



## OUR LITURGY UNFOLDED: ADVENT

The seasons of the church year are helpful ways of focusing our attention on different aspects of the Christian story. The practice of keeping the church year dates back to 5th century Jerusalem.

As Christians, we use symbols to visually express the basics of our faith and as reminders of the journey in Christ and with Christ in our life. Symbols can have heightened meaning for us when associated with particular seasons of that journey. You will notice several symbols in this first season of the Christian year.

We begin the Church Year with Advent, from the Latin *adventus*, meaning “coming”. Advent, a quiet time of watching and waiting, consists of the four Sundays before Christmas when we anticipate Christ's coming into the world. It is a time of preparation.

The **Advent Wreath**, made by a member of SsAM, consists of a circle of evergreen branches (symbolizing eternal life) and four candles, representing the light of God coming into the world. The fifth candle is white and is called the Christ Candle. There is no one prescribed color for the candles, although several traditions exist. Some of you may remember the use of purple during Advent, representing a penitential theme for the season. In more recent years, however, blue is being used, reflecting the sense of hope and anticipation.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday, a blue candle (hope) is lit. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday we add the second blue candle (peace or preparation) while on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday, the pink candle (joy) is lit. The 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Advent marks the lighting of the final blue candle (love).

**The Readings:** In 2021, The 1st Sunday of Advent marks our moving into Year C in the lectionary with the majority of Gospel readings taken from *the Gospel of Luke*.

*Compiled and written by D-L Casson*

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### Want to Get Into the Christmas Spirit? Face the Darkness

How I fell in love with the season of Advent. 2019

#### By Tish Harrison Warren

Ms. Warren is a priest in the Anglican Church in North America and author of “Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life.”

As darkness lengthens in late fall, we begin to see the signs of the season — advertisements with giant red bows atop new cars, Christmas music blasting everywhere, the heightened pace of holiday hustle and bustle, lights and garlands speckling every corner of the city.

But inside many church buildings, this time of year looks different. There, we find a countercultural sparseness. The altar is covered in purple, the color of both royalty and repentance. There's a slowing down, a silent stillness. The music turns to minor keys and becomes contemplative, even mournful. The Scripture readings are apocalyptic and trippy, strikingly short on sweet tales of babies, little lambs and Christmas stars. In this small space, Christmas season has not yet begun. The church waits in Advent.

In the church calendar, every period of celebration

is preceded by a time of preparation. Historically, Advent, the liturgical season that begins four Sundays before Christmas Day, is a way to prepare our hearts (and minds and souls) for Christmas. For Christians, Christmas is a celebration of Jesus' birth — that light has come into darkness and, as the Gospel of John says, “the darkness could not overcome it.” But Advent bids us first to pause and to look, with complete honesty, at that darkness.

To practice Advent is to lean into an almost cosmic ache: our deep, wordless desire for things to be made right and the incompleteness we find in the meantime. We dwell in a world still racked with conflict, violence, suffering, darkness. Advent holds space for our grief, and it reminds us that all of us, in one way or another, are not only wounded by the evil in the world but are also wielders of it, contributing our own moments of unkindness or impatience or selfishness.

*New York Times* – sent to us by Chuck Bean