

Make an Advent Wreath at Home

Did you know that Advent wreaths were originally used in the home? They didn't become popular in churches until the middle of the twentieth century.

You can make an Advent wreath with either four or five candles.

How to Make an Advent Wreath

To begin, put four candles on a wreath or at least in a circle. Traditionally the candles are purple, because in antiquity, purple dye was very expensive and it was the color of royalty. We use purple for Advent because it is the season of the coming of the King. If you can't get purple candles, you can substitute blue ones. You can also make one of the candles pink if you like—technically, it is rose colored. If you have a fifth candle, it goes in the center of the wreath and it should be white.

How to Use Your Advent Wreath

The idea is to use the wreath in conjunction with worship services or personal or family devotions on the four Sundays in Advent. You light candles at the beginning of each service and snuff them out at the end.

- On the first Sunday in Advent, you light the first candle. Have your service, then snuff out the candle.
- On the second Sunday in Advent, you light two candles, first the one from the previous Sunday, then the second one. Have your service, then snuff out the candles.
- On the third Sunday in Advent, you light the two candles from the previous weeks, in the order you lit them before, then you add the third one. Have your service, then snuff out the candles.
- On the fourth Sunday in Advent, you light the three candles from the previous weeks, in the order you lit them before, then you light the fourth one. Have your service, then snuff out the candles. You should get a stair-step effect, since each candle is a different length by now.

If you have a fifth candle in the center, then on Christmas Day you light the four candles in the order you lit them before, and then you light the center candle. Have your service, then snuff out the candles.

You notice how I emphasize snuffing out the candles at the end of each service? This has absolutely no liturgical significance whatsoever, but it is vitally important and you must not leave it out. It prevents the candles from burning your house down.

I recommend that you snuff out the candles, rather than blowing them out. The reason is that if you blow them out, you might spray hot wax over everything.

Prayers for Use with the Advent Wreath

When you use an Advent Wreath in personal or family devotions, you can use whatever scriptures and prayers you like. If you need a point of departure, here is something to get you started. Please don't take it as a set form. You can use different readings, you can modify the prayers, and you can add hymns, carols, or other prayers as you like.

On the First Sunday in Advent

- Light one purple candle
- Read Isaiah 60:2-3

Lord God, we light this candle to thank you for your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world. We who have sat in darkness have seen a great light, the light of Jesus Christ, our salvation. We give you thanks and praise in Jesus' name, because he lives and reigns with you in your glory, and in the unity of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

On the Second Sunday in Advent

- Light two purple candles
- Read Mark 1:4

Lord God, we light this candle to thank you for your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, who is the way. We who like sheep have gone astray have found the way to you through Jesus Christ. We give you thanks and praise in Jesus' name, because he lives and reigns with you in your glory, and in the unity of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

On the Third Sunday in Advent

- Light three purple candles
- Read Isaiah 35:10

Lord God, we light this candle to thank you for your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, who brings us great joy. We who have walked in the shadow of the valley of death have found life in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We give you thanks and praise in Jesus' name, because he lives and reigns with you in your glory, and in the unity of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

On the Fourth Sunday in Advent

- Light all the purple candles
- Read Isaiah 9:6-7

Lord God, we light this candle to thank you for your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, who is the Prince of Peace. We who live in discord and strife have found peace in the promise of eternal life, through Jesus Christ. We give you thanks and praise in Jesus' name, because he lives and reigns with you in your glory, and in the unity of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

On Christmas Eve or Christmas Day

Remember, it isn't Christmas Eve until sundown on December 24!

- Light all the purple candles and the white candle
- Read Luke 1:68-79 and Luke 2:1-20

We praise you, Lord God, because on this day, your Word became flesh in our Savior Jesus Christ, was born of a woman, and walked among us as a man. Help us to imitate your incarnation, by manifesting our faith in our conduct as well as in our speech. To you, O Lord, we give our honor, praise, worship, and love, in the most holy and precious name of the One who is born today; because He lives and reigns with you in your glory, and in the unity of the Holy Spirit, Amen.