

The Season of
ADVENT



CHURCH OF THE
GOOD SHEPHERD
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

What is Advent?

Advent is a meaningful season in the Christian calendar, a time of anticipation and preparation for the celebration of Jesus Christ's birth. As we move toward Christmas, we reflect, pray, and prepare our hearts and minds for Christ's coming. The word "Advent" comes from a Latin root meaning "arrival" or "coming," and it reminds us of both Christ's birth in Bethlehem and our hope for His return.

Advent spans four weeks, beginning on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and culminating on Christmas Eve. In 2024, Advent begins on Sunday, December 1, and continues through the following Sundays:

First Sunday of Advent: December 1, 2024

Second Sunday of Advent: December 8, 2024

Third Sunday of Advent: December 15, 2024

Fourth Sunday of Advent: December 22, 2024

Each week of Advent represents a key theme: hope, peace, joy, and love. These themes help us focus on the true meaning of Christmas, encouraging us to seek God more deeply, share love with others, and prepare for Jesus' arrival.

The Themes of Advent

Hope: In the first week, we light the "Prophecy Candle" and reflect on the hope found in the promise of the coming Messiah. We remember the hope God offers, and we look forward to celebrating Jesus' birth.

Peace: In the second week, we light the "Bethlehem Candle," symbolizing the peace that Christ brings. We seek to be at peace with God and each other as we prepare for Christmas.

Joy: The third week, marked by the pink "Shepherd's Candle," invites us to rejoice. It reminds us of the joy that the birth of Jesus brings to our lives and our faith community.

Love: In the final week, we light the "Angels' Candle," focusing on God's love for us and our call to show love to others. This week encourages us to serve one another and embody the love of Christ.

How We Celebrate Advent

During Advent, we use an Advent wreath, which includes four candles (three purple, one pink) arranged in a circle, representing the four weeks of the season. Each week, a candle is lit, reminding us of the light Christ brings into the world. On Christmas Eve, the central "Christ Candle" is lit, symbolizing the arrival of Jesus, the Light of the World.

Other traditions during Advent include daily scripture readings, prayers, and devotionals. Many families enjoy using Advent calendars to count down the days, adding joy and anticipation as we prepare for Christmas.

The Significance of Advent

Advent invites us to pause amidst the busyness of the season and focus on what truly matters. It calls us to reflect on God's great love and prepare our hearts for the joy of Christ's birth. It's a time to seek forgiveness, cultivate gratitude, and embrace hope.

As we journey through Advent, may we be reminded that this season is not only about celebrating the birth of Jesus but also about renewing our commitment to Him, living out our faith, and sharing His love with others. Let us prepare with hearts full of hope, peace, joy, and love, as we look forward to the wonder of Christmas together.

Blessings,
Pastor Sarah

Church of the Good Shepherd, United Church of Christ
Albuquerque, New Mexico
Pastor: Rev. Dr. Sarah TevisTownes