



**ADVENT  
FOR  
FAMILIES**

**CHRIST CHURCH AMSTERDAM  
29 NOVEMBER - 24 DECEMBER**



## **Make and Use an Advent Wreath**

Advent wreaths are used to make the passing of the four weeks in Advent. The candles are lit, one additional one per week, for four weeks. Often a special liturgy accompanies the lighting of the candle. In this version for the home, the family gathers around a very simple votive wreath to have dessert together and talk about each of the four advent candles: hope, peace, joy, and love. On Christmas Eve, a fifth candle is lit to represent Christ the light of the world.

## **Designed for Ages 4+**

### **Materials:**

1. Four votive candles (traditionally 3 purple/light blue, 1 pink): these are the weekly candles that represent hope, peace, joy, and love
2. One pillar candle (traditionally white): this is the Christmas Eve candle that represents Christ, the light of the world
3. A plate large enough to accommodate all five candles
4. Special dessert: hot cocoa, candy canes, cookies, ice-cream....

### **Time Investment:**

5 minutes to put the wreath together, and 15 minutes each week during Advent

### **How To:**

1. Arrange the votive candles in a circle around the perimeter of the plate.
2. Place the pillar candle in the center.

### **Light The Candles:**

1. Decide which day and time the candles will be lit during Advent. Choose a consistent time for each of the four weeks.
2. Gather everyone together with the special dessert.
3. Light the candle of the corresponding week (as well as the candles from the previous week{s}) and follow the readings below. Take turns reading and lighting the candle(s) from week to week. Candles may remain lit for the evening until the last adult goes to bed.

**Week 1 – Hope:** The leader says, “This is the first week in Advent and we light the candle of hope.” The leader lights the first candle, and asks, “I wonder, what does it mean to have hope as we wait for Jesus’ birth?”

Everyone takes turns answering the question while enjoying the dessert. Family members can take the conversation wherever it leads. At the conclusion of the sharing time, someone says, “Let us leave with hope in our hearts.”

**Week 2 – Peace:** The leader lights the first candle and then says, “This is the second week in Advent. Last week we lit the candle for hope. This week we light the candle of peace.” The leader lights the second candle, and asks, “I wonder, what does it mean to have peace as we wait for Jesus’ birth?”

Everyone takes turns answering the question while enjoying the dessert. Family members can take the conversation wherever it leads. At the conclusion of the sharing time, someone says, “Let us leave with hope and peace in our hearts.”

**Week 3 – Joy:** The Leader lights the first two candles and then says, “This is the third week in Advent. We have already lit the candles for hope and peace, and today we light the candle of joy.” The leader lights the third candle and asks, “I wonder, what does it mean to have joy as we wait for Jesus’ birth?”

Everyone takes turns answering the question while enjoying the dessert. Family members can take the conversation wherever it leads. At the conclusion of the sharing time, someone says, “Let us leave with hope, peace, and joy in our hearts.”

**Week 4 - Love:** The leader lights the first three candles and then says, "This is the fourth week in Advent. We have already lit the candles for hope, peace, and joy, and today we light the candle of love." The leader lights the fourth candle and asks, "I wonder, what does it mean to have love as we wait for Jesus' birth?"

Everyone takes turns answering the question while enjoying the dessert. Family members can take the conversation wherever it leads. At the conclusion of the sharing time, someone says, "Let us leave with hope, peace, joy and love in our hearts."

**Christmas Eve:** The leader lights the votive candles and says, "Tonight is Christmas Eve. We have already lit candles for hope, peace, joy, and love, and we have wondered together about what it means to have these things as we wait for Jesus' birth. Today we celebrate the coming of Christ into the world and we light the Christ candle." The leader lights the Christ candle, and asks, "As we think about Christmas, I wonder, how do we experience the hope, peace, joy, and love Jesus in our lives?" Conclude the Christmas Eve sharing time by singing "Silent Night" and saying Merry Christmas to one another.

## **Notes**

- This tradition grounds Advent in a spiritual realm, which is in stark contrast to the glitzy consumerism all around during this time of year. It's nice to take a moment to think about how the values of hope, peace, joy, and love contrast with the values of shopping, buying, wrapping, and doing what our cultures often hold in esteem.

- The questions for each week are deliberately simple, open-ended, and repetitive.

### **Variations**

- You can discuss the readings from church during your home celebration.
- Take turns within your family leading and lighting the candles, or have one person lead/read and another person light the candles.



## **Advent: Make an Acts of Kindness Tree**

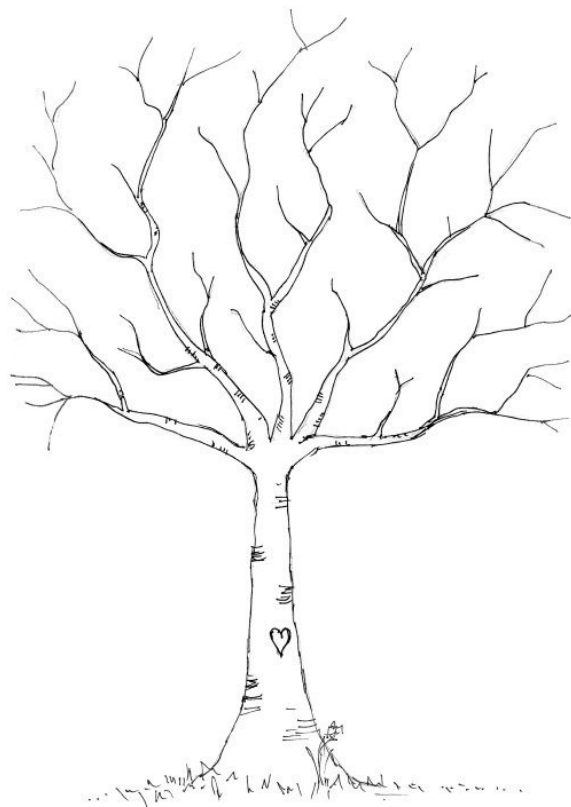
While the liturgical season of Advent is focused on quiet reflection and waiting, the wider culture is focused on buying and consuming. How can parents take the lead in helping their families focus on values of kindness, service, and giving during such a busy time of year? Make an “acts of kindness tree” that helps to bring focus to the season.

### **Designed for Ages 5+**

#### **Materials:**

- Acts of kindness ornaments (make your own using the suggestions in the “how to” section)
- Small Christmas tree or branch that will be dedicated to this purpose

**Time Investment:** Varies



## How To

- Make 25 acts of kindness ornaments for your advent tree.  
To make your own, cut out 25 shapes (stars, bells...) and write the 25 following instructions on them (one per ornament).
1. Give someone a compliment
  2. Feed the birds
  3. Write someone a thank you note
  4. Leave an encouraging note around the house for someone to see
  5. Pick trash around your house or school
  6. Do a chore for someone (set the table, sweep the floor, take out the trash....)
  7. Tell someone in your family why he or she is important to you
  8. Send a card to someone who needs extra love
  9. Donate food to the food pantry
  10. Make a homemade gift for someone
  11. Smile at everyone you see today
  12. Do something kind for a neighbor (bring their garbage cans to their house, shovel or sweep their driveway, bring over a treat or a gift...)
  13. Pass on a book or toy to a friend
  14. Hold the door open for someone
  15. Think of five things you are grateful for and share them with your family
  16. Let someone go ahead of you in line
  17. Bring flowers or cookies to a nursing home or hospital
  18. Tell your postal worker that he or she is doing a good job
  19. Tidy up your room (or a common area) without being asked
  20. Pray for a country that is far away from your country



21. Take a photo of something beautiful and share it with someone in your family
22. Draw a picture or write a poem for someone else
23. Find little ways to help the planet (turn off unnecessary lights or use less water....)
24. Call someone you love
25. Spend time with family or friends instead of screen time

*There are loads of other acts of kindness ideas on the internet!*

- Once the ornaments are made, place them on a tree or branch
- Take an ornament off the tree each day and do the act of kindness it suggests

## **Notes**

There is a danger of this activity becoming “just one more thing” to do during Advent. A spirit of flexibility and grace for this activity is suggested. If your family isn’t able to complete an activity one day, no worries. Pick it up the next day, after Christmas, or simply let it go.

## **Variations**

- Put ornaments in a basket or box or in an advent calendar
- Do activities at random (or on selected days only) rather than one per day
- Do this activity at a different time of year instead of only Advent

*Above two ideas are adapted from the book Faithful Families, Creating Sacred Moments at Home by Traci Smith*

# RESOURCES

**Sally Lloyd-Jones' *The Jesus Storybook Bible* FREE** printable Advent ornaments for coloring (with scriptures), advent music playlist, and coloring pages:



**LEGO 12 Days of Christmas Nativity cards:**



**Jesse Tree free printable ornaments and family devotional:**



**O Come, O Come Emmanuel - song**



## **REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR**

Collect an item each day to donate to those in need:

1. Packet of cereal
2. Peanut Butter
3. Packet of crackers
4. Package of pasta
5. Package of porridge
6. Package of rice
7. Dessert mix
8. Tinned fruit
9. Tinned tomatoes
10. Tinned fish
11. Tinned beans
12. Packet of soup
13. Package of biscuits/cookies
14. Bar of soap
15. Shampoo
16. Toothbrushes
17. Toothpaste
18. Hand lotion
19. Hand sanitiser
20. Mouth masks
21. Packet of dried fruit
22. Packets of tissues
23. Lip balm
24. A pen or pencil and paper
25. A Christmas card

SUNDAY WORSHIP CENTRE -  
10:00

SUNDAY WORSHIP SOUTH -  
10:15

SUNDAY WORSHIP COHS -  
13:30

CHRIST CHURCH  
AMSTERDAM  
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Services at  
Groenburgwal 42,  
1011 HW Amsterdam

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS:

OPEN WEDNESDAYS 15:00 - 18:30

CAROLS SERVICE - ZOOM 20 December, 18:30

CHRISTMAS EVENSONG 24 December, 20:30  
HOLY COMMUNION 24 December, 23:00

CHRISTMAS DAY (CENTRE) 25 December, 11:00

