

ST. LUKE'S ADVENT WREATH GUIDE



St. Luke's
United Methodist Church



Advent is the season leading up to Christmas Day. It is a time set aside for the preparation of our hearts and minds to fully celebrate the birth of the Christ Child. Advent is marked by anticipation of the coming of Christ as the physical manifestation of God. Jesus is “God in the flesh” and the best expression of God’s love for all creation. He is Emmanuel, which means “God with us,” and that is the greatest gift we can receive.

The candles are a way of counting down to Christmas by focusing on a different theme each week. Just as there are countless lessons to learn from the birth of Christ, there are also numerous themes that can be applied to the Advent candles.

Just as we clean and decorate our homes to get ready for the holiday, so too we make our hearts ready. There are five candles - each representing a certain week of the Advent season and one for Christmas Eve/Day.

There are three purple candles, one pink candle, and one white candle placed in the middle. Purple is a sign of royalty and represents that Jesus was born as the Prince of Peace and King of Kings. Pink or rose is the liturgical color for joy. The pink candle is traditionally lit on the third Sunday of Advent which is known as Gaudete Sunday. “Gaudete” (the first syllable rhymes with “cow” so that the word is pronounced Gow-Day-Tay) means “rejoice.” White is the color to represent holiness and is lit on Christmas Eve and Christmas morning to celebrate the birth of Christ.

Let the lighting of the Advent Wreath become a family tradition that helps you celebrate the birth of Christ with anticipation, reverence, and joy!



WEEK ONE - RECEIVING HOPE

Scripture

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years. Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, it fell to him by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer is heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth; for he will be great before the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared." And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel, who stand in the presence of God; and I was sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things come to pass, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time." And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they wondered at his delay in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak to them, and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he made signs to them and remained dumb. And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home. After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she hid herself, saying, "Thus the Lord has done to me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men." - Luke 1:5-25



WEEK ONE - RECEIVING HOPE (cont.)

Light the first candle (purple) and sing the first verse of *O Little Town of Bethlehem*.

*O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.*

Reflection

The scripture reading says that Zechariah and Elizabeth were “advanced in years” and that she was barren. Before encountering the angel Gabriel, how much hope do you think Zechariah had that he would have a child? How would he receive hope? How do you receive hope? From the first verse of *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, look at the phrase “Yet in the dark streets shineth, the everlasting light; the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.” This verse reminds us that even in the darkest moments the light of Christ gives us reason for hope.

Prayer

Merciful Christ, You are the Everlasting Light that shines in the darkness. In the midst of despair, You offer hope. While we have known difficult times, we know that we were never alone. You are always with us, and we receive our hope from You. Let our lives reflect Your light to the world and offer hope to all. - Amen.



WEEK TWO - RECEIVING PEACE

Scripture

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus. - Matthew 1:18-25

Light the candle from the first week and then the second candle (purple) and sing the second verse of *O Little Town of Bethlehem*.

*For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to Christ the King and peace to all on earth!*



Reflection

In John 14:27 Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." The world tends to view "peace" in the same light as "tranquility," as in, a life without any negative circumstances. The peace that Christ brings to us is the reassurance of His loving presence in the midst of turmoil. Joseph had plenty of reasons to be troubled and fearful; his fiancé was found to be pregnant outside of marriage. The circumstances didn't change, but something changed within Joseph following the dream where the angel spoke to him. He had peace as he was reassured by the messenger. Recall some moments where you faced difficult circumstances, but you felt peace.

Prayer

Prince of Peace, You are our source of joy and meaning. In the midst of struggles You offer peace. We thank You for the way You guide us through fearful circumstances. Remind us to be agents of Your peace in the world. - Amen.

WEEK THREE - RECEIVING THE GIFTS OF GOD

Scripture

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end." And Mary said to the angel, "How shall this be, since I have no husband?" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God." - Luke 1:26-35



Light the candles from the first and second weeks and then the third candle (pink) and sing the third verse of *O Little Town of Bethlehem*.

*How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of the heav'ns.
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him still the dear Christ enters in.*

Reflection

Our lives are filled with blessings from God, beginning with the gift of life itself. We are given opportunities to give and receive love, to find joy, and to make a difference in the world. In the Gospel of John, Jesus said, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." In a season where there is a lot of focus on gift-giving, it is good to remember the many gifts we receive from Christ, gifts that help us have a more abundant life. In addition, we ought to consider the gifts we give to our family and friends. Do they reflect the love we have for them? Finally, during this time of year, it is important to look for opportunities to bless those in need in life-giving ways. Make time each day to think of the blessings you have and give thanks.

Prayer

Lord of Life, You are the never-ending gift of life. Your faithfulness strengthens our soul and gives meaning to our days. Help us to follow Your example of generosity in blessing the lives of others. - Amen.

WEEK FOUR - RECEIVING EMMANUEL

Scripture

And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!" When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. - Luke 2:7-20

Light the candles of the first three weeks and then the fourth candle (purple) and sing verse 4 of *O Little Town of Bethlehem*.

*O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray,
cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today!
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell.
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.*



Reflection

Jesus was born to be “Emmanuel,” God with us. The meaning of “Emmanuel” is almost too much to comprehend. What does it mean for Christ to be the tangible revelation of God with us? How does it impact our lives to know that we are never alone, because Christ is always with us?

Prayer

Emmanuel, You are the greatest gift of all. Your presence calms and reassures us. Thank You for Your faithfulness and the abundant life You've given us. - Amen

CHRISTMAS EVE/DAY - RECEIVING CHRIST

Scripture

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet: 'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will govern my people Israel.'" Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star appeared; and he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. - Matthew 2:1-11



CHRISTMAS EVE/DAY - RECEIVING CHRIST (cont.)

Light the first candle (purple).

Reading

We light this candle and give thanks for the hope we receive in Christ.

Light the second candle (purple).

Reading

We light this candle and give thanks for the peace we receive from Christ.

Light the third candle (pink).

Reading

We light this candle and rejoice in the gifts that we receive from the birth of Jesus.

Light the fourth candle (purple).

Reading

We light this candle and give thanks for receiving Emmanuel, which means, "God with us."

Light the Christ candle (white).

Reading

We light this candle and give thanks for the birth of Jesus Christ, Light of the World. His love illuminates our life, giving us hope and peace in midst of all the circumstances we face. Emmanuel, God with us, is born in us today.

Prayer

Emmanuel, You have given us life and shown us the way to live a more abundant life. Your birth reveals true love to the world. Live in us and through us, so that we radiate Your light into darkened areas. Let our lives be a witness to Your mercy and grace. - Amen.



Downtown Campus

222 NW 15th St.
Oklahoma City, OK 73103
(405) 232-1371

Edmond Campus

900 N. Sooner Rd.
Edmond, OK 73034
(405) 285-2002

Asbury Campus

1320 SW 38th St.
Oklahoma City, OK 73119
(405) 632-3378

stlukesokc.org