

2016 Advent Home Worship

by MaryJane Pierce Norton

Advent is the season when we prepare ourselves to receive God's gift of Jesus. It is a time of "getting ready" for the celebration of Christmas. Here are some ways you can prepare yourself and your family for celebrating Jesus' birth:

- Make an Advent wreath. The wreath, because it is a circle, symbolizes God's never-ending love. The wreath, because it is green, symbolizes life. An Advent wreath contains four candles representing the four Sundays leading to Christmas. Many people place a white candle in the center of the wreath to symbolize Jesus.

You can make a wreath using a Styrofoam base, greenery, and purple candles. If you do not have a Styrofoam base, place your candles in candleholders. Arrange them in a circle, with the white candle in the middle. Place greenery around the candles.



- Use the **Advent Worship Service for Families** (below) and worship together daily during Advent, lighting the candles on your wreath.
- Make an Advent prayer chain. Use construction paper cut into twenty-four strips. Write a prayer concern on each strip. Use tape to tape the first strip into a circle. Take the second strip and insert it into the first strip before taping it into a circle. Continue until you have a chain. On Monday, November 28, open your first strip and pray together as a family for what is on the strip.
- Make a family-blessing jar. Place an empty jar on your dining table. Each day during Advent, state one blessing for which you are thankful. Write the blessing on a slip of paper and put it in the jar. On Christmas Day, pour out the blessings. Read together and give thanks to God for the blessings you have enjoyed during Advent.
- For each week of Advent, focus on one of the people or groups of people in the story of the birth of Jesus. Tell one another the stories from the Bible about:
 - Week one: the Prophets
 - Week two: Mary
 - Week three: Joseph
 - Week four: Shepherds
- Discover more ideas for celebrating Advent in your home. The book [*'Tis the Season: Church Celebrations for Advent & Christmas*](#) by Rachel Gilmore (Judson Press: 2011) contains several programs for church use during the season of Advent. However, many may be used in your home. Of particular note are the ones included in "Celebrations for All Generations."

- Use the following **Advent Worship Service for Families** as you light your Advent wreath at home.

Advent Worship Service for Families

Week One - Advent — Hope

First Sunday of Advent — Sunday, November 27, 2016

Light the first candle on your wreath and read together the following meditation:

First Reader: This is the first Sunday in Advent. Today, we light one purple candle. This is the candle of hope. Advent is a time of waiting and of hoping. We wait for the day when we celebrate again the birth of Jesus. We hope that everyone will come to know God and to worship God.

(Light the first candle)

All: Sing or read together the hymn: "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" (page 196 in *The United Methodist Hymnal*).

Second Reader: When we look at the first candle, we remember God's promise. God promised to send a Savior to the people. When we listen to our Scripture reading, we hear what the prophet Isaiah wrote about God. God fulfills the promises made to care for people. God is loving and just. God brings peace. This gives us hope. We look forward to the time when everything is fair, when the world is at peace, and all people are treated justly.

First Reader: Read [Isaiah 2:1-5](#).

Discussion: This Scripture offers us the hope of God's kingdom where there is peace. It includes the wonderful sentence, "...let us walk in the light of the Lord!"

Who are the people in our world who need hope?

What are the hopes we have for our world today?

How do we help others know that God gives hope?

Prayer: Dear God: Thank you for your son, Jesus. Thank you for the words of the Prophet Isaiah that remind us that you are the source of our hope. Help us to remember to walk in the light of the Lord.
AMEN.

Monday, November 28, 2016: Today read again Isaiah 2:1-5. Pick one verse and memorize it. How do you think this verse gives hope to people?

Tuesday, November 29, 2016: Is there someone you know who needs to hear words of hope? Make or select a card for that person and mail it today.

Wednesday, November 30, 2016: Hope is something we need in our world. Think about different leaders in the world. Select one world leader. Pray for that world leader today.

Thursday, December 1, 2016

: As we get ready to celebrate again the birth of Jesus, we sometimes get very busy. Today, take a ten-minute break. Sit quietly. If it helps you to concentrate, look at your Advent wreath. Pray, asking God's help to bring quiet and calm to a busy world.

Friday, December 2, 2016: Think about your family. Some may live with you. Others may be far away. Who in your family needs God's hope? Pray for this family member today.

Saturday, December 3, 2016: There are people in our neighborhoods, in our church, and in our community who need to know of God's hope. Select someone to visit today. Visit electronically or by phone or in person. Go as a family or by yourself. It doesn't necessarily have to be a visit to a home. Maybe there is someone you always see at the library. Stop by today and talk with that person. Tell the person you visit one way he or she helps you feel hopeful.

Second Week of Advent - Love

Second Sunday of Advent — December 4, 2016

Light the two candles on your wreath and read together the following meditation:

First Reader: This is the second Sunday in Advent. Today, we light two purple candles. Last Sunday, we lit the candle of hope. This Sunday, we light the candle of love. One verse that many memorize and remember on this day is John 3:16, "God so loved the world..." Some people may not know the love of other people. That makes it harder for them to understand God's love. During Advent, we pray that we may remember again God's gift of Jesus to the world and know that God's love for all people is the reason for this gift.

(Light the first and second candles.)

All: Sing or read together the hymn: "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear," page 218, *The United Methodist Hymnal*.

Second Reader: When we look at the second candle, we remember God's love. When we read the words of John 3:16, we know of God's greatness and care. We remember God's love at Advent when we remember that God sent Jesus to us to help us know that God is loving and just.

First Reader: Read [Isaiah 11:1-10](#).

Discussion: When we think of God's love, we might not always think of the words of the prophets. But when we read this picture of the peaceable kingdom, we are amazed by God's love that allows a child to lead. Who are the people in our world who need the message of God's love?

What are our hopes for how people today can receive the message of God's love?

How do we help others know God's love?

Prayer: Dear God: Thank you for your son, Jesus. Thank you for the words found in our Bible that help us remember your love and care. Help us see how we can bring God's message to the people we meet in our schools, at our jobs, and in our neighborhoods. Help us be messengers of God's love for everyone. AMEN.

Monday, December 5, 2016: Read again Isaiah 11:1-10. Create a poster by drawing pictures of the wondrous

things you see in the world around you that God has created. Create your picture of God's kingdom of peace. Give thanks for the world and all the people in the world.

Tuesday, December 6, 2016: Is there someone you know who needs to hear words of God's love? Make or select a card for that person and mail it today.

Wednesday, December 7, 2016: Love is something we need in our church. Think about the people in our church. Select one person in our church. Pray for that person today.

Thursday, December 8, 2016: As we get ready to celebrate again the birth of Jesus, we sometimes get very busy. Today, take a ten-minute break. Sit quietly. If it helps you to concentrate, look at your Advent wreath. Pray, asking God's help to bring quiet and calm to a busy world.

Friday, December 9, 2016. Think about your family. Some may live with you. Others may be far away. Who in your family needs God's love? Pray for this family member today.

Saturday, December 10, 2016: There are people in our neighborhoods, in our church, and in our community who need to know of God's love. Select someone to visit today. Visit electronically or by phone or in person. Go as a family or by yourself. It doesn't necessarily have to be a visit to a home. Maybe there is someone who waits on you at the grocery store. Stop by today and talk with that person. Tell the person you visit one way he or she makes you feel loved.

Third Week of Advent — Joy

Note: Some Advent Wreaths may have one pink candle. The pink candle is always lit on the third Sunday of Advent and traditionally means "joy." If your wreath has a pink candle, light this as the third candle this week.

Third Sunday of Advent — Sunday, December 11, 2016

Light the three candles on your wreath and read together the following meditation:

First Reader: This is the third Sunday in Advent. Today we light three purple candles (OR two purple candles and the pink candle.) The first Sunday, we lit the candle of hope. On the second Sunday, we lit the candle of love. Today, we light the candle of joy. One thing that sometimes happens as we get ready to celebrate Jesus' birth is we expect to be happy all the time. Joy is not the same as happy. Joy is a deeper feeling created by knowing that God cares for us. Joy is remembering that God sent Jesus so we would always know of God's care. During Advent, we pray that we may remember again God's gift of Jesus to the world and know the joy that gift brings to all people.

(Light the first, second, and third candles.)

All: Sing or read together the hymn: "Joy to the World," page 246, *The United Methodist Hymnal*.

Second Reader: When we look at the third candle, we remember God's promise of joy. God promised to send a Savior to the people. Today we read from the Gospel of Luke. In the Scripture, we read Mary's song of praise and joy. There must have been times when Mary was frightened, worried, fearful and sad. But we have these words of joy even in a time when she was unsure of the future. Her words can guide us to look for the joy of God even when things may be uncertain for us.

First Reader: Read [Luke 1:47-55](#).

Discussion: How privileged we are to have this beautiful song of Mary. Can you imagine her singing the

words written in Scripture? It is a testimony to her faith and joy at being chosen as God's servant. Who in our world needs God's joy?

What are our hopes for joy in our world today?

How do we help others know that God gives joy?

Prayer: Dear God: Thank you for your son, Jesus. Thank you for the joy remembering Jesus' birth brings to us today. Help us live in such a way that our words and our actions help others know of the joy you give. AMEN.

Monday, December 12, 2016: Today read again Luke 1:47-55. Make a list together of the things that bring joy to your lives. Write your own song of joy to God or sing a song that expresses joy to God.

Tuesday, December 13, 2016: Is there someone you know who needs to hear words of joy? Make or select a card for that person and mail it today.

Wednesday, December 14, 2016: Joy is something we need in our city. Think about different leaders of our city. Select one leader of our city. Pray for that leader today.

Thursday, December 15, 2016: As we get ready to celebrate again the birth of Jesus, we sometimes get very busy. Today, take a ten-minute break. Sit quietly. If it helps you to concentrate, look at your Advent wreath. Pray, asking God's help to bring quiet and calm to a busy world.

Friday, December 16, 2016. Think about your family. Some may live with you. Others may be far away. Who in your family needs God's joy? Pray for this family member today.

Saturday, December 17, 2016: There are people in our neighborhoods, in our church, and in our community who need to know of God's joy. Select someone to visit today. Visit electronically or by phone or in person. Go as a family or by yourself. It doesn't necessarily have to be a visit to a home. Maybe there is someone you see in a place where you go to eat. Stop by today and talk with that person. Tell the person you visit one way he or she brings joy to you.

Fourth Week of Advent — Peace

Fourth Sunday of Advent — Sunday, December 18, 2016

Light the four candles on your wreath and read together the following meditation:

First Reader: This is the fourth Sunday in Advent. Today we light the fourth purple candles. (OR three purple candles and the pink candle). The first Sunday, we lit the candle of hope. On the second Sunday, we lit the candle of love. On the third Sunday, we lit the candle of joy. Today, we light the candle of peace. Our world is not always a peaceful world. People hurt other people. Countries are at war today. People don't take care of the world. People yell and scream at other people. But God promises peace. During Advent, we pray that we, as well as all people, will seek God's peace.

(Light the first, second, third, and fourth candles.)

All: Sing or read together the hymn: "O Little Town of Bethlehem," page 230, *The United Methodist Hymnal*.

Second Reader: When we look at the fourth candle, we remember God's promise of peace. We recall the

words of Jesus in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you." In times of war and hatred, it's hard to remember that Jesus is the one who brings peace. As we approach Christmas, let's remember that God's intention is a place of peace where people shake hands instead of harm one another.

First Reader: Read [Luke 2:1-20](#).

Second Reader: The shepherds may have not felt very peaceful when they heard the words of the angel. They were probably scared and confused. Yet they followed those words, trusting in God. Sometimes all we see around us gives a different message from the message of peace. Yet we, like the shepherds, can follow God's words and trust in God's promises.

Discussion: This Scripture reminds us that when we are fearful, we are often not thinking of peace. The angels calm the shepherds and send them forward with a task. Who are the people in our world who need God's peace?

What are our hopes for peace in our world today?

How do we help others know God's desire for peace in our world?

Prayer: Dear God: Thank you for your son, Jesus. Thank you for those in our world today who seek to act for peace. Help us look for ways to be peacemakers at home, at church and at school. AMEN.

Monday, December 19, 2016:

Peace seems so difficult for us to achieve in our world. Read again Luke 2:1-20. Think about what peace would look like in your family, in your congregation, in your community, in our nation, and in the world. Pray a prayer of peace asking God for what you have envisioned for your family, your congregation, your community, your nation, and the world.

Tuesday, December 20, 2016:

Spend time today thinking about your image of a world at peace. Write your thoughts, or create a picture depicting God's peace in the world.

Wednesday December 21, 2016:

Today, try a new greeting to those you see in your home, or at work, or as you shop. Say, "Christmas Peace to you." At the end of the day, when you pray, thank God for each person you saw this day and pray that each person will experience the peace of God.

Thursday, December 22, 2016:

As we get ready to celebrate again the birth of Jesus, we sometimes get very busy. Today, take a ten-minute break. Sit quietly. If it helps you to concentrate, look at your Advent wreath. Pray, asking God's help to bring quiet and calm to a busy world.

Friday, December 23, 2016:

Take time to do an act of service today for someone in your home or someone in your community. You might want to make cookies for your postal carrier or take a Christmas card to your neighborhood bank. Perhaps you can call those who work at your church and offer thanks for their service. How does showing we appreciate the service of others bring peace? What acts of peace can you do this day?

Saturday, December 24, 2016 -- Christmas Eve

Light the four candles on your wreath. Read together [Matthew 1:18-25](#).

We sometimes forget about Joseph. Are there those in your home or community that you might be forgetting? Take a moment to pray for the forgotten people in your home, your church, or your community.

Sunday, December 25, 2016—Christmas Day

Light the four candles on your wreath, plus the center white candle (which is called the Christ candle) and read together the following meditation:

First Reader: Today is Christmas. Today, we light the four purple candles. (OR three purple candles and the pink candle). We also light the center white candle. The first Sunday, we lit the candle of hope. The second Sunday, we lit the candle of love. The third Sunday, we lit the candle of joy. The fourth Sunday, we lit the candle of peace. Today, we also light the center candle. This candle represents Jesus. When we light this candle, we remember Jesus' birth. Our waiting has ended.

(Light the first, second, third, and fourth candles. Light the center white candle.)

All: Sing or read together the hymn: "Silent Night," page 239, *The United Methodist Hymnal*.

Second Reader: When we look at the center candle, we remember that God sent Jesus to give hope, peace, joy, and love to all people. Outside of Bethlehem, the shepherds saw a great light and heard the voices of angels. They traveled to the manger and saw the baby Jesus.

Far away from Bethlehem, wise men saw a star in the sky. They followed the star and were filled with joy when they found Jesus. They remind us that the gift of Jesus was not just for the people in one place, but for all people.

First Reader: Read [Matthew 2:1-12](#).

Discussion: It's amazing to think of these persistent travelers who were determined to find Jesus. They traveled with hope and faith in the promise that they would find the new king. Who are the people in our world who need to know of God's promises?

What are our hopes on this Christmas Day for our world?

How can we help people remember God's promises after Christmas Day is over?

Name one thing you are willing to do in the days following Christmas that will help you and others remember God's promises.

Prayer: Dear God: Thank you for your son, Jesus. Thank you, God, for sending Jesus for ALL people, not just those in one place at one time. On this Christmas Day, help us remember and rejoice again because Jesus was born. May we live every day remembering your love and care and showing that love and care to others. AMEN

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<http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/2016-advent-home-worship>



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