

(These readings are designed to include as many people as possible, please feel free to adjust for the appropriate number of readers for your context. Also, incorporates use of the liturgical colours of the candles (3 purple, 1 pink; pink candle to be lit on week three)

The First Sunday in Advent- The Candle of Hope

Celebrant: During Advent, Christians everywhere prepare for Christmas, but not with wrapping paper and ribbons. The days leading up to Christmas provide an opportunity for us to reflect on what came before all the glitter: the arrival of One who gives us gifts which last forever. Today is the first Sunday in the season of Advent. Advent means “arrival”, a coming of something long-hoped-for. Throughout history, prophets and poets have written about this time, the arrival of God’s chosen one. There were no secrets: God was going to rescue the planet from darkness. Someone great was coming, with a promise of help, of peace, of rescue. Lord, may our roots go down deep into the soil of your marvelous love. Through our devotion to you this season, through prayerful reflection on your coming, and through our hope in your near return, may we have the power to understand how wide, how long, how high, and how deep your love really is. We look to you to transform us, Lord. May Christmas never be the same again! Help us to see Jesus in a new light. Amen.

Reader 1: This first week of advent we turn our focus to preparing our hearts. We remember that Jesus is our hope. He is our only hope. Because God loved us so much that He sent His son, to be born in a lowly manger, we have the hope of salvation.

ALL: The day of Your incarnation is near.

Reader 2: Hope can be a tricky thing, for hope requires us to have a bit of patience. We hope for things to come. We hope for circumstances to change. We hope for redemption and we hope for a miracle. The world tells us that all hope is lost; yet we know that hope is found in Jesus Christ. Quite frankly, without Jesus, we are hope-less. The Lord delivers us from fear.

ALL: The day of Your incarnation is near.

Reader 3: Jesus, The Savior has come, is coming and will come again. God is past, present, and future. God has always been and always will be. He is eternal. He is the Alpha and the Omega. The beginning and the end. Come Lord Jesus come.

Light 1st Candle (purple)

Reader 4: This week, as we light the first purple candle, we remember that Jesus is our hope. Let all who are discouraged take heart in this light. Let us not close ourselves to hope when it seems naive, or is too painful. And let us refuse to call any place or time or person hopeless. For this is our hope.... Emmanuel.

Reader 5: from 1 Corinthians 1: 3-9 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge— because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

Reader 6: Some call the first candle of advent the Prophet's Candle, or the candle of Hope for it was the prophets who foretold of the coming Messiah. And, the prophets were an example of hope and patience, all in one. In this first week of Advent, we sing with the prophets of One who will come, who will right the world.

ALL: Sing the first verse of Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Celebrant: Lord, we prepare the ground of our hearts for this Advent season. Once again, we reclaim Your work within us and in Your world, to make all things new. The story of advent reminds us that when You come there is Transformation and healing. You transformed lives then, You transform our lives now, and You will transform all things on the Day of Your return. We look forward to this great Day, when all creation will be made new. We prepare our hearts in this Advent season by praying, listening, singing and responding to Your coming. With the ancients who awaited You, we say “Living Lord, come among us.” *Amen.*

Second Sunday of Advent-The Candle of Peace

Celebrant - The first Sunday of Advent we lit the candle of hope in our Advent Wreath. It is also called the Prophecy Candle for it was the prophets who foretold of the coming Messiah. We light it again today as we remember that Jesus is our hope and we remember that he has come, and we remind ourselves that he is coming again on a day just like today.

Light 1st Candle (purple)

READER 2 - Today we light the second candle, the candle of peace.

Light 2nd Candle (purple)

We light it knowing full well that peace is elusive, and in some parts of the world, it is almost completely absent.

READER 3 - Yet in this season of Advent, we trust that God is never absent from us. God is always preparing something new. And even where there is war and discord, whether between countries, within families, or within our own hearts, God is present, gently leading us to new possibilities. Saving Lord, intervene in this world and restore all things to Your original purpose.

READER 4- We lit the candle of peace today to remind us that Christ, who was born in Bethlehem, has come as savior and redeemer. The babe of Bethlehem has come to bring everlasting peace. Jesus, Lord, save and rescue us from the sting of death and the grip of sin.

READER 5: May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

READER 6 –Isaiah 9:6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

READER 7

You Lord, showed favor to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob. You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins. Psalm 85: 1-2 Show us your unfailing love, LORD, and grant us your salvation. I will listen to what God the LORD says; he promises peace to His people, His faithful servants— but let them not turn to folly. Surely His salvation is near those who fear Him that His glory may dwell in our land. Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. The LORD will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest. Righteousness goes before Him and prepares the way for His steps. Psalm 85-8-13

Reader 8- Loving God, in this time of preparation and planning. We thank you for the hope and peace you unfailingly offer us. Show us the creative power of hope. (*short pause*) Teach us the peace that comes from justice. (*short pause*) Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you that we may walk in the light of Christ.

ALL: O Come, O Come (2 verses)

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse
Free thine own from Satan's tyranny
From depths of Hell Thy people save
And give them victory o'er the grave
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

ALL: Lord, we recognize that You are the God who draws near to Your creation. You are not far, not distant, not oblivious to our needs. Come, save us from our enemies within and without, rescue us from the idolatries of our age, and renew our voice to sing once again of Your saving power in our world. We prepare our hearts in this Advent season by praying, listening, singing and responding to Your saving acts of love in History. With the ancients who awaited You, we say "Living Lord, come save us." Amen

Celebrant: Let all who long for peace take heart in this light. By its light let us recognize the things that make for peace. By its light let us walk with each other, in all of our diversity and difference, as we work together to prepare a path for the coming of the Lord. This is the light of Emmanuel, the candle of peace. Therefore, take your encouragement from Christ, that your joy may be complete. For we find peace as we love and welcome one another in the Spirit. And we grow in grace as we practice walking in humility and compassion. God is at work in us, empowering us. This season, we once again welcome Christ into our hearts and we pray that we will live lives worthy of the Gospel as we go into the world in hope and peace. Amen.

Third Sunday in Advent – The Candle of Joy

(Pink Candle)

Celebrant: The first Sunday of Advent we lit the candle of hope. We light it again today as we remember Jesus, who was born Christ and King. And we remember that He will come again to fulfill all of God's promises to us.

Light 1st Candle (purple)

Last Sunday we lit the candle of peace. We lit it again today as we remember that Christ, who was born in Bethlehem, has come as savior and redeemer. The babe of Bethlehem has come to bring everlasting peace.

Light 2nd Candle (purple)

Today we light the third candle of Advent, the Candle of Joy. *(light the pink candle)* When the angel Gabriel told Mary that a special child would be born to her she was filled with joy. She sang a song recorded in Luke 1:46-54 that began with the words: "My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my savior.

Light 3rd Candle (pink)

All: My soul rejoices in my God.

Reader 1: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked upon his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed:

ALL: My soul rejoices in my God.

Reader 2: the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.
He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.

ALL: My soul rejoices in my God.

Reader 3: He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of mercy

ALL: My soul rejoices in my God.

Reader 4: Just as the birth of Jesus gave great joy to his mother, so his presence in the world gave joy to those for whom joy had been elusive. He healed them and gave them hope and peace when they believed in him. From hope, peace, and love grows joy.

Reader 5: We light the candle of joy to remind us that when Jesus is born in us we have joy and that through him there will be everlasting joy on earth.

Reader 6: Joy is like a light shining in a dark place. As we look at this candle we celebrate the joy we find in Jesus Christ.

All: O Come, O Come (3 verses)

Verse 1:

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Verse 2:

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny
From depths of Hell Thy people save
And give them victory o'er the grave

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Verse 3:

O come, Thou Day-Spring,
Come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Reader 7: Thank you God for the joy you give us. We ask that as we wait for all your promises to come true, and for Christ to come again, that you would remain present with us. Help us today, and every day to worship you, to hear your Lord, and to do your will by sharing your joy with each other. We ask it in the name of the one who was born in Bethlehem. Amen.

Reader 8: Loving God, we open ourselves to you, trusting that this is how you made us: you created us for joy-filled hearts and lives. Show us the creative power of hope. Teach us the peace that comes from living according to your ways. Fill us with the kind of joy that cannot be contained, but must be shared. Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you that we may walk in the light of Christ. Amen.

Celebrant: Let all who mistrust joy take heart in this light. Our joy is a deep river on a long journey, within us and through us. It flows from Christ, who knows both joy and pain. In our joy we do not forget our sorrow, nor in our sorrow do we forget our joy. This is the light of Emmanuel, the candle of joy. Come, God is calling in the middle of all the seasonal pressures and anticipation; God's spirit wraps us in a story, a story of accepting the mystery and believing by faith. May we answer God's call with joy.

The Fourth Sunday in Advent - The Candle of Love

Celebrant: We light three candles—for hope, for peace, and for joy.

Light 3 candles (2 purple; 1 pink)

And today we light the fourth candle—the candle of love.

Light the remaining purple candle

With this flame we signify the love of God that surrounds and fills us at all times, but that we recognize in a special way in the Christmas story.

Reader 1: There is no greater power than love. It is stronger than rulers and empires, stronger than grief or despair, stronger even than death. We love, because God loves us.

Reader 2: From the Gospel of John we hear: I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. [John 13:34-35](#)

Reader: 3: Love is like a light shining in a dark place. As we look at this candle we celebrate the love we find in Jesus Christ

ALL: Anticipation grows within us. The day of Your incarnation is very near.

Reader 4: Every man, woman and child is made to dance within Your Law of Love. In this fourth week of Advent, we sing with the prophets.

ALL: That One will come who trump the powers of every age – and show us the way to be truly human.

Reader 6: In this fourth week of Advent, we shout as children. King of the Universe, dwell in our midst and teach us the ways of Your Everlasting Kingdom.

Reader 7: King of the Ages, we are broken in our understanding of loving leadership, and have lost the capacity to understand the ways of a benevolent Sovereign. Show us Your face, teach us your ways, elevate the law of Love among us, and help us to receive Your Guidance. We prepare our hearts in this Advent season by praying, listening, singing and responding to Your Rightful Kingship in our lives and in Your world. With the ancients who awaited You, we say “King of Kings and Lord of Lords, come quickly to us, right Your world, and spark the dawn of New Creation.”

Amen

All: Sing O Come, O Come (4 verses)

Verse 1:

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Verse 3:

O come, Thou Day-Spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Verse 2:

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny
From depths of Hell Thy people save
And give them victory o'er the grave

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Verse 4:

O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Reader 8: Let us pray:

Thank you God for the love you give us. We ask that as we wait for Christ to come again, that you would remain present with us. Help us today, and every day to worship you, to hear your word, and to do your will by sharing your love with each other.

Celebrant: Loving God, we open ourselves to you this Christmas season. As these candles are lit, light our lives with your imagination. Show us the creative power of hope. Teach us the peace that comes from living according to your ways. Fill us with the kind of joy that cannot be contained, but must be shared. Magnify your love within us. Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you that we may walk in the light of Christ. Amen.

Lighting the Christ Candle

(The Christ Candle is traditionally lit on Christmas Eve and/or Christmas Day. Depending on your rhythm of gathering, it can also be lit on the fourth advent Sunday following the lighting of the 4th candle)

Celebrant: (With all 4 advent candles lit)

Hope, peace, joy, and love. Four candles, four promises continually offered to us by God, and all of them manifest in this one we light this morning: the Christ candle.

Reader 1: In Christ we find the hope of transformation, the peace that comes from living according to your ways, the joy of fulfillment in community, and the love that encompasses us in all our diversity, empowering us to make our own unique contribution to this world. In Christ we find light and life, and the courage to be like him, answering his call and following in his footsteps.

Reader 2: We rejoice in God's steadfast presence in our lives, and in God's unique presence in the life of Jesus of Nazareth—born of Mary, growing through childhood into an adult ministry, in all his life manifesting the peace, love, and justice of God; his voice undimmed by the centuries, his call and his promise as clear to us as it was to his disciples so long ago.

Reader 3: We welcome you, Lord Jesus as you come to us. Be born in us afresh, in our hearts, our minds, our lives. May the light of your life be kindled in us, and lead us to the shining truth, of God with us, God for us, God in us. Amen.

Celebrant: Hope, peace, joy, and love. Four candles, four promises continually offered to us by God and all of them manifest in this one, the Christ candle. This morning, we light the Christ candle, remembering the great mystery of his birth long ago, and also recognizing that as we seek God, we don't seek him in a long ago stable or an ancient manger, but in the people we meet and the depths of our own hearts. So as you leave here later today, go in peace, and take with you the certain knowledge that God is always coming into the world. May the blessing of Christmas make you a blessing to others and may the true meaning of the season pervade all that we do as we go out in hope, peace, joy and love. And so we ask Lord, that you would be in our minds and in our thinking, in our eyes and in our seeing, in our ears and in our hearing, in our mouth and in our speaking, in our hearts and in our understanding, in our hands and in our doing, in our feet and in our going. We ask it in the name of the one who was born in Bethlehem