

These brief ceremonies may be led by a church member family, with different family members reading the paragraphs, lighting the candle, and leading in prayer.

The First Advent Candle: The Forefathers

Today we begin a new Christian year with the season of Advent. The word *advent* means “coming.” It’s a time of preparation for the coming of Christ, as we look forward to the celebration of his birth.

The Scriptures tell us that Abraham, the forefather of Israel, looked forward to the day of Christ. Jesus said, “Abraham rejoiced to see my day.” God had chosen the people of Israel to be a light to the nations. His purpose would be fulfilled in Jesus, the Light of the World.

An ancient seer called Balaam also saw the coming of Christ. He said, “A star shall come forth out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel.” The hope of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob became a reality when Jesus was born, and God’s Word took human form.

As we light this first Advent candle, we remember how the Forefathers were able to endure many difficulties because God had given them his promise of a greater salvation to come.

[Light the First Candle.]

Let us pray. Thank you, Lord, for the example of the Forefathers of our faith, who looked forward to the coming of Christ. Help us to live each day with the same steadfast hope of great things you will do to fulfill your purpose in each of us; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The Second Advent Candle: The Prophets

The people of Israel struggled through difficult times and dark days. Sometimes their leaders turned away from the Lord and led the people astray. When that happened, God judged them and let them fall into the hand of their enemies.

The prophets of Israel longed for a new leader who would turn the people back to God and make the nation strong again. The new leader would be the son of David, their great king. He would be called Messiah, which means *anointed one*.

Isaiah was a prophet who looked for God’s Messiah. He said, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” Another prophet, Malachi, said, “The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple.”

As we light this second Advent candle, we remember how the prophets of Israel kept alive the vision of the coming Messiah, or Christ. Their vision was fulfilled when Jesus came, and God said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!”

[Light the Second Candle.]

Let us pray. Lord, as we worship you today may we be filled with the same vision as the prophets of old. Help us to live in constant expectation that we will meet your Messiah in the events of our lives, and that he will be our Savior and Helper in all trials; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The Third Advent Candle: John the Baptist

Sin and indifference can keep us from meeting the Lord. Before we can see him at work, we need to prepare the way for his coming to us. We need to get the wrong things out of the way so his Word can take root in our lives.

Before Jesus came preaching about the kingdom of God, there was a man who prepared the way. His name was John, and he baptized people who confessed their sin and asked God’s forgiveness.

John said, “The One who is coming is greater than I am. I’m not even worthy to untie his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” When John saw Jesus coming, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.”

As we light this third Advent candle, we remember the witness of John the Baptist, and how we need to be prepared to meet Jesus by acknowledging our sin and asking God to cleanse us.

[Light the Third Candle.]

Let us pray. Father, we have all sinned and turned away from you. Forgive us, and help us to change our lives. Make us ready to meet the Lord as he calls to us, and comes to us; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The Fourth Advent Candle: The Virgin Mary

Sometimes God chooses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. He’s always looking for people willing to serve him. It’s not our ability, but our *availability*, that makes us useful to him.

When the time came for Jesus to be born, God chose someone nobody would have picked to be the mother of the Son of God. He sent his angel to a simple peasant girl from Galilee named Mary. The angel brought astounding news: “God has favored you. His Holy Spirit will come upon you, and you will be the mother of God’s Messiah.”

Becoming a mother, even the mother of God’s Son, wouldn’t be easy. Mary didn’t yet have a husband; what would people think? But she was available to God. She said, “I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me just as you have said.”

As we light this fourth Advent candle, we remember the Virgin Mary, and her humble faith that made her fit to be the mother of the Messiah.

[Light the Fourth Candle.]

Let us pray. Give us, O Lord, that same simple faith that Mary had, so you can use us for whatever purpose you plan for us. May we always be available to you, ready to serve you; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The Christ Candle

Before Jesus came, the world lay in darkness. People were far from God, not understanding his Word. But then, “the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth.”

Jesus came to us as a light for a darkened world. And he told us that we, too, were to be lights for the world. As we light the Christ Candle, let us remember that we are called to be light, reflecting the greater glory of the Son of God.

[Light the Christ Candle.]

Let us pray. Thank you, Lord, for the gift of light, shining upon us in the face of Jesus our Savior. May the light of Christ shine brightly in our hearts, guiding us through life and leading us to your truth; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*