



ADVENT, A TIME FOR PREPARING

(Three readers are needed for this program that could be presented at a society meeting, used in conjunction with a workshop to make Advent wreaths, or as a mid-week congregational service.)

Props: *Advent wreath, three purple candles, one pink candle and a larger white Christ candle for the center of the wreath. The candles are lit during the presentation.*

Reader 1: Read Luke 2:8-15

Sing: “Angels We Have Heard On High” *LW 55*, or
“Angels from the Realms of Glory” *LW 50, TLH 136*

Reader 2: As we look back to the first Christmas, we can scarcely imagine what a wondrous time it was as the shepherds looked to the heavens and, in the night sky, saw the glory of God shining on them and heard the angels singing. Through the prophets, God had prepared the world, and now the time was right for Him to send His Son.

A world of peace and goodwill toward all is not what the Christ Child entered. Instead, He was born into a world of darkness; a world that had disease, greed, cruel leaders, and beggars in the streets and a king who wanted to kill Him. Sounds somewhat like the headlines of today, doesn't it? And, sad as it is, the world is still shrouded in the darkness of disease, greed, poverty and killing.

In this Advent season, it's time to take a look at the darkness that surrounds our own lives. It is time to sweep our hearts clean of the dust and cobwebs put there by jealousy, anger, resentment, or hatred. It's time to throw out the prejudices, the vanity, the pride and the old ways that cause us to stumble and struggle. We, too, as the shepherds did, must turn our eyes heavenward and listen for the voices of the angels. When we do, even though our lives have been sinful, we need not despair. We follow Christ from the manger to the cross, and because we do, we know that He has brought a light to the darkness of sin in our lives.

Reader 3: Advent helps us to remember that, even though the world is surrounded in darkness, the power of the Light is in our lives. To remind us of this Light, we can make the Advent wreath a beautiful focal point in our daily Advent worship. As we light an additional candle each week, we see that the light becomes stronger. We can be confident in believing that Jesus Christ does, indeed, have power over the darkness.

Reader 1: The circular shape of the wreath signifies no beginning...no end. God loved us before we were born and will love us forever through Jesus, our Savior. The evergreens that cover the wreath remind us that green is the color of life, our life in God. A life that we pray

will be healthy and show continual growth. The three purple candles represent repentance and longing. The pink candle signifies Joy. The large white candle in the center is the Christ candle.

Reader 2: We light the first candle, a purple one in the 9 o'clock position, with expectation. (*Light the first candle.*) Read Isaiah 40:3.

We prepare the way in our lives by clearing away obstacles so Christ can enter in. We clear away obstacles by being repentant. With repentance, we can believe God's promise - "*I will remember their sins no more.*" Jeremiah 31:34

Sing: "Prepare the Royal Highway" Stanza 1 & 4, *LW 27*, or
"Ye Sons of Men, Oh, Hearken" Stanza 1 & 2, *TLH 75*

We Pray: Almighty God, thank You for keeping Your promises. Thank You for sending Your Son as a baby to be like us, to teach us, to guide us, and to save us. Help us with our preparations that all we do, we do to Your glory. Amen.

Reader 3: The second candle, a purple one in the 6 o'clock position, is lit with hope during the second week of Advent. (*Light the second candle.*) Read 1 Timothy 4:9-10. In Christ Jesus, the Living God, and Him alone is there hope.

Sing: "Come, O Precious Ransom" Stanza 1, *LW 34*, *TLH 55*

We Pray: Heavenly Father, without You in our lives there is no hope. We thank You for the heavenly home You have prepared for us through Christ our Savior, the mercy You have shown us and the love You have showered upon us. In our preparations, let us not forget to give words of encouragement to those in need of uplifting. Amen.

Reader 1: The third candle, the only pink one, standing in the 3 o'clock position, is lit with joy during the third week of Advent. (*Light the third candle.*) Read Isaiah 49:13.

Because we are redeemed and saved, not only will we be comforted, but also our great God will look upon us with compassion. Why? Because He loves us, He has called us by name and we belong to Him.

Sing: "Joy to the World" *LW 53*, *TLH 87*

We Pray: God in the highest, we thank You for who we are and what You have made us. May we always make it our responsibility to share joy with those we meet so that in us they will see the face of Jesus. Amen.

Reader 2: As the fourth candle, the purple one in the 12 o'clock position, is lit during the last week of Advent, we know that God accepts us as His own through the covenant established by His Son, the Messiah. (*Light the fourth candle.*) Read Malachi 3:1-5.

God's coming will mean purification, judgment and redemption, but in His loving mercy, He first sent His Son to show us the way.

Sing: "Comfort, Comfort These My People" *LW 28, TLH 61*

We Pray: Loving Father, it is beyond the scope of our imagination to be able to comprehend how much You love us. Open our hearts to receive You and let our dear Lord enter in. Amen.

Reader 3: Finally, on Christmas Eve we light the Christ Child candle to proclaim that the Light of the World has come. (*Light the Christ candle.*) Read 2 Corinthians 4:6.

From this humble birth in a stable came the One who leads us from the darkness into the light; the One who shows us, by His example, how to live; the One who loved you and me so much that He was willing to travel to Calvary for each of us.

Sing: "Away in a Manger" *LW 64*

We Pray: O Gracious God, thank You for sending Jesus to Bethlehem. Amen.

Reader 1: As we leave this group to go our separate ways, we leave with the assurance that God loves us. He loves us in spite of our shortcomings, our failures, and our inaction. He loves us and made us His very own through our baptism into Christ. He loves us enough to have given us a Light that has no equal, His Son, Jesus, who paid for our sin. We leave to prepare our hearts and to shout with joy, "Come, Lord Jesus. Come."