

## Observing the Season of Advent

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A pastor of the church should recite or paraphrase the following introduction for the advent season on the first week, and in like manner utilize the introductory material listed under each of the remaining weeks below. Following the introduction each week, the scheduled individual or family should light the appropriate candle and read the Scripture of the week. Immediately following the Scripture reading a prayer may be given that incorporates the reading and focus material for the week.

#### INTRODUCTION:

The season of advent is a season of anticipation and preparation. Anticipation for the celebration of Jesus birth on Christmas Day, and preparation for his return one day as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. During the advent season it has become common for churches to use the advent wreath, with 5 lighted candles as a sign of our watching and waiting for our coming Savior.

Weeks 1, 2, and 4 of the advent season emphasize our preparation for the birth of Christ, and historically were marked by a time of serious repentance. This season of repentance is represented by the purple candles lit for these weeks. Week 3 emphasizes the joy of the advent season and is represented by a pink candle. On Christmas Eve we celebrate the birth of Christ, with the lighting of the white candle in the center, white representing the blamelessness and holiness of Christ who came to be the light of the world.

Week 1: Isaiah 40:1-5 Prophecy (purple) Information from the paragraphs above should be used this week to introduce the season.

Week 2: Matthew 3:1-12 Personal Preparation (Purple). Introduction: How does this season lead us to repentance? The unknown time of the return of Christ should lead us as Christians to repentance –just as the original anticipation of the coming of Christ urged a season of repentance as preached by John the Baptist.

Week 3: Luke 1: 41-55 Joy of Anticipation (Pink); Introduction: Very briefly tell the story of Elizabeth conceiving John the Baptist (the herald of Christ) and Mary conceiving Christ, noting that angels visited parents of

both children to announce their coming birth. End the introduction with Mary going to visit her cousin Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-40).

Week 4: Matthew 1:18-25 The Incarnation of the Word (Purple)

Introduction: In the first weeks of our observance of advent, we noted that purple candles on our wreath represent Advent as a season of repentance and personal preparation for Christ's second coming. Significantly, purple is also a color designating royalty. Thus today the incarnation of God as man is represented in our Scripture as well as the purple candle lighting.

Christmas Eve: Luke 2:1-7 and John 1: 1-5 (or through v. 17) Christ's Birth (White) Introduction: On Christmas Eve we celebrate the birth of Christ, with the lighting of the white candle in the center, white representing the blamelessness and holiness of Christ who came to be the light of the world. (If this is a candle-lighting service, the center candle can be used to begin the lighting of the congregation's candles.)

Robert Webber, ed. *The Services of the Christian Year*, vol. 5 of *The Complete Library of Christian Worship*, (Nashville: Star Song Publishing Group, 1994)