

What is Advent? Advent is a season of reflection, waiting and preparation in the Church calendar. Just as Lent precedes the celebration of Easter, Advent precedes the celebration of Christmas. The word “advent” means “arrival”, “coming” or “appearance”. So, beginning four Sundays before Christmas Day, we remember how many waited expectantly for the coming of the promised Messiah, we celebrate the arrival of the Lord Jesus in the flesh at Christmas, we give thanks for the giving of His Word and His Spirit, and we renew our anticipation for the final return of Christ, when He shall appear to all, bodily, in glory.

One common tradition during this season is the lighting of candles, often placed round a wreath. Each Sunday in Advent, an additional candle is lit. Though the days grow shorter and the physical darkness of winter deepens, the light of the candles grows with each passing week. On Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, a fifth candle, often placed in the center of the wreath, is lit to represent the arrival of Christ Himself, the Light of the world.

Visually and tangibly demonstrating this truth can be a valuable, hope-filled experience in this season of waiting and preparation, especially this year. We hope and pray that we will be able to meet in person for our December services, but even if we are, many of us will still be limited to joining virtually for worship. We recognise the spiritual struggle of worshipping while apart, perhaps feeling as flat as the screen you're watching. So, as we set aside time each Sunday in the service for the lighting of these candles, we want to encourage you to physically do the same with us in your home this Advent season. Creating is one way we image our Father, the Creator of all things, so get creative! Fashion your own wreath out of things around your home and garden, and share a photo with us of what you come up with! Here are some ideas to help you get started.



Wreath:

- Gather some greens from your garden and tie them together.
- Colour or paint the cardboard from your leftover toilet and kitchen rolls. Cut into rings and glue together to form a wreath.
- Make some simple clay or salt dough (120g flour, 90g table salt, 80 mL water, 40 mL PVA glue, splash of lemon juice). Make it green by adding some green food colouring to the water or by painting after it has dried (at least 48 hours). Don't forget to form on a paper plate, piece of cardboard, or greaseproof paper.

Candles:

- Use whatever candles you have around your home: tealights, tapers, birthday candles . . .
- Always remember that lit candles are a potential fire hazard. If you want to avoid using real candles, particularly with small children, try using battery operated tealights or making candles out of toilet roll cardboard with paper flames (see photo).