

# *Living in the Light*

## Advent Week 1 Year A 2004 Liturgy of the Word for Children

Please note: Elements of this liturgy can be adapted for classroom prayer and ritual.

### The History and Background – The Advent Wreath



The Advent Wreath consists of a circle of evergreen foliage with 3 violet/purple candles and 1 rose candle placed in the circumference of the circle. A large white candle is placed in the centre of the wreath and purple or red ribbon is loosely wound around the evergreen foliage.

### Symbolism of the Advent Wreath

Using the Advent wreath to count the weeks before Christmas almost certainly originated in ancient harvest festivals of northern Europe. Evergreen branches were draped as decoration and wound round wagon wheels brought inside for the winter. These year-end celebrations were marked as well by feasting and the lighting of lamps against the growing darkness. Early Christians adapted these traditions to fit their celebration of the birth of Christ. Although Advent wreaths originated as and remain primarily a tradition for the home, many parishes now incorporate them into the liturgical environment. The Advent wreath stands in our midst as symbol of Christ who comes to save us.

The growing light of the Advent wreath is a symbol of Christ who shatters the darkness of sin and death. Each week as the light grows stronger; we grow stronger too in our reverence for and commitment to Christ. The growing light helps us recognize Christ not only in the historical event we celebrate at Christmas but in our lives today and in the hope we carry as we prepare for the coming fullness of God's reign.

Evergreen branches also symbolize Christ, as evergreens stand firm against the barren winter, Christ stands firm against the barrenness of sin and death, beckoning us to eternal life. The circular shape of the wreath reminds us that all is complete in Christ and that all is brought to perfect union in him.



Artwork by Dorothy Woodward rsj

Violet candles are used in the Advent wreath to remind us of the season's joyful penitence. A rose coloured candle often marks the third Sunday, reminding us that the promise of salvation draws near and that the great feast of Christmas is just around the corner.

The window created by a suspended Advent wreath reminds us of Christ as gateway to eternal life. Certainly not all parishes can or wish to suspend the wreath, but for those who do, the view from beneath it can be a striking reminder that we are a pilgrim people still making our way home. We gaze up through the evergreen branches to catch a glimpse of eternity where there is light and warmth and life unending.

## **Gathering Hymn & Entrance Procession: LIVING IN THE LIGHT (As One Voice For Kids)**

During the singing of the Gathering Hymn, the Procession makes its way into the worship space.

### **Order of Procession:**

- Processional Cross bearer
- Advent Wreath bearer
- Lectionary bearer
- Presider

The Lectionary is enthroned in the sacred space and the Advent Wreath is placed on a table draped in purple cloth in a central position for all to see.

### **Welcome & Blessing of the Advent Wreath:**

The Presider welcomes the community. A little child, (who is natural and spontaneous, aged about 5-7years), comes up to the Presider and asks what an Advent Wreath is. (The Presider will need to share her/his microphone with the child so that they child can be heard). The Presider bends down to the child and responds with a simple statement such as, **“Let me explain”**. S/he invites the community to be seated. The Presider takes the little child by the hand to the table. Bending down to the Wreath, the Presider asks the child to count the number of candles in the Wreath. The child counts out through the microphone 5 candles. The Presider then says, **These candles remind us of what Advent is about. Advent is a special time in our Church when we prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of Jesus. The colours of the candles and the ribbons around them, tell us something of the meaning of Advent. Can you tell me the colours you see here?** The little child names the colours of the candles, 3 purple, 1 rose colour and 1 white candle. The Presider then explains how the purple colour (touching the candles and ribbon) reminds us to prepare our hearts for Jesus’ birth by doing good things; being generous in our love and care. We light these during the first three weeks of Advent. The rose candle (touching the candle and ribbon) reminds us of the joy and excitement we feel as we move closer to Christmas the celebration of Jesus’ birth. We light this in the fourth week of Advent. The white candle (touching it) is a sign of Jesus’ light that has come into our world. We light this on Christmas Day.

The child then asks about the circle of evergreens. The Presider explains, as s/he and the child run their fingers around the circle of greenery, that this circle is a sign of God’s endless, life-giving love for us.

The Presider then invites the little child to help her/him bless the Advent Wreath.

### **Presider:**

**God of all life, this wreath reminds us of your endless love for us. It is a sign of our waiting and longing for the celebration of the birth of your Son Jesus. Bless this wreath** (Presider makes the Sign of the Cross over the wreath) **that it may be a holy sign that leads us more deeply in our Advent journey into the mystery of your love for us.**

The Presider then sprinkles the Advent Wreath with generous amounts of Holy Water. S/he then invites the little child to sprinkle holy water on the Wreath and then assists the child in lighting the first Advent Candle. As this is being done play some appropriate instrumental music.

**Presider:**

**May the light of this candle remind us to live in the light of Jesus' love, by doing good for all during this time of Advent.**

The little child and Presider bow to the Advent Wreath and the child returns to her/his place.

**Penitential Rite**

**Presider:**

**As we prepare to hear God's holy Word, let us pause a moment to consider how we have lived in the Light of Jesus.**

(PAUSE)

**Presider: Lord Jesus, you are the Light of the world. When we do not recognise your living light in our lives, Lord have mercy.**

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

**Presider: Lord Jesus, you want for us to live in your light. When we fail to do this by not loving one another, Christ have mercy.**

**All: Christ have mercy.**

**Presider: Lord Jesus, your light overcomes all darkness. When we stumble and lose our way in the dark, Lord have mercy.**

**All: Lord have mercy.**

**Presider: God of Light, forgive us our failings and help us to be children of the light. We ask this in the name of Jesus our Light.**

**All: Amen.**

**Opening Prayer**

**Presider:**

**Let us pray. God of Jesus, who is light for our world, as we begin our Advent journey, be with us as we strive to live in the light. We make our prayer in our Saviour's name.**

**All: Amen.**

**First Reading: ROMANS 13: 11-13a**

**Sung Response: COME LORD, JESUS (Hi God 2)**

**Gospel Acclamation: PREPARE YE (Musical 'Godspell')**

**Gospel: MATTHEW 24: 37- 44**

**Homily:**

Reflect with the community on the readings and the call to live in the light. Invite the children to give examples of how they can live in the light of Jesus. Conclude by directing them to be still, to close their eyes and reflect silently on one way they can try to live in the light of Jesus, in a special way during this Advent season.

### **Prayer of the Faithful**

#### **Presider:**

With confident trusting hearts we bring our prayers and our needs before our gracious God.

#### **Reader:**

Living Light, we pray for our community gathered here today that our Advent journey may bring us closer to you as we prepare for the coming of Jesus. Lord, hear us.

**All:** Hear our prayer. May we live in your Light.

#### **Reader:**

Living Light, we pray for those whose lives seem dark and hopeless. Lift their darkness from them and help them to find their way. Lord, hear us.

**All:** Hear our prayer. May we live in your Light.

#### **Reader:**

Living Light, we pray that our hearts, minds and spirits may be ready to receive your Son Jesus who is born in our hearts. Lord, hear us.

**All:** Hear our prayer. May we live in your Light.

#### **Reader:**

Living Light, we pray for so many of our brothers and sisters around the world who live with war and poverty. May we reflect your radiant light by doing what we can to ease their suffering. Lord, hear us.

**All:** Hear our prayer. May we live in your Light.

#### **Reader:**

Living Light, we pause now to pray for the silent needs in our own hearts.  
(PAUSE)  
Lord, hear us.

**All:** Hear our prayer. May we live in your Light.

#### **Presider:**

Gracious God, hear the prayers of your children. As we begin our journey of Advent may we walk in the light of Christ.

### **Ritual of Light**

Play quiet instrumental music, as class representatives come forward in procession with a class Advent Candle which they light from the lit candle in the Wreath. (Infant children may need a senior student to assist them with this). When they return to their class group they hold the candle high as the concluding prayer is said.

### **Closing Prayer**

#### **Presider:**

Let us pray.

**God of Light, you call us to live in your light by living as Jesus has shown us. As we begin this journey of Advent in preparation for Jesus' coming, may we learn to live as children of the light in all we do. We make our prayer through Jesus who lights our way.**

**All: Amen.**

**Final Hymn: CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT (Children of the Light)**

During this final hymn the children process out in their class groups, lead by their candle bearer, who leads them back to their classroom. (Have a cover to place over the candle flame to prevent it from being extinguished by the wind). When the children gather in their classroom, the candle bearer enthrones the Advent candle in the class sacred space, and all the children sing an appropriate hymn together. During the weeks of Advent light this candle during class prayer.

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**Duration of Liturgy:** Approximately 30 minutes

**Props & Resources:**

- Processional Cross
- Bowl of holy water & small branch for sprinkling
- Advent Wreath constructed from greenery & purple ribbon with 3 purple candles, 1 rose pink candle, 1 white candle
- Taper & matches
- Lectionary
- Small table draped with purple cloth
- An Advent candle for each class

**People Required:**

- Processional Cross bearer
- Advent Wreath bearer
- Lectionary bearer
- A little child for the Lighting of the Advent Candle
- Reader for First Reading
- 5 readers for Prayer of the Faithful
- Class representatives to light their class Advent candle

**Music Suggestions:**

These songs and hymns are suggestions only – you would know others that are suitable for this liturgy. The important thing about choosing music is that whatever is chosen needs to support and enhance the ritual for which it is being used. (See notes on the Music Resource Page on this site)

- **Living in the Light** ( David MacGregor – As One Voice for Kids)
- **Come Lord Jesus** (Carey Landry – Hi God 2)
- **Prepare Ye** (Musical "Godspell")
- **Children of the Light** (Michael Mangan – Children of the Light)