

Some Advent Practices for Your Family

The Advent Wreath



- The traditional Advent wreath includes evergreens arranged in a circle with three purple candles and a pink candle, all the same size, lining the inside edge of that circle. One taller white candle is set in the middle of the circle.
- The wreath is circular, like God's eternal love. It has no beginning and no end.
- Wreaths are traditionally dressed with evergreens, symbolizing endless life. Since actual evergreens are highly flammable, consider using some artificial greenery, or decorate your wreath in a different way.

- The purple candles represent both repentance and royalty, and the pink candle, used the third week, is Mary's candle, the candle of joy. The center candle is the Christ candle.
- We often use a word for each week of Advent, as we light each candle. Week 1 is "hope," week 2 is "peace," week 3 is "joy" and week 4 is "love."

Clearing the Path for the Journey

The month of December can quickly become chaotic. There are pressures to do things certain ways, to keep traditions, to go to a lot of extra events, to travel and to make things special, not to mention the weird family dynamics that seem to assert themselves around the holidays.

Some of these pressures are out of our hands, but we do have some control over at least some of them. *Before* you dive into the season, sit down as a household and prioritize. List out the many calls for your time and attention that are going to come your way. Discern which are non-negotiable, which really aren't necessary and which give life and joy.

Ask: "How do we clear our path so that we can be present on this journey toward the birth of Jesus?"

Journey to the Manger

This simple daily or weekly ritual is a visual way to anticipate the birth of Christ.

1. Set up a simple, unadorned nativity crèche. Maybe you have a nativity structure you want to use, but this could also be something you create.
 - a. "Simple and unadorned" is enough! But if you want an extra challenge, you could decorate the crèche a little more each week to prepare it for Jesus.
2. Place Mary and Joseph somewhere in your home to the north of the manger and place the Magi somewhere to the east. Hide Jesus for now.
3. Each day of Advent, move Mary and Joseph a little closer to the manger, letting them land at the manger on Dec. 24.
4. You may want to also place your shepherds nearby, instead of at the manger, so that you can move them in to worship Jesus on Christmas Day. On Dec. 25, Christmas Day, add Jesus to the manger.
5. After Christmas, begin moving the Magi closer each day, letting them arrive to worship Jesus on Jan. 6, Epiphany.

Taken from "Together on the Journey" Advent at Home Worship Guide 2024 by Mennonite Education Agency.