



Pandemic Lighting of the Advent Wreath

This liturgy for the lighting of the candles of the Advent wreath was written to be shared by multiple voices. It is the hope that those sharing in lighting the candles would offer a vision from their shared experience in the group as prompted in the liturgy.

First Sunday of Advent

Our expectation begins now.
It starts here after so much
has happened but we still
expect more.

We begin our journey, like Joseph
and Mary,
in darkness. We cannot see the
way ahead.
We cannot know what hope will
come but
we trust God to journey with us,
beckoning along with the prophets,

"The days are surely coming,
says the LORD, when I will fulfill
the promise I made to
the house of Israel
and the house of Judah.
It is coming." This is our hope
today as we light the
first candle of Advent.

[First Candle is lit.]

We light this candle
to remember what was promised

and every dream we dared to
dream
about what could be. We light this
candle full of hope because
we know the days are surely
coming as we have seen signs
of God's hope in...

*(name a vision of hope
you've recently seen
in your daily life,
in your relationships,
or in the news).*

With this hope, we know
that the days are surely coming
and so we pray together:

O God, who gave us the Light,
thank you for giving us hope
in the form of a child at Bethlehem.
As we prepare to celebrate
the birth of this holy child,
may we see signs of your hope
in the darkness of despair. Amen.

Second Sunday of Advent

When so much feels uneven and unsteady, we push into the wild possibility that change will come. We imagine the peace how the world might shift in the hope John the Baptizer dares us to dream,

"Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." It is in this wild possibility that we light the second candle of Advent.

[Second Candle is lit.]

We light this candle in search of your peace. We look forward to the days when all the rough places are smooth, but for now we seek your comfort...

(name a time when you have recently been found comfort in words, in a kindness, or even in an idea).

With this possibility, we believe our rough places will be made smooth and so we pray together:

Prince of Peace, you came to us in the innocence of an infant. Comfort us when the world feels too rough. Give us the courage to find friends in unlikely places as we work together toward your peace. Amen.

Third Sunday of Advent

We come find warmth together in the light of God's love. We have often felt so misunderstood and even unloved, but today we marvel in the love that begins in God. We celebrate the love we have known in the words of the Apostle Paul,

"And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." It is in this peace that our guarded hearts break open to welcome the light of this third candle of Advent.

[Third Candle is lit.]

We light this candle to celebrate your love that unites all people.

In the warmth of this shimmering hope, we dream of that all people might experience this kind of love that surpasses all understanding.

(Share a brief story about how you've experienced love together. Begin this story with the words, "I dream...")

With this love made real, we find new understanding of what love could change and so we pray together:

Loving God, pour into our hearts this day the light of your love, warming us to one another, enlightening our understanding of others, and revealing the love that guards our hearts and minds. Amen.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

We might not feel quite ready, still we praise God. There is joy in the inexplicable and the extraordinary. We celebrate wonder of what could be just as Mary sang,

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed."

It is with this joy that our souls unite to magnify the good news so full of blessing in the lighting of this fourth candle of Advent.

[Fourth Candle is lit.]

We light this candle to celebrate our joy for the world. Like Mary, we might hesitate and be cautious with our praise but when we remember how what God has done, we can only sing with joy.

(Share a brief story about you've been surprised by joy.. Begin this story with the words, "I remember...")

With this deep joy, our hearts join together in prayer to God:

Eternal God, who magnifies each of our souls, surprise us this joy in these last few days before Christmas. Warm our hearts to feel the joy of your presence in our lives and in your world. Amen.

Christmas Eve

In the silence of this night,
we celebrate the tiny hope
of birth in Jesus, our Christ.
As we wonder what this
birth means to us, we recall
all that we have found
on the way to Bethlehem.

We remember every bit of
hope, peace, love and joy
we have shared in sacred story.
These lights shine bright
as the work of Christmas begins.
*(Reader pauses as each candle is
lit in order.)*

The light of hope ... *(Candle is lit.)*
The light of peace ... *(Candle is lit.)*
The light of love ... *(Candle is lit.)*
The light of joy... *(Candle is lit.)*

Now, as the shepherds worship
and the cattle low, we sing
with the angels that
God has come into the world.
We join in that song, singing,

"Glory to God in the highest
heaven, and on earth peace
among those whom he favors!"
It is in this glory and awe
that we light the candle of our
Savior.

(Christ candle is lit.)

We light the Christ candle
to celebrate our Savior.
We join the chorus of angels
with our glad tidings and great joy.
God has been made real
again. God has come close.
We add our praise,
remembering...

*(name a time, at Christmas
or some other time,
when you've been
able to see God
in another person.)*

As God becomes known
again in human flesh
and ordinary wonder,
we join our hearts
to pray together:

Holy God, we rejoice
in your presence!
The birth of this baby at Bethlehem
gives us wonder and delight.
The birth of your holy child
is your answer to our unrest,
our confusion and our sorrow.
Tonight we live in Hope,
we pray for Peace,
we share your Love,
as we are filled with your Joy.
Thank you for sending
your Child to be our Immanuel.
Amen.