

Advent 2016

'Twas
the LIGHT
Before Christmas



Advent, 2016
Brandywine Hundred — Delaware

Dear Members and Friends of Saint David's:

The spiritual opportunities of Advent are easily lost in the shuffle between traffic jams and parking lot backups, office 'holiday celebrations' and family gatherings, decking the halls and a desire to deck someone else. It's no simple task to find balance between parties and planning, shopping malls and shipping packages, super sales and spending sprees. Yet, there is good news.

In the church's ancient and varied arsenal of spiritual practices is the Advent Wreath. This simple circle of greens adorned with candles is a wonderful way to mark the weeks and days leading to Christmas. It serves as a poignant symbol around which Christians can gather to touch the deep longing we have for God's presence in our lives and in the world.

The worship services and prayers in this devotional booklet are offered in the hope that in seeking Christ you will find him.

Gloria in excelsis Deo,

Brad +

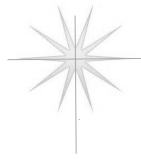


What is Advent?

Advent is a “season” in the church-year that lasts anywhere from twenty-two to twenty-eight days and always includes the four Sundays preceding Christmas. Advent ends on Christmas Eve. The word advent is derived from the Latin *adventus*, which means “coming” or “arrival.” In the church it has come to mean the coming of Jesus.

Jesus’ advent is at least twofold and some would say at least three-fold. His first advent was in history as a child in Bethlehem. His second advent usually refers to a future coming when he is expected to return as a king. There is also the coming of Jesus into the lives of individuals as Lord and Savior. Thus it is that Advent is a time when individuals prepare their hearts to receive Christ.

Advent can be observed at church and at home. Traditional elements include: lighting the candles on the Advent Wreath, singing a carol(s), reading scripture, praying, as well as devotional readings. Families with children sometimes use advent calendars.

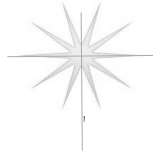


What is the liturgical color of Advent?

The traditional color for Advent is **purple**, which refers to the coming of the royal King, Jesus Christ. Through the years purple has come to be associated with repentance (think of the season of Lent). The Greek word that is often translated “repent” can be translated “change your mind” or “turn around [your mind].” This is an appropriate element in any effort to welcome God more and more into our lives.

In recent years the color **blue** has become a way to honor Jesus’ mother, St. Mary, as that is the color long associated with her. This change in color has also opened the opportunity for themes of longing and expectation to come to the fore of the church’s preparations.

So, the answer is really that there are at least two main colors: purple and blue!



What is the Advent Wreath?

An Advent wreath is a ring that is usually decorated with greenery and holds four candles (one for each Sunday of the season and the days that follow).

The circle of the wreath symbolizes God's everlasting love for God's creation and the evergreens represent Christ's gift of eternal life. The light of each candle represents the light that Christ brings to the world and gets brighter as we draw closer to Christmas. The candles of the wreath are variously colored. Some wreaths have purple candles. Some wreaths have three purple candles and one pink. Other wreaths have blue candles. Some traditions give each candle a name (e.g., hope, faith, love, joy, etc.).

The Advent wreath can be placed in the center of your dinner table or in some prominent place in your home to remind you each day of the need to prepare for and celebrate the coming of Jesus. You can even use it as part of a worship service (see page 9ff).



What does it mean to prepare our hearts ?

Believers who desire to grow in their faith often find Advent to be a particularly meaningful season. Regular devotions and time spent in prayer help the people of God experience Christ's presence in their lives.

Because Christians are waiting for Jesus' promised return, Advent is a good time to reflect on the experiences of waiting, expectation and longing. This short season provides a great opportunity to slow down, listen to and talk with God. Gathering with friends and family during these special times can give a sense of identity that comes from knowing and experiencing the presence of Christ. These kinds of gatherings become a tradition and help children enjoy family and friends who provide stability, love and faith.

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL MATERIALS FOR 2016

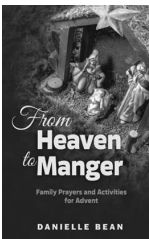


The Dear Christ Enters In— *Adult Individual*

In these warm and inviting prayers for this season of reflection, author Jane Wilke opens our eyes and our hearts to the message that the dear Christ enters into our lives in many and various ways at school, at home, at work, at church—wherever we find ourselves this Advent season. Each prayer is a window of welcome to the Christ Child.

Peace, Hope, Light— *Adult Individual*

Deepen your Advent experience this season with insights from C.S. Lewis, one of the most prolific and popular Christian apologists of the twentieth century, followed by reflections from C.S. Lewis scholar Dr. Joel Heck. The daily quotes, Scripture, reflections and prayers will serve as faithful fellow travelers accompanying you through Advent and enriching your Christmas preparations as you await the Savior who comes with peace, hope and light.

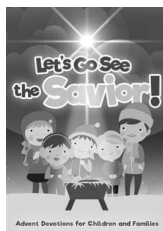


From Heaven To Manger— *Families with older children*

The whole family can experience the joy of anticipation this Advent as the true meaning of the season is emphasized in From Heaven to Manger. Written by popular author Danielle Bean, there's something for every age group and every day of the season packed into this booklet. With language clear enough for the whole family to enjoy, Bean reminds us that our Advent preparations should center on the arrival of our Savior, rather than only on parties and gifts.

The Manger on the Mantel Storybook— *Families with small children*

Start a new tradition this year as you share the joyful message discovered in the Manger on the Mantel. This storybook tells the tale of a young child reflecting on the events of the very first Christmas night and the precious gift God put on display in the manger. Create your own Manger on the Mantel from the punch-out activity sheet which is included. This book reminds us that the good and loving things we do are done because God gives us the good and loving gift of Jesus.



Let's Go See the Savior!— *Families w/ small children*

The 28 devotions in this Advent booklet encourage children to accept the invitation of angels, shepherds, prophets and kings to look for the promised Savior throughout the season. When Christmas nears, we gather at the manger to welcome Jesus and welcome others to come see the Savior for themselves! Perfect for children ages 6 to 12 and their families. Matches the children's devotional booklet of the same name.

Devotional Materials are gladly provided free of charge, but they are not inexpensive. Please take only one per household.

1 Advent

If you wish to dedicate and bless your advent wreath, see the prayer on page 13.

When everyone has gathered, the first candle is lit.

Leader: Our Savior and King draws near.

Response: **O Come, Let us adore him.**


Leader: Almighty God, be by our side and cast away all works of darkness which separate us from you. In your great mercy, forgive all the things we have done that we should not have done and all the things we did not do that we should have; and teach us to live as children of God; in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Then follows readings from one or more Advent devotional materials.


Leader: As Jesus taught us, we now pray:

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.

Leader: The almighty and merciful God bless us and keep us. **Amen.**



2 Advent



When everyone has gathered, the first and second candles are lit.

Leader: Our Savior and King draws near.

Response: **O Come, Let us adore him.**

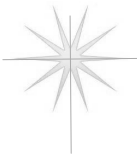
Leader: Dear God, pour your love into our hearts so that we may love our neighbors as ourselves. Help us to be understanding of the needs of others, as you were understanding of the needs of all people by and sent Jesus to be our savior. This we ask in the power of your Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Then follows readings from one or more Advent devotional materials.


Leader: As Jesus taught us, we now pray:

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.

Leader: The almighty and merciful God bless us and keep us. **Amen.**



3 Advent



When everyone has gathered, the first, second, and third candles are lit.

Leader: Our Savior and King draws near.

Response: **O Come, Let us adore him.**

Leader: O God, you sent the prophets to prepare the way for the coming of your son: help us to hear their warnings and their promise of great joy which was given for all people: so that at the birthday of your So, we may receive him joyfully into our hearts. **Amen.**

Then follows readings from one or more Advent devotional materials.

Leader: As Jesus taught us, we now pray:

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.

Leader: The almighty and merciful God bless us and keep us. **Amen.**



4 Advent

When everyone has gathered, all the candles are lit.

Leader: Our Savior and King draws near.

Response: **O Come, Let us adore him.**

Leader: Blessed God, we await the coming of your son our savior. In this last week of our waiting, bring us to greater love for our family by learning to give more respect and honor to one another; that our home may be a happy and joyful place into which your son, Jesus may come. **Amen.**

Then follows readings from one or more Advent devotional materials.

Leader: As Jesus taught us, we now pray:

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.

Leader: The almighty and merciful God bless us and keep us. **Amen.**



Prayers with Children

Prayer of Blessing for an Advent Wreath

O God, by whose word all things are made, we give thanks for this wreath, and ask that we who use it may prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ into our lives. Amen.

Lighting of the Christmas Tree

O God, who sent your son to be the light of the world, bless us as we light this Christmas tree. Grant that its light may bring joy to all who pass by or visit this home and bring joy to those who celebrate the coming of your son, Christ our Lord. Amen.

Christmas Eve Prayer

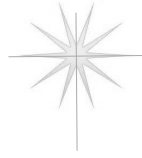
O Lord Jesus, born in a stable because finding room for you was difficult to do, may your Spirit come into our hearts and stay with us forever. Grant that peace and goodwill may shine forth in our lives, and in the lives of people everywhere. Amen.

Christmas Day Prayer

Dear Lord, We gather to celebrate the marvelous birth of your son, Jesus. By his example, we can learn what it means to share, to love and to respect our friends and neighbors. We thank you for St. Nicholas and for Santa Claus who gives presents just as the wise men did when Jesus was born. Happy Birthday to Jesus. Amen.

Christmas Night Prayer

Dear God, we thank you for the good times and the happy thoughts that we enjoyed today. Help us make every day as nice as Christmas. Help us to love Jesus as he loves us. Amen.



Adult Prayers

Come, Lord Jesus, come!

Come in weakness and in power
To reveal our sin and shame.

Come, to set us free to worship without fear
And guide us on the road to peace.

Come, shine on those who dwell in darkness
And in the shadow of death.

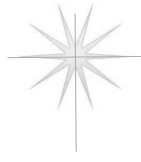
Come and make all things new,
In our lives, our labor, and our world.

Come, save us now in life and death,
And in the great and final Day.

Come, Lord Jesus! Alleluia!

Bring us, O Lord God, at our last awakening into the house and gate of heaven, to enter into that gate and dwell in that house, where there shall be no darkness nor dazzling but one equal light, no noise nor silence but one equal music, no fears nor hopes but one equal possession, no ends nor beginnings but one equal eternity, in the habitation of thy majesty and thy glory, world without end. Amen.

Give us courage, God our strength,
to see your Christ in all who suffer,
to be hands to the helpless,
food for the hungry,
and rescue for the oppressed. Amen.



Family Activities

Make snowflakes

Fold white paper several times and cut tiny pieces out along the folds. Display the snowflakes in a window and talk about how no two snowflakes are the same, like there are no two people the same and God loves each of us.

Say 'Grace'

Write a special table grace/food blessing/ that is short and easy to remember. Try to make it rhyme or set it to an easy tune such as *twinkle, twinkle, little star* or *Mary had a little lamb*.

Alphabet Game

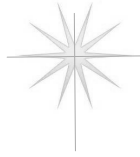
While riding in a car or airplane, have the children say a Christmas or Advent word for each letter of the alphabet: Angels, Bethlehem, Candles... Go through the alphabet more than once.

Gather around the TV

Rent the movie "It's a Wonderful Life." Talk about what makes this life wonderful.

Empty Chair

Set an extra place and extra chair at the dinner table to remind the family of Christ's presence in the world, in our homes, and in our lives.



Kwanzaa

Explore the celebration of Kwanzaa. It is not a religious holiday but one that honors African history and customs. The celebration runs from December 26 until January 1. Kwanzaa celebrates the harvest and family customs, it has seven principles such as unity, cooperation, creativity and faith.

Hanukkah

Find out more about this holiday that celebrates Jewish history and heritage and find out how the Hebrew people got the right to worship God freely.

Thanksgiving Stocking

Take an old sock and hang it where the Christmas stockings will be hung. Then during Advent family members can put coins or bills in the sock in thanksgiving for good things that happen. On Christmas Eve take the money to church or use the money to donate to a not-for-profit organization.

Tell the story

Tell the Nativity story in the round. While riding in the car or airplane, have someone begin the Christmas story, then after a sentence or two the next person adds a couple sentences to the story, going around the family until the story is completed.

Celebrate Jesus' Birthday

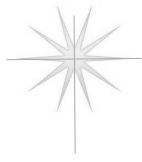
Make birthday cards for Jesus and take them with you to church to place at the manger scene. You can also make a birthday cake and enjoy for dessert on Christmas Day or sometime during the twelve days of Christmas.

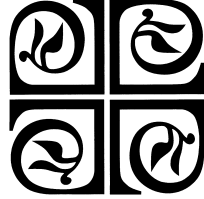


Advent is a good time to give of yourself to others:

- ◆ Greet family members when they come home from work or school.
- ◆ Have a family night when the children can plan the menu and an activity.
- ◆ Help someone with his/her chores.
- ◆ Let someone else have the biggest piece of dessert.
- ◆ Help someone with his/her schoolwork.
- ◆ Read to a younger brother or sister.
- ◆ Go to bed without fussing.
- ◆ Do your work/chores before you are reminded.
- ◆ Do something to help those who do not have enough food.
- ◆ Offer to help out in the kitchen.
- ◆ Pray for those on the sick list at church.
- ◆ Give someone a compliment.
- ◆ Let others watch a TV program they want, even if it is something you do not like to watch.
- ◆ Write a letter or email someone who would be glad to hear from you.
- ◆ Use magic words like: please, thank you, you are welcome and I'm sorry.







Saint David's

Brandywine Hundred

A Community of Disciples Called to Pass Along God's Love to All!

stdavidsde.org

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