

Spirituality

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Supporting, empowering, and educating members in spirituality, leadership and service; reaching out with Gospel values to meet the needs of Church and society.

ADVENT is a time of waiting, listening, holding back, and discovering the beauty in both the night and day. Year by year, we learn what it is to keep Advent; to take time with those days and nights before Christmas.

BLESSING OF AN ADVENT WREATH

An Advent wreath is made of four candles and a circle of branches. Before the first candle is lighted, the household gathers for this blessing. **All make the sign of the cross.** *The leader begins:*

Our help is in the name of the Lord. **All respond: Who made heaven and earth.**

The leader introduces the blessing: In the short days and long nights of Advent, we realize how we are always waiting for deliverance, always needing salvation by our God. Around this wreath, we shall remember God's promise.

Listen to the words of the prophet Isaiah: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing. *Isaiah 9:1-2* This is the Word of the Lord. **All respond: Thanks be to God**

All join in the Lord's Prayer.

Leader: Let us now pray for God's blessing upon us and upon this wreath. Lord our God, we praise you for your Son, Jesus Christ; he is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples, he is the wisdom that teaches and guides us, he is the Savior of every nation.

Lord God, let your blessing come upon us as we light the candles of this wreath. May the wreath and its light be a sign of Christ's promise to bring us salvation. May he come quickly and not delay. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **All: Amen**

The first candle is then lighted & the leader says: Let us bless the Lord. **All respond, making the sign of the cross: Thanks be to God.**

The blessing concludes with a verse from "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel": **O come, desire of nations, bind in one the hearts of humankind; Bid ev'ry sad divisions cease and by thyself our Prince of peace, Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

Each day in advent at meals the candles are lighted: one candle the first week, two the second, and so forth.

Prayer for Second Week of Advent: Father in heaven set our hearts ablaze to follow in the steps of John the Baptist. May we bring light and love to all we meet, that the darkness of sin and fear may be overcome. In Christ's name we ask this. Amen.

Prayer for the Third Week of Advent: As we draw near to you, Lord God, keep us aware of your presence in all we do. Come with power to enlighten us by your grace, that we may live in praise and peace all our days. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

Prayer for the Forth Week of Advent: Lord Jesus, give us peace and allow us to celebrate your presence with joy, that we may someday share your glory. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

BLESSING OF A CHRISTMAS TREE

When the tree has been prepared, the household gathers around it. *All make the sign of the cross.*

The leader begins: Blessed be the name of the Lord. *All respond:* **Now and forever.**

Leader: This tree is a blessing to our home. It reminds us of all that is beautiful, all that is filled with the gentleness and the promise of God. It stands in our midst as a tree of light that we might promise such beauty to one another and to our world. It stands like that tree of paradise the God made into the tree of life, the cross of Jesus. Listen to the words of the apostle Paul to Titus: But when the kindness and generous love of God our savior appeared, not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of his mercy, he saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he richly poured out on us through Jesus Christ our savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life. *Titus 3:4-7* This is the Word of the Lord. *All respond:* **Thanks be to God.**

All join in the Lord's Prayer

Leader: Let us now pray for God's blessing upon all who gather around this tree. Lord our God, we praise you for the light of creation: the sun, the moon, and the stars of the night. We praise you for the light of Israel: the Law, the prophets, and the wisdom of the Scriptures. We praise you for Jesus Christ, your Son: he is Emmanuel, God-with-us, the Prince of Peace, who fills us with the wonder of your love. Lord God, let your blessing come upon us as we illumine this tree. May the light and cheer it gives be a sign of the joy that fills our hearts. May all who delight in this tree come to the knowledge and joy of salvation. We ask this through Christ our Lord. *All:* **Amen**

The lights of the tree are then illuminated.

Leader: Let us bless the Lord. *All respond, making the sign of the cross:* **Thanks be to God.**

The blessing concludes with a verse from "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel". **O come, thou dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here; disperse the gloomy clouds of night and death's dark shadow put to flight. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

BLESSING OF A MANGER SCENE

The manger scene has a special place near the Christmas tree or in another place where family members can reflect and pray during the Christmas season. It is blessed each year on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

All make the sign of the cross. *The Leader begins:* Our help is in the name of the Lord. *All respond:* **Who made heaven and earth.**

The leader introduces the blessing: We are at the beginning of the days of Christmas. All through the season we will look on these images of sheep and cattle, of shepherds, of Mary and of Joseph and Jesus. Listen to the words of the holy gospel according to Luke:

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. *Luke 2: 1-7* This is the Gospel of the Lord. *All respond:* **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

The figures are placed in the manger. After a time of silence, all join in the Lord's Prayer.

Leader: Pray now for God's blessing as we look on these figures. God of Mary and Joseph, of shepherds and animals, bless us whenever we gaze on this manger scene. Through all the days of Christmas may these figures tell the story of how humans, angels, and animals found the Christ in this poor place. Fill our house with hospitality, joy, gentleness, and thanksgiving and guide our steps in the way of peace. Grant this through Christ our Lord. *All:* **Amen**

Leader: Let us bless the Lord. *All respond, making the sign of the cross:* **Thanks be to God.**

Then Christmas songs are sung, for example: **It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old, from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold: "Peace on the earth, good will to all from heaven's all gracious King"; the world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.**