



Taking
ADVENT
Home

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ANGLICAN CHURCH CAMBERWELL

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Making Your Advent Wreath

Making an Advent Wreath is easy! All you need is a firm base - possibly a polystyrene wreath base bought at a florist, or one constructed of vines or branches from your garden.

The base needs to support four coloured candles around its circle, with one larger white candle in the middle.

Cover the wreath with greens of some kind, freshly cut and regularly replenished. You may like to make a distinctively Australian wreath using gum leaves and nuts, or proteas and ribbons and bows.

The four coloured candles are for the four Sundays of the season, and as we light them one by one we see how the time is ticking away, how the weeks are flying by, and how little time is left to prepare ourselves for the birth of Christ this Christmastime.

The coloured candles represent us who wait, and others who have waited patiently before us in other places and times. We are not alone, even when we feel most alone! We are part of the great company of faithful people who know God loves them and who love God in response. We have in mind particularly the prophets of truth, John the Baptist, and Mary of Nazareth, and when we light the white Christ Candle at the heart of the Wreath we offer our thanksgiving to the One who links us all together.

When you have finished your Wreath, set it on the dinner table or in some specially prominent place in your home where it will look very special. You might light the candle(s) for the week each day, and look for a while quietly at the brightly burning flame. What an astonishing amount of light a single candle flame gives! We too are to be lights of the world in our generation as followers of Christ, the Light of the world. Be quiet for a moment or two, look, listen, say the simple prayer for the day, be thankful, pray for those close to your heart and for peace in God's world.

Praying the Advent Wreath

The four coloured candles (red or blue) represent other people who have waited for the birth of Christ, just like us. The white candle at the centre of the Wreath is the Christ Candle, sign of Emmanuel, God-with-us. On each of the four Sundays we light a new candle, and on Christmas Eve we light the Christ Candle. All five candles burn throughout Christmastime which lasts until Candlemas at the end of January.

The First Candle : Patriarchs and Matriarchs

The first candle is for our mothers and fathers in faith, from Sarah and Abraham down through the ages of salvation history. All sorts of people have hoped for a better world - where God is served, where human beings are treated with dignity and respect, and where the earth is cared for and its resources wisely used. As you light this candle you might like to say this simple prayer -

Lord Jesus, Light of the world,
born a Jewish child in Bethlehem,
born to know God and love God:
Lord Jesus, Light of the world,
be born in us this Christmastime
and help us serve God with you always.
Amen

The Second Candle : The Prophets

Who are the prophets? Prophets are women and men who look around them, see clearly what is true and false, and alert the rest of us! They are uncomfortable people because they disturb our complacency, and stir us to action. It's no good just talking about injustice. We have to do something! Prophets want Jesus to come because the presence of Jesus ignites love in human hearts and invites God to re-order the world at our hands. As you light the first candle, use the same prayer as before, and this new one as you light the second candle, and daily thereafter -

Lord Jesus, Light of the world,
the prophets said You would bring peace
and save God's people:
stir us up to work for justice
and make us Your peacemakers
on Christmas Day and every day.
Amen

The Third Candle : John The Baptist

John was the last of the long line of Hebrew prophets, and he influenced Jesus dramatically. He called the people to a change of heart: they must give up their selfish ways, and turn to God, and start out again as forgiven people. John prepared the way for Jesus to come, and we can do the same today. Light the first candle, and be quiet, and say the first prayer. Then the second. Now light the third candle and say this new prayer today, and every day this coming week -

Lord Jesus, Light of the world,
John told the people to prepare
because You were very near:
as Christmas grows closer day by day
help us and everyone to be ready.
and welcome You into our hearts now.
Amen

The Fourth Candle : Blessed Mary

Mary of Nazareth was an ordinary young Jewish girl who loved God and wanted God's love to fill her heart. God filled her to overflowing with the presence of Jesus. She conceived Jesus in her mind before she conceived him in her womb, and we too can carry Jesus inside us like Mary. He can influence everything we think and do and say, and he can reach out through our hands to touch and heal the people we meet. Stop and be quiet. Light the first three candles. Now light the fourth candle, say the familiar prayers, adding the new one for this week -

Lord Jesus, Light of the world,
blest is Mary Your mother and ours:
be born in us this Christmastime
that we may carry You with grace
to the waiting world.
Amen

The Christ Candle

The Christ Candle should not be lit until late on Christmas Eve or early on Christmas Day. The Advent Wreath might then be the centre piece of your Christmas table, and all five candles can be lit. You may need some new candles by now! It is quite important that the Wreath continues to be used through the whole of Christmastime, and that it does not burst into flames! Here is a new prayer to add to your collection at the lighting of the Christ Candle and on the forty days of Christmas -

Lord Jesus, Light of Light,
You have come among us,
born in us at this holy time:
help us live by Your light
to shine as lights in Your world.
Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace and good will
Amen



The Christmas Crib

Almost every home is decorated for Christmas. Every Christian home should be distinguished by a Christmas Crib at the heart of these decorations. Saint Francis of Assisi invented the Crib - setting up a life-size stable with real people and real animals one thirteenth century Christmastime! You might like to be just a little less ambitious, but do the same with the same intention! Make sure you have your own Christmas crib, and use it as a centre for devotion and prayer. Make sure you don't put the Christ Child in the Crib until Christmas Eve! Prayer around the Crib is natural and easy, although silence and contemplative looking may be just as important. Make a fuss of your Crib with candles and flowers, and you might like to use this simple prayer as you look at it, and as the scene looks at you -

May the humility of the shepherds,
the perseverance of the wise men,
the joy of the angels,
the faith of Mary,
and the peace of the Christ Child
be God's gifts to all this Christmastime
Amen



The Christmas Tree

Christmas trees come in many shapes and sizes and kinds - fir trees, gum trees, any kind of tree really. The important thing is that it is a real tree, rather than an artificial tree - if that is at all possible.

Trees can be decorated in all sorts of ways - but not with snow and icicles in Australia's summer!

Making decorations can be wonderful, and carefully unearthing family treasures for the tree is very special.

Turning on the lights for the first time can be a special moment. Choose the moment carefully, and make something of the event.

Perhaps you might like to say a little prayer as you look at the lights - tiny reflections of the Light -

God in the night, God at my right,
God all the day, God with me stay,
God in my heart, never depart,
God with Your might
keep us in light through the dark night.
Amen

Christmas decorations traditionally remain in place for the twelve days of Christmas, or through to Epiphany.

The Circle of Light and the Christmas Crib could remain as focal points for devotion in the home through the forty days until Candlemas, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, on 2 February.

