



Advent 2020

Though Advent appears at the end of the secular calendar year, it is the beginning of the Christian year. The deep darkness of the natural world around us is an echo of the nurturing darkness of the dawning of creation. It is in this holy space we begin retelling our sacred stories. The word “advent” comes from the Latin *adventus*, which means “coming” or “arrival.” Advent prepares for us, and leads us to, Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem. St Matthew’s is decorated in Sarum blue during Advent, a color that honors Mary the mother of Jesus – an outward sign of our hope and expectations as we await, with her, the coming of Christ. We are called to wait, wonder, and

live faithfully in this in-between time: the time between remembering that God has already walked as one of us and God’s full in-breaking once again. While in our homes, all of us at St. Matthew’s will watch and wait for the One who comes to fulfill all things, to make the whole creation new together. We watch and wait for Jesus, and He is coming.

The Advent Invitation

“Every time I go into the darkness, I returned with fistfuls of jewels.” –Barbara McAfee

The four Sundays in Advent invite us on a journey. As the days grow shorter each week, we are invited to draw closer and closer to the light of Christ. We are invited to open our hearts a little wider each week to God with Us – *Emmanuel*. In her book *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, Episcopal priest Barbara Brown Taylor writes: “... new life starts in the dark. Whether it is a seed in the ground, a baby in the womb, or Jesus in the tomb, it starts in the dark.” Advent is an invitation for rest and growth before a new beginning. What will you discover as you are nurtured in the darkness this year?

The Advent Wreath

The tradition of the Advent wreath dates back to the Middle Ages. It symbolizes our growing hope as we near the days of Christ’s birth. Lighting the wreath helps us mark the time of waiting during the four weeks of this season. The circle of a wreath reminds us of God’s never-ending love. Evergreens symbolize the everlasting life promised to us by the gift of Jesus. There are four candles for each week in Advent, with the fifth candle representing Christ’s birth. The lighting of the candles in the darkness reminds us that Jesus, the Light, came into the world and continues to shine through us – the Church. We are the hands and feet of Christ in the world today.

Making Your Advent Wreath

Find a plate or tray to hold your Advent wreath; you will want to keep the wreath moist over the next few weeks. Place the wreath on the plate, add the “candle ring” into the center open space. Place three blue and one pink candle in the holders. Add decorations such as ribbons, pinecones, or berries. Find a candle holder or votive for the white candle. Save this for adding to the center on Christmas Eve. Spritz the wreath or Add water regularly to the plate so the greens do not dry out. Place a lighter or box of matches nearby. A candle snuffer can be handy, although it is fun to blow out the candles after your meal or gathering for prayer.

Using Your Advent Wreath

Create space in your home for your Advent wreath such as a table in the kitchen, dining room, or family room where people gather together. Dinner time is a perfect time to light your wreath. Each evening, or every Sunday, turn off all the lights nearby and light the correct number of candles for the week. As you gather around the Advent wreath, have a moment of silence to bring peace and calm. Prayers can be said each week as the candles are lit. The first week, just light one blue candle. The second week light two candles; on the third, light two blue and the pink candle. This is *Gaudette Sunday*, which means “rejoice;” the time of waiting is almost over! Light all four candles on the fourth Sunday. On Christmas Eve, place your white candle in the center of your wreath and light all the candles, welcoming and celebrating the Light of Christ.



Advent Wreath Prayers

1st Sunday of Advent – November 29

Jesus, you are light even in the darkest places.
Help us to trust in you when we are lost or lonely.
Shine hope into our hearts we pray. Amen.

2nd Sunday of Advent – December 5

Jesus, you are peace even when there is hatred.
Help us to forgive like you when we are hurt or wounded.
Bring peace into our hearts we pray. Amen.

3rd Sunday of Advent – December 12

Jesus, you are joy even in the saddest times.
Help us to praise you when we are upset or grieving.
Shine joy into our hearts we pray. Amen.

4th Sunday of Advent – December 19

Jesus, you are love even if we are afraid.
Help us to pray to you when we are scared or fearful.
Bring love into our hearts we pray. Amen.



Christmas Eve – December 24

Jesus, you came to be light in our darkness.
Jesus, you came to be peace in our conflicts.
Jesus, you came to be joy in our sadness, and to bring your love in our fears.
Today we celebrate your birth.
Thank you for your saving grace. Amen.

An Advent Song

Another way to celebrate advent is by singing “Oh come, Oh come Emmanuel” when lighting the Advent candles each night. The first week of Advent sing one verse. On the second week, sing verses one and two. By the end of Advent, your family will know four verses by heart. This is a simple way to mark time until the birth of Christ.

1. Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lowly exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Refrain:

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, oh Israel.

2. Oh come, O Wisdom from on high,
who ordered all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show
and teach us in its ways to go. *Refrain.*

3. Oh come, O come, great Lord of might,
who to your tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times did give the law
in cloud and Majesty and awe. *Refrain.*

4. Oh come, Desire of nations, bind
in one the hearts of all mankind;
Bid thou our sad divisions cease
and be thyself our King of Peace. *Refrain.*



Join us for worship throughout Advent and Christmas

November 29, Advent I: 10:00am on Facebook & Website

December 6, Advent II: 10:00am on Facebook & Website

December 13, Advent III: 10:00 am on Facebook & Website

December 20, Advent IV Christmas Pageant: 10:00am on Facebook & Website

December 24, Christmas Eve: 5:00pm on Facebook & Website

December 24, Christmas Eve: 10:00pm on Zoom

December 27, Christmas I Lessons & Carols: 10:00am on Facebook & Website