

Advent One: The Prophet's Candle

Isaiah 9:2, John 1:5

A Prophet heard the word of God. He was afraid but he spoke them. He spoke them to any and all that could

hear. The prophet Isaiah said to the people, "You who have walked in darkness have seen a great light, you who have dwelt in a land of deep darkness have seen a great light that on you will shine." Isaiah spoke the words of God that promise not just the return of the sun but of the coming of new light.

As we light this candle let us remember to listen for the word of God in our lives.



Advent Two: The Holy Family Candle

Matthew 1-2, Luke 1-2

Isaiah spoke the word of God promising that one day a Messiah would be born. He said that the Messiah would be like a light shining in the darkness. In the town of Nazareth an angel visited a young woman named Mary, and told her that she was a favored one of God. If this wasn't scary enough the angel told her she would in time give birth to a very special baby boy that she would name Jesus, and that he was the son not of her soon-to-be husband, Joseph, but that he was the son of God. Mary was frightened but brave enough to embrace this message. Mary carries in her body the new light.

As we light this candle let us remember to not be afraid but listen to and follow and to welcome the call to be changed by God in our lives.



Advent Three: The Shepherd's Candle.

Matthew 1-2, Luke 1-2

A prophet and angel's words sent Mary and Joseph on their journey to Bethlehem. The same angel's words came to the most unlikely of characters – shepherds in the field. Tending sheep was a lonely and smelly business and shepherds were often the most necessary but overlooked people in the world. But an angel sought them out to share with them the good news of the light coming back into the world. And though afraid, they listened and got up and went in search of this new light.

As we light this candle let us remember to invite those we might overlook to our table, and to learn with them what it is to follow and live into the promised light.



Advent Four: The Magi's Candle

Matthew 1-2, Luke 1-2

In King Herod's royal court there were those who knew the stars, and recognized a new light beaming in an unexpected location. These travelers set out to find out what this light might shine on. They ignored Herod's demand to come back with the one they discovered. They followed the light and presented gifts to this new king, leaving by routes on which Herod could not find them or find the baby Jesus.

As we light this candle let us remember to follow the light that we come to know as true, and to be brave enough when needed to go the other way home.





The Advent Wreath

The Advent wreath traces its beginnings to pre-Christian people living in the far European north. Accustomed to the shortening days and loss of sunlight that meant the coming of winter they would take the wheels off their work carts and bring them inside. They would hang them from their ceilings with candles and drape them with evergreens. This signaled a giving up of one time and the embracing of a new time, a time spent indoors rather than working in their fields, a time of waiting for the light of the sun to return.

We Christians incorporate this tradition into our Advent season, another time of waiting and preparing for what will come in shortened and dark days. We place our candles in a circle and surround them with green reminders of the bloom of spring, of new life and new light.

Like our ancestors we can also use this circle of a measured return of light to help us slow down and focus on the new life that is coming, that life that is to be born in us anew.

Adapted from Gertrud Mueller Nelson



Advent 2018

A Blessing for the Advent Wreath:



Lord God, You who sent into the world Your Beloved Son as a light that shines in darkness, invest this wreath, our Advent symbol, with the power of Your energy and light. With each of these candles that are lighted, may we rekindle within ourselves the desire to prepare a way for the birth of Christ. With each new candle that is lighted, may the flame of Christ's coming grow brighter and brighter so that this Christmas may see a fresh and ever-green coming of the Lord of Light into each of our hearts and into our whole world. We pray, then, that the richness of God's blessing rest upon this Advent wreath, upon our home and upon each of us as we light this candle in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

