: Matthew 3:1-12

3:1 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,

2 “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

3 For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,
“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord;
make his paths straight.’”

4 Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.

5 Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him,

6 and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them,
“You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.

9 And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.

10 Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

11 I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

Prayer

Dear God, in this very busy season with so many things to do, help us to hear anew your voice calling us to prepare the way for our Lord and Savior Jesus. Call us to repentance. Live in us by your Spirit that our lives will produce good fruit to the praise and honor of your name. Amen.

Suggested Song: “O Little Town of Bethlehem”

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Jesus is coming, shout for joy! Joy is a word we see and hear everywhere at Christmas. Joy to the world is the message of the season. Joy is the theme of this day.

Two weeks ago we lit the Prophecy candle and remembered those who first spoke the promise of the coming Christ child.

[Youngest child: Light the colored candle that was lit on your first week.]

Last week we lit the Bethlehem candle, a symbol of the preparations being made to receive and cradle the Christ child.

[Oldest child: Light the colored candle that was lit on your first week.]

The third candle on the Advent wreath is called the Shepherds' candle. It remembers the first in a long line of people who joyfully shared the good news of the Savior's birth. The candle is a different color, reminding us that our period of waiting is half over.

[Middle child: Light another colored candle.]

Lord, we ask you to penetrate the darkness of our minds so that, filled with your brightness, we may rejoice in your coming as we say: Blessed be God forever. Amen.

[Say together]

Three candles, burning bright,
Chasing away the darkness from night.
Three candles, glowing bright,
The blessing of God, giving new sight.

From the Old Testament

Scripture: Isaiah 35

35:1 The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus;

2 it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.

3 Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.

4 Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you."

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

6 then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters

break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;

7 the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

8 And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it. It shall belong to those who walk on the way; even if they are fools, they shall not go astray.

9 No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there.

10 And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Prayer

Holy God, create in us a fountain of joy, stir in us a spirit ready to dance, kindle in us the fire of gladness, set loose in us songs of praise. For you are the One who comes with healing and blessing. Amen.

From the New Testament

Scripture: Matthew 11:2-11

2 Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples

3 and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?"

4 And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see:

5 the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.

6 And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?

8 What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

9 What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

10 This is he of whom it is written,

'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.'

11 Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

Prayer

Dear God, with joy and praise we acknowledge the signs that your kingdom has come in Jesus Christ. We rejoice in the forgiveness of sin. We rejoice that you have made us new creatures in Christ. With joy we commit ourselves to the proclamation of the good news of great joy. In the Savior's name we pray. Amen.

Suggested Song: "O Come All Ye Faithful"

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

The Advent wreath is a circle with no beginning and no end. It is a symbol of endless love and faithfulness. Out of darkness light shines, pointing us in hope to the One who came to overcome the darkness of this world and to be our light in the world to come.

Three weeks ago we lit the Prophecy candle and remembered those who first spoke the promise of the coming Christ child.

[Youngest child: Light the colored candle that was lit on your first week.]

Two weeks ago we lit the Bethlehem candle, a symbol of the preparations being made to receive and cradle the Christ child.

[Oldest child: Light the colored candle that was lit on your first week.]

Last week we lit the Shepherds' candle, remembering the first in a long line of people who joyfully shared the good news of the Savior's birth.

[Middle child: Light the colored candle that was lit on your first week.]

The fourth candle on the Advent wreath is called the Angels' candle. It reminds us of the hope fulfilled in the first coming of our Savior and of our continuing hope as we anticipate his coming again.

[Mom: Light the last colored candle.]

Lord, hurry and come to us. May your light shine in our lives, so that we may be freed from sin. Protect us from all anxiety as we wait in joyful hope for your coming as our savior: For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

[Say together]

Four candles, burning bright,
Chasing away the darkness from night.
Four candles, glowing bright,
The blessing of God, giving new sight.

From the Old Testament

Scripture: Isaiah 7:10-14

- 10 Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz,
11 "Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven."
12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test."

13 And he said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also?”

14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

Prayer

God of angels and sheep, God of the poor and meek, in these days before Christmas, quiet us so we may hear where new life is struggling to be born, slow our rush so we may hear the faint sound of angel wings and the words whispered in hope. Open our hearts to the wonder of Immanuel - God with us. Amen.

From the New Testament

Scripture: Romans 1:1-7

1:1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,
2 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures,
3 concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh
4 and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,
5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,
6 including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,
7 To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer

Dear God, in the fullness of time you sent the One promised through the prophets who looked forward in hope. You have given us a living hope by raising him from the dead. Enliven our hope as we live in the expectation of your coming again. Amen.

Suggested Song: “O Come O Come Emmanuel”

CHRISTMAS EVE

Four Sundays ago we lit the Prophecy candle and remembered those who first spoke the promise of the coming Christ child.

[Youngest child: Light the colored candle that was lit on your first week.]

Three Sundays ago we lit the Bethlehem candle, a symbol of the preparations being made to receive and cradle the Christ child.

[Oldest child: Light the colored candle that was lit on your first week.]

Two Sundays ago we lit the Shepherds' candle, remembering the first in a long line of people who joyfully shared the good news of the Savior's birth.

[Middle child: Light the colored candle that was lit on your first week.]

Last Sunday we lit the Angels' candle, and were reminded of the hope fulfilled in the first coming of our Savior and of our continuing hope as we anticipate his coming again.

[Mom: Light the colored candle that was lit on your first week.]

Tonight the Advent season ends. We wait no longer. That great event for which we waited has happened. God's promise of a Redeemer is fulfilled. Christ Jesus is born. We light the Christ candle with praise to our God who brings joy to the world.

[Dad: Light the Christ candle in the middle.]

From the Old Testament

Scripture: Isaiah 9:2-7

- 2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.
- 3 You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil.
- 4 For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.
- 5 For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.
- 6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
- 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David

and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Prayer

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, we rejoice that you, so wonderful, so mighty, so everlasting, and so princely, entered time in the weakness of human flesh in a lowly stable in Bethlehem as the son of a peasant couple. O Child of Bethlehem, your birth gives us great joy. Make our joy complete so that we, like you, spend our lives looking to the interests of others. By the power of your Spirit, instill in us your attitude of humble service. In your name we pray. Amen.

From the New Testament

Scripture: Titus 2:11-14

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,
12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,
13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, tonight we celebrate your lowly coming as a baby in Bethlehem even as we wait for your glorious appearing on the clouds of heaven. We give thanks for your redeeming work, which assures us of victory, for the power of your Spirit that enables us to say "no" to sin and "yes" to righteousness, and for your love, which forgives us when we fail. Help us to live today and always as your sons and daughters. Amen.

Suggested Song: "Silent Night"

Tips and Traditions

Advent is “wreathed” in traditions, and many are worthy of following. But for those unfamiliar with Advent, or too busy to put it all together, it can be helpful to keep it simple.

Since it only takes a few minutes, right before dinner is a good time for many families.

Tip: *If it's dark, you might want to have a “non-Advent” candle or two on hand to provide light without ruining the atmosphere.*

A Simple Advent Wreath

Instructions:

1. Place a wreath on the table.
2. Place four small candleholders into the wreath. Make sure you don't create a fire hazard.
3. Insert four colored candles (we use all the same color).
4. Place a white candle in a candleholder in the center.

With your wreath set up and the lights turned off, and hopefully some snow falling right outside your window, just follow the script.

The Kids and the Candles

Traditionally, the lighting of each candle is assigned to a specific family member. That person lights the same candle throughout the Advent season. This can leave some kids out if you have a larger family. To let all the kids participate, rotate assignments or use more candles.

The colors of the candles in the wreath are also very important according to some Advent traditions. You might want to research these and other Advent practices before you get started.

A portion of this Advent script was written by George H. Vander Weit while he was Pastor of Fuller Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Compiled and provided by *The Classical Difference* editorial staff. The statements and positions in this document are not necessarily those of the ACCS.

Suggested Song Lyrics

Hark, the Herald Angels Sing

Hark the herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled"
Joyful, all ye nations rise
Join the triumph of the skies
With the angelic host proclaim:
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Christ by highest heav'n adored
Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come
Offspring of a Virgin's womb
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see
Hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with man to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings
Ris'n with healing in His wings
Mild He lays His glory by
Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth
Born to give them second birth
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"

O Little Town of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight

For Christ is born of Mary
And gathered all above
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love
O morning stars together
Proclaim the holy birth
And praises sing to God the King
And Peace to men on earth

How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him still,
The dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem
Descend to us, we pray
Cast out our sin and enter in
Be born to us today
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell
O come to us, abide with us
Our Lord Emmanuel

O Come All Ye Faithful

O Come All Ye Faithful
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.

Come and behold Him,
Born the King of Angels;
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

O Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing all that hear in heaven God's holy word.

Give to our Father glory in the Highest;
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

All Hail! Lord, we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning,
O Jesus! for evermore be Thy name adored.

Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

O Come O Come Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Day-Spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Silent Night

Silent night, holy night,
All is calm, all is bright.
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child,
Holy Infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar.
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ, the Saviour is born.
Christ, the Saviour is born.

Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, love's pure light,
Radiant beams from Thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace.
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.