

# Fourth Sunday of Advent



Advent is a season of waiting. It's a time to reflect on the Old Testament promises of the one who is to come. It's a reminder that we're part of a much bigger story. It's a season to anticipate the miracle that God would come, as a baby, to us.

For many people, the practice of lighting candles around an Advent wreath is a familiar part of worship in this season. Although this is a part of corporate worship in many congregations, it has become increasingly popular as part of worship at home. And this insert is a resource that may help in your home worship during this season as we make sure Jesus is at the center of our lives and this season.

This resource can be used with any candles, but will best be used with an Advent wreath. An Advent wreath has four outer candles. They can be purple, blue, white, red- the color doesn't matter. Some Advent candles have one different color (example: one rose colored candle and three purple ones.) The "different" candle is traditionally lit on the Third Sunday of Advent: historically a day of joy amid a very reverent and contemplative season. A candle in the center of the wreath, often called the "Christ Candle" is lit for the first time on Christmas Eve, and again through the Day of Epiphany. Traditionally this is a white candle – again, color is not important.

Lighting the Advent and Christ candles is a way of remembering – setting this apart as a season of holy waiting, and taking the opportunity to remember that God, who makes promises, is always faithful to fulfill them.

## Lighting the Fourth Advent Candle

### Prophecy from Micah

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.

Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor bears a son, and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites.

He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be our peace. (Micah 5:2-5a)

### Light All the Advent Candles

The prophet Micah reminds us that Jesus is our shepherd. "I am the good shepherd." said Jesus. "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep: (John 10:11) Today we light the Advent candle to remind us of the Shepherd's love, for Jesus also says, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:14. May our love for Jesus and our friends be the same.

### Prayer

God of grace,  
your eternal Word  
took on human flesh  
and came to live among us  
when Mary placed her life  
at the service of your will.  
Prepare our hearts for his coming again;  
keep us steadfast in hope  
and faithful in service,  
that we may receive  
the coming of his kingdom,  
for the sake of Jesus Christ the ruler of all,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever. Amen.