



## What is Advent?

### **The Season...**

Of the sacred seasons of the Church Year, Advent is the first, observed during the first four weeks of each new Church Year leading to the festival of Christmas. In the four weeks of Advent, familiar sights and sounds can stir in us a Christian readiness to receive our Savior, while sharpening our sense of the world's need for redemption and the great mystery of God's becoming human for us.

Advent is a Latin word meaning the coming. The season of Advent is a time of preparation. Advent helps Christian people prepare each other to receive the promise Christ as He comes, whether at his lowly birth in history, his mysterious coming now to the Christian community through His Word and the Sacraments, or his triumphal coming to be our Judge at the end of time.

Early Christians in the western tradition treated the days before Christmas in two ways: some as a time of repentance and others as a time of joyous celebration. Christians in northern Europe viewed Advent as a time to "clean house" spiritually in preparation for the Lord's final coming. Christians in Rome viewed Advent more as a time of joy our remembrance of the incarnation of God in the Christ-child.

Today these two emphases continue side by side. They give our observance of Advent, symbols, terms and Scripture lessons that lead us to introspection and renewal, and to exuberant joy and celebration as we travel toward Christmas.

### **The Symbols...**

**Advent Colors.** The colors of Advent are purple and blue. The ancient tradition of purple symbolizes the Advent's emphasis on repentance, signaled by John the Baptizer's call. More recently, the use of blue signifies hope, as the people of God look forward to Christ's coming.

**Advent Wreath.** The Advent wreath is probably the most popular symbol of Advent. Its bright candles dominate the wreath, symbols of the Light of the World who overcomes the darkness and warms a wintry world. The candles, lit week by week, first one, then two, three and finally four candles at a time, most often consist of three purple or blue candles and one pink. The pink one, lit on the third Sunday in Advent, is the "Rejoice" candle. The sequential lighting of the wreath, whether in the center of the congregation or the family gathering, leads us to Christmas.

**Advent Calendar.** Advent calendars help us count the days of Christ's birth, giving young and old a daily reminder of where our Christian hopes lie - with the holy child in the lowly manger.

### **Advent is a time to prepare for Christ's coming.**

#### [Advent Activity Ideas...](#)

+ **Invite someone to a special church service:** Many people who'd feel awkward accepting an invitation to "come to church with us" on any given Sunday will not feel that way about an invitation to join you for special worship service at Christmas time.

+ **Writing Your Christmas letter:** Relate the events of the year to God, e.g. "God blessed us with... We thank God for..."

And don't forget to include a spiritual blessing or two in your re-cap of the events of the year.

Include a favorite verse from Scripture that "summed up" your year or helped you to get through the year - maybe even put this verse in bold at the top of your letter and refer to why you included it.

**+ Decorating time with family:** Don't forget to share your faith with the people closest to you. Decorating the tree and house is a good time to take time out to read the Christmas story and have each person share what Jesus' birth means to them.

Thanks for asking,  
Pastor David

Send your questions to [pastor@livingwordlutheran.net](mailto:pastor@livingwordlutheran.net)