

The Advent Wreath



Advent

Advent is the time before Christmas.

It begins on Advent Sunday, which this year is 2nd December 2018.

It is a time of preparation for Christmas.

Many Christians believe it is also a time for prayer, reflecting on past choices and how to make better decisions in the coming weeks.



Did You Know?

The word 'wreath' comes from an old English word 'wriþa', which means 'to twist'.

Candles

Four candles are displayed around the wreath and the fifth candle is set in the middle. A candle is lit each Sunday before Christmas Day.

In many churches, there are three purple candles and one pink candle around the edge, with a white candle in the middle.



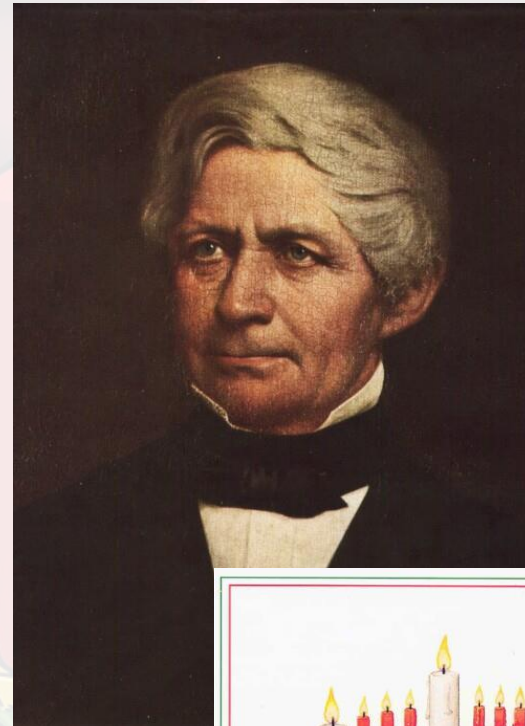
- **On the first Sunday, a purple candle (the candle of hope) is lit.**
- **On the second Sunday, a purple candle the (candle of preparation) is lit.**
- **On the third Sunday, a pink candle (the candle of joy) is lit.**
- **On the fourth Sunday, a purple candle (the candle of love) is lit.**
- **On Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, the white candle (the Christ candle) is lit.**

Often, Advent wreaths are often red or white.

Click on the candles to find out what they represent.

The First Advent Wreath

The first Advent wreath was thought to have been created in 1839 by a German minister named Johann Wichern. He was the founder of a children's home. A year after opening the home, the children kept asking him when it was Christmas. To stop the children asking him constantly, he lit a white candle each Sunday and a smaller red candle for each weekday so they knew how many days there were until Christmas.



Leaves

Advent wreaths are made using the leaves of evergreen plants, mainly because other trees have lost their leaves by the time it is Advent. However, evergreens also have a symbolic meaning too. Leaves from holly and pine trees are ideal as they thrive during the cold winter months.



The Circular Wreath

The Advent wreath has different meanings for different people. Some believe it is circular because it represents the seasons changing, the beginning of another year and the continuation of life. Christians believe that the circle represents God's love being everlasting or the immortality of the soul.



Evergreen Leaves

Some people believe holly used in an Advent wreath represents the crown of thorns Jesus wore when he was crucified on Good Friday.

However, others believe that pine and holly are symbolic of immortality and that cedar leaves represent strength and healing.



What Do the Candles Represent?

The candles represent light in the darkness. The flames give light during the dark winter months.

Christians use the white candle in the centre to represent Jesus being born and being the 'Light of the World', guiding people out of the darkness of misery into the light of God's love.

Lighting the candles can also be seen as a sign of expectation and hope.



What Does the Advent Wreath Mean to You?

Whatever people believe, Advent wreaths are a way to look forward to Christmas and to reflect on how we can help others.



