

Emmanuel, God With Us

A 4-part set of Advent readings for year C, or any year

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Notes about Advent:

Churches use Advent liturgy for at least these 5 reasons:

1. We live as citizens of God's Kingdom on earth. This kingdom has its own calendar, which begins each year on the first Sunday of Advent (the fourth Sunday prior to Christmas Day). If congregations live as citizens of God's Kingdom, they need to know its calendar.
2. An Advent liturgy is a nice prelude to Christmas season messages, and it works in very small or very large churches.
3. It is especially comforting for parishioners who grew up in formal traditions.
4. It offers creative writers an outlet for their gift.
5. It is an opportunity to involve several people in the worship experience.

There are 5 Advent candles, available from various Christian supply stores. In stores, they are a bit expensive, but you can just as easily get the traditional colors of candles from anywhere. Three of the candles are purple, 1 is pink, and 1 is white. They are arranged in a circle of 4 candles surrounding the white one, which is called the "Christ candle." On the 1st Sunday of Advent, have some parishioners light one purple candle and read/recite the liturgy. On the 2nd Sunday, light two purple candles and do the reading. On the 3rd Sunday, light the two purple candles and the pink one. On the 4th Sunday light the two purple candles, the pink one, and the last purple candle. On Christmas Eve/Day, light all the surrounding candles, and finally the white "Christ candle."

The Advent Readers generally enter the worship area from the back, carrying a lit candle-lighter (such as in a wedding), or they can use a cigarette lighter. Avoid matches because of the smell. The Advent team walks to the front, lights the appropriate candle(s), and then reads that day's reading. You can do this anytime in the service. Once lit, leave the candles to burn throughout the rest of the service.

Notes on Advent during remote worship:

One option if you are worshiping remotely, either pre-recorded or via zoom, is to distribute one or more candles ahead of time to five families or individuals and ask them each to make a short video of themselves lighting the candle and doing the readings.

You can download this file to your computer by clicking on the File pulldown menu >> Download as... and choose the file type you want. Once it's on your computer you can edit it all you want.

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First Sunday of Advent: Emmanuel in the Valley

Suitable for 2 adults or teens. Light candle at start or end of readings. Scriptures are adapted from the New Living Translation.

Reader 1: It's getting dark. There are earthquakes and floods and forest fires. People are hurting. Where is Jesus?

Reader 2: I'm afraid. Things are changing too fast for me. I'm not sure what to do. I feel lost. Where is Jesus?

Reader 1: What does the Bible say? What does Jesus say?

Reader 2: Jesus says, "The nations will be in turmoil, perplexed by the roaring seas and strange tides. People will be terrified at what they see coming, and all the powers will be shaken."

Reader 1: "Then everyone will see the Son of Man coming on a cloud with power and great glory. So when all these things begin to happen, stand and look up, for your salvation is near!"

Reader 2: Psalm 25 says, "Show me the right path, O Lord; point out the road for me to follow."

Reader 1: "Lead me by your truth and teach me, for you are the God who saves me. All day long I put my hope in you."

Reader 2: Where is Jesus? Jesus is here. Jesus is with us.

Reader 1: In the dark, in the shadow. Jesus is with us, leading us home.

Reader 2: Today we light the first candle of Advent. When you see this candle, look up, for your salvation is near!

Both: God is with us.

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Second Sunday of Advent: Emmanuel In the Dry Desert

Suitable for 2 adults or teens. Light candles at start or end of readings. Scriptures are adapted from the New Living Translation.

Reader 1: I'm tired. I'm thirsty. Nothing seems to go my way. I've been praying, but I'm not hearing anything back. Where is Jesus?

Reader 2: I'm alone. I'm dried up. I see all the decorations, but I don't see Jesus.

Reader 1: What does the Bible say? What does Jesus say?

Reader 2: A message from God came to John, who was living in the wilderness. Then John went from place to place, preaching that people should be baptized to show they had repented of their sins and turned to God.

Reader 1: John said, "Prepare the way for the Lord! Clear the road for him! The valleys will be filled, and the mountains and hills made level. The curves will be straightened, and the rough places made smooth. And then all people will see God's salvation."

Reader 2: The prophet Malachi warns, "Who will be able to endure it when he comes? Who will be able to stand and face him when he appears? For he will be like a blazing fire that refines metal, or like a strong soap that bleaches clothes."

Reader 1: Jesus answers when he says, "Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.'"

Reader 2: Where is Jesus? Jesus is here, pouring out living water for us to drink.

Reader 1: Today we light the second candle of Advent. When you see this candle, imagine a glass of water in a dry, desert place. That's the gift Jesus gives.

Both: God is with us.

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Third Sunday of Advent: Emmanuel In the Stormy Season

Suitable for 2 adults or teens. Light candles at start or end of readings. Scriptures are adapted from the New Living Translation.

Reader 1: I'm sad. I've lost people that I love. The news is full of destruction and death. Where is Jesus?

Reader 2: There's a storm crashing around me. I hear noise and thunder, but I don't hear Jesus.

Reader 1: What does the Bible say? What does Jesus say?

Reader 2: The prophet Isaiah says, "Look, God has come to save me. I will trust in him and not be afraid. The Lord God is my strength and my song."

Reader 1: Another prophet says, "Don't be afraid! For the Lord your God is living among you. He is a mighty savior. With his love, he will calm all your fears."

Reader 2: God says, "I will save the weak and helpless ones; I will bring together those who were chased away. I will gather you together and bring you home again."

Reader 1: The apostle Paul says, "Remember, the Lord is coming soon. Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done."

Reader 2: "Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."

Reader 1: Today we light the third candle of Advent. When you see this candle, tell God what you need. Listen for Jesus.

Both: God is with us.

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Fourth Sunday of Advent: Emmanuel God With Us

Suitable for 2 or 3 adults or teens (3rd person can help light candles as indicated in script).

Scriptures are adapted from the New Living Translation.

Reader 1: In the dark and difficult parts of our lives, Jesus is with us. (light 1st candle)

Reader 2: When we're hungry and thirsty, when our spirit is exhausted and dried up, Jesus is with us. (light 2nd candle)

Reader 1: When we experience sadness and loss, Jesus is still with us. (light 3rd candle)

Reader 2: Two thousand years ago, a pregnant teenage girl wrote this song, praising God for sending his son Jesus: (light 4th candle)

Reader 1: "Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! From now on all generations will call me blessed. For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me."

Reader 2: "He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him. He has scattered the proud and boastful ones. He has brought down princes from their thrones and lifted up the humble."

Reader 1: "He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands."

Reader 2: "He has helped his servant Israel and remembered to be merciful. For he made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever."

Reader 1: God does not abandon us. God does not leave us alone. He is here, he is with us, in this room and in our hearts.

Reader 1: Today we light the last Advent candle, the Christ candle. When you see this candle, remember that Jesus was, in the beginning, Jesus is today, and Jesus will come again.

Both: God is with us.