

The Advent Season

From the Eric and Elaine Huntsman Family

The term “advent” comes from the Latin *adventus*, meaning “coming” or “appearance.” Advent is the season marking the four Sundays before Christmas and developed as a way of helping Christians prepare not only to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ in his First Coming but also to help them look forward to his glorious Second Coming. Although Advent customs may be foreign to many Latter-day Saints, we have found that, like so many seasonal traditions, they are a wonderful way to turn our attention more fully to the true meaning of Christmas



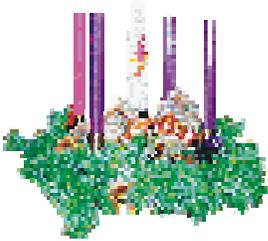
Elements of Advent liturgy existed by the time of Gregory the Great (Roman pope, A.D. 590-604), and much of the celebration was formalized during his papal reign. Many familiar Advent traditions, however, originated in Germany, where Martin Luther encouraged its continued observance as a way of teaching children and families more about the significance of the coming of Jesus Christ. It is still widely celebrated by Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and Lutherans and has become a common celebration in many Christian faith communities throughout the world.

One of the best known Advent customs is the lighting of the candles in an Advent wreath, a simple or decorated evergreen wreath with four candles placed in the circle and a single white candle in the center. The wreath itself represents the never-ending circle of God’s love, that he is the same and forever in his love towards his people. The green of the wreath, as in the Christmas tree, represents the hope of eternal life that comes through Christ and serves a reminder of the freshness of God’s love and promises. The light of the candles reminds us that Jesus is the Light of the World, that his birth represented the coming of the light into darkness, and that we are called to reflect that light in our lives.

The outer candles are purple, the color of royalty, although customarily the third one is rose or pink. Traditions differ regarding the symbolism of the candles. One is that they represent the hope, love, joy, and peace that come through Jesus Christ. Each Sunday before Christmas an additional candle is lit, creating a beautiful stepped-effect as the previous weeks’ candles burn down further. Scriptures can be read and carols sung as part of the lighting, which we do before family prayer. The four candles can also represent the different Old Testament covenants that God made with his servants, beginning with Noah and continuing through Abraham, Moses, and David. The central white candle is known as the Christ candle. It is lit on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day and represents the new covenant made possible through Christ.

The scriptures below for each candle come from the Old Testament, the Book of Mormon, and the New Testament. While not all families may wish to observe such Advent customs formally, we hope that the scriptures and thoughts that we have selected for each of the Sundays of Advent

will be uplifting and provide meaningful reflection on the season. *This year I have also added for the second, third, and fourth Sundays stirring anticipatory episodes known traditionally as the Annunciation to Mary, the Dream of Joseph, and the Visitation to better set up the Christmas story for Christmas Eve.*



First Sunday of Advent: Hope

The first candle represents the hope that the message of Christmas brings us as we recall the birth of the promised king. In the dispensations before the coming of Christ, prophets looked forward to his advent with hope. Now, through the Atonement of Christ we have hope for salvation from sin and death and look forward to his return.

The first candle can also represent the first covenants that God made with the patriarchs Adam, Enoch, and Noah. In particular, God saved Noah and his family from the flood and promised them life, just as we are saved through Christ and hope for eternal life through him.

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me *to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn . . .*” (Isaiah 61:1–3)

“For, for this intent have we written these things, that they may know that we knew of Christ, and *we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming; and not only we ourselves had a hope of his glory, but also all the holy prophets which were before us. Behold, they believed in Christ and worshiped the Father in his name, and also we worship the Father in his name . . .*” (Jacob 4:4–5)

CAROL: “O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL”

*O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

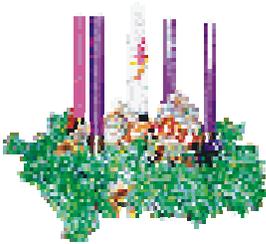
“Therefore Being Justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, *and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: *knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope:* And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” (Romans 5:1–5)

“And what is it that ye shall hope for? Behold I say unto you that *ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal . . .*” (Moroni 7:41)

*O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan’s tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory over the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,
And be Thyself our King of Peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*



Second Sunday of Advent: Love

The Second Candle represents the love of God that he has shared with us in the person of his Son, and which Jesus Christ showed us through his sacrifice and death. This love, the pure love of Christ, we are enjoined to share with each other.

This candle also represents God's covenant with Abraham, promising him an eternal glory and seed as numerous as the sands of the sea. The Lord further promised Abraham that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed, a promise that received its ultimate fulfillment in the coming of Jesus Christ through Abraham's line.

“Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted. But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.* Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands . . .” (Isaiah 49:13–16)

“And it came to pass that I saw the heavens open; and an angel came down and stood before me; and he said unto me: Nephi, what beholdest thou? And I said unto him: A virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins . . . And he said unto me: Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the

flesh . . . And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms. And the angel said unto me: *Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father!* Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw? And I answered him, saying: Yea, *it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things.*” (1 Nephi 11:14–22)

“*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*” (John 3:16–17)

SUGGESTED CAROL: “O, COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL”

Emphasis on the refrain, “Oh come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.”

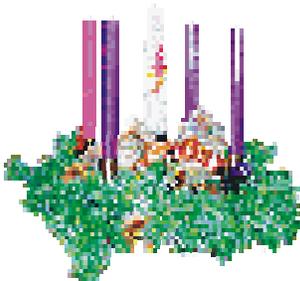
The Annunciation to Mary:

“And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, ‘Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.’

“And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, ‘Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.’

Then said Mary unto the angel, ‘How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?’ And the angel answered and said unto her, ‘The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible.’

“And Mary said, ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.’ And the angel departed from her.” (Luke 1:26–38)



Third Sunday of Advent: Joy

The third candle represents the joy that we have in the birth of Jesus, but it is pink to remind us of Easter and the blood of Christ even in midst of the joyous celebrations of Christmastide. Nevertheless, the sorrow of Christ’s suffering and death is blotted out as we triumph in his resurrection, and we anticipate the return of Jesus in his Second Coming with joy.

This candle can also represent the covenant that God made with Israel through Moses. On one level it represents the law of Moses, the blood of its offerings prefiguring the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. On another it represents the Deuteronomic covenant that the Lord will bless those who will have him to be their God and who covenant to serve him and be his people.

“Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. *Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.* And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his

name is exalted. Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth” (Isaiah 12:2–5)

“And he said unto me: Awake, and hear the words which I shall tell thee; for behold, I am come to declare unto you the glad tidings of great joy. For

the Lord hath heard thy prayers, and hath judged of thy righteousness, and hath sent me to declare unto thee that thou mayest rejoice; and that thou mayest declare unto thy people, *that they may also be filled with joy*. For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay . . . And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary.” (Mosiah 3:3–8)

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, *but your sorrow shall be turned into joy*. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and *your joy no man taketh from you*.” (John 16:20–22)

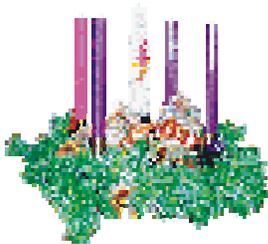
SUGGESTED CAROL: “JOY TO THE WORLD”

The Angel’s Words to Joseph:

“When as . . . Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.

“But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.’

“Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son . . .” (Matthew 1:18–25)



Fourth Sunday of Advent: Peace

The fourth candle represents “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). Isaiah 9:6 identified the Christ as the Prince of Peace, and elsewhere Isaiah’s messianic prophecies look forward to the peace that Christ will establish during his millennial reign. Nevertheless, we know that even now we can, through Jesus Christ, have “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come” (D&C 59:23).

Often the fourth candle is associated with the covenant that the Lord made with David, namely that in his line there would always be a king in Israel, a promise which received its glorious and final fulfillment in Jesus Christ, who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth . . .

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’s den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the

waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.” (Isaiah 11:1–10)

“And behold, I say unto you, this is not all. *For O how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that is the founder of peace, yea, even the Lord, who has redeemed his people; yea, him who has granted salvation unto his people;* For were it not for the redemption which he hath made for his people, which was prepared from the foundation of the world, I say unto you, were it not for this, all mankind must have perished. But behold, the bands of death shall be broken, and the Son reigneth, and hath power over the dead; therefore, he bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead.” (Mosiah 15:18–20)

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:27)

SUGGESTED CAROL: “IT CAME UPON A MIDNIGHT CLEAR”

Emphasis on the second half of verse three, “. . . When the new heavn’n and earth shall own the Prince of Peace their King.”

The Visit to Elisabeth and the Magnificat:

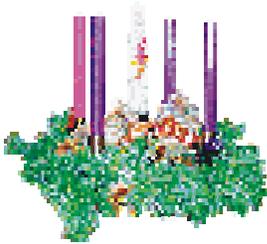
“And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, ‘Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for



there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.’

“And Mary said, ‘My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.’

“And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.” (Luke 1:39–56)



Christmas Eve

The white “Christ candle” is traditionally lit on Christmas Eve, symbolizing that the True Light has come into the world to usher in the new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah 31:31–34. The Lord himself referred to this covenant at the Last Supper when he said that the sacrament represented his “blood of the new testament, which is shed for many” (Mark 14:24). He thus made possible the blessings and promises of the “new and everlasting covenant” mentioned throughout latter-day revelation, whereby we are promised all that God has if we have faith in Christ and make sacred covenants of our own in his name.

The lyrics of the Catalonian carol “What Shall We Give to the Babe in the Manger” beautifully review the nativity of our Lord but also point us forward to his life, death, and resurrection. Likewise, the words of the much-loved sacrament hymn, “Jesus, Once of Humble Birth,” both recall the birth of the Son of God in a stable and point our minds forward to his glorious Second Coming, an important message of the Advent season.

The last candle may be lit in connection with the reading of the traditional Christmas story of Luke 2 or while singing Christmas carols, particularly “SILENT NIGHT.”

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward

parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people . . . for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (Jeremiah 31:31–34)

“ . . . And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he

was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. *And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger;* because there was no room for them in the inn.

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone

round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, ‘Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.* And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.’

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ‘*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.*’” (Luke 2:1–1)

“What shall we give to the Babe in the manger, what shall we offer the child in the stall? Incense and spices and gold we’ve got plenty, are these the gifts for the King of us all?

“What shall we give to the boy in the temple, what shall we offer the Man by the sea? Palms at his feet and hosannas uprising, are gifts for Him who will carry the Tree.

“What shall we give to the Lamb who was offered, rising the third day and shedding His love? Tears for his mercy we’ll weep at the manger, bathing the infant come down from above.”



“What Shall We Give to the Babe in the Manger?”
Traditional Catalan Carol, arr. Mack Wilberg (from *A Mormon Tabernacle Choir Christmas*)

“Jesus, Once of Humble Birth”

Jesus, once of humble birth,
Now in glory comes to earth.
Once he suffered grief and pain;
Now he comes on earth to reign.
Now he comes on earth to reign.

Once a meek and lowly Lamb,
Now the Lord, the great I Am.
Once upon the cross he bowed;
Now his chariot is the cloud.
Now his chariot is the cloud.

Once he groaned in blood and tears;
Now in glory he appears.
Once rejected by his own,
Now their King he shall be known.
Now their King he shall be known.

Once forsaken, left alone,
Now exalted to a throne.
Once all things he meekly bore,
But he now will bear no more.
But he now will bear no more.

“This is the wondrous and true story of Christmas. The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem of Judea is preface. The three-year ministry of the Master is prologue. The magnificent substance of the story is His sacrifice, the totally selfless act of dying in pain on the cross of Calvary to atone for the sins of all of us.

“The epilogue is the miracle of the Resurrection, bringing the assurance that ‘as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive’ (1 Cor. 15:22).

“There would be no Christmas if there had not been Easter. The babe Jesus of Bethlehem would be but another baby without the redeeming Christ of Gethsemane and Calvary, and the triumphant fact of the Resurrection.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“The Wondrous and True Story of Christmas,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2000, 2