

## About Advent

The season of Advent has been with us since the fourth century, although it has not been a part of the liturgical observance of all denominations and churches. With the mixing of Christmas and Advent during the weeks leading up to Christmas Day, there is often confusion of the two. Here are the basics of Advent:

**When.** Advent marks the beginning of the church year. It begins with the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day and ends Christmas Eve. If Christmas Day falls on a Sunday, Advent will last four full weeks. If Christmas Day falls on any other day of the week, Advent will last less than four weeks. If Christmas falls on a Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday, all of Advent will be in December. If Christmas falls on any other day of the week, Advent will begin in November.

**What.** Advent comes from the Latin word, *adventus*, meaning "coming." It is a season to prepare for the coming of Christ in various meanings: the promised coming of the Messiah to the Jews, the coming of Jesus being born in Bethlehem, the promised return of the risen Christ in final victory, and the continual coming of Christ into the lives and hearts of believers.

**Liturgical Context.** Advent, which marks the beginning of the liturgical year, is part of the cycle of seasons that includes Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, all related in some fashion to the coming of Jesus. That cycle is followed by Lent, Holy Week, Easter, and the long Pentecost season.

**History.** Advent began in France in the fourth century. In various times and locations of the church, Advent has been observed for three, four, and six weeks leading to Christmas. Some churches today are experimenting with incorporating Advent themes and symbols in worship during the weeks prior to the actual start of Advent in the hope that they can avoid the conflict of Advent versus Christmas observance during the immediate weeks prior to Christmas.

**Color.** The color for Advent has traditionally been purple. Some churches have adopted blue for Advent. In practice, however, as churches increasingly incorporate the symbols and decorations of Christmas during Advent, more and more we see red, green, and gold appearing. *The United Methodist Book of Worship* upholds the traditional color of purple for Advent, signifying penitence and royalty; but it also allows blue, the color of hope. The third Sunday is the pink which represents joy. It is pink to symbolize a rose - a celebratory event is coming.

## Isaiah 9:2-7

<sup>2</sup> The people who walked in darkness  
Have seen a great light;  
Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death,  
Upon them a light has shined.

<sup>3</sup> You have multiplied the nation  
*And* increased its joy;  
They rejoice before You  
According to the joy of harvest,  
As *men* rejoice when they divide the spoil.

<sup>4</sup> For You have broken the yoke of his burden  
And the staff of his shoulder,  
The rod of his oppressor,  
As in the day of Midian.

<sup>5</sup> For every warrior's sandal from the noisy battle,  
And garments rolled in blood,  
Will be used for burning *and* fuel of fire.

<sup>6</sup> For unto us a Child is born,  
Unto us a Son is given;  
And the government will be upon His shoulder.  
And His name will be called  
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

<sup>7</sup> Of the increase of *His* government and peace  
*There will be* no end,  
Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,  
To order it and establish it with judgment and justice  
From that time forward, even forever.  
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

## **Great Thanksgiving for Christmas Eve**

Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another. Therefore, let us confess our sin before God and one another.

**Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart. We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done your will, we have broken your law, we have rebelled against your love, we have not loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy. Forgive us, we pray. Free us for joyful obedience, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The Lord be with you.  
**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.  
**We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty (almighty God), creator of heaven and earth. You created light out of darkness and brought forth life on the earth. You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through your prophets. In the fullness of time you gave your only Son Jesus Christ to be our Savior, and at his birth the angels sang glory to you in the highest and peace to your people on earth. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. As Mary and Joseph went from Galilee to Bethlehem and there found no room, so Jesus went from Galilee to Jerusalem and was despised and rejected. As in the poverty of a stable Jesus was born, so by the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

As your Word became flesh, born of woman, on that night long ago, so, on the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

**Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father (God), now and forever.

**Amen.**