

Mission and Service Candle-Lighting Services for Worship and Home

Introduction

Here are two ideas for Advent candle-lighting: one for worship services and one to be used at home by your church families.

Mission and Service Candle-Lighting for Worship

Hope, peace, joy, and love are favourite themes for Advent. This candle-lighting service for worship is based on those themes and celebrates them as gifts we receive, as well as gifts that we give to others through the Mission and Service work of the church. The bible references are from the appropriate lectionary readings for Year B.

The service can be read by families or other groups as you decide. Each is divided into parts or “voices” to be assigned to any number of people or, if you wish, to be read by one person. Music is suggested [*Voices United* (VU) #6 “A Candle Is Burning” or #7 “Hope Is a Star”], but you may choose a different hymn that is a favourite of your congregation and insert when indicated.

It will be appropriate to include Mission and Service in the invitation for the offering. You may use an invitation such as the following:

*As we come to present our offerings,
we remember God’s generous gifts to us.
This season we are called to share the gifts
of hope, peace, joy, and love with others.
Through the mission of our church
and the service we offer others,
we too can be a light in the world.*

Advent 1 (Scripture: Isaiah 64:8; 1 Corinthians 1:3–9)

Print the Advent prayer in the bulletin for reading together. Ask the congregation to open their hymn books to the hymn you have chosen.

Voice: Jesus is coming and we are preparing to welcome him again into the world and into our lives. We light the Advent candles to celebrate the gifts we are given and to name the gifts we can offer to others.

Voice: The prophet Isaiah declares that we are like clay and God is the potter. We are the work of God’s hands, and we have the potential to be greatly transformed. Paul reminds us that, in Jesus, we have been blessed in every way, and likewise we can be a blessing to others. These are both statements of great hope.

Voice: We light the first Advent candle of hope.

A person lights the first candle, the candle of hope, and says:

Voice: This small flickering light of hope can do great things. Hold it high to light a path or add it to others to brighten a whole room. The flame of hope is an Advent gift given to us that can dispel fear, lift despair, and offer a promise of better times.

Congregation sings the first verse of VU 6 or 7 or a similar hymn of your choice.

Voice: As we look at this candle, we celebrate the hope we have received in Jesus. Likewise we recognize that we ourselves are a gift of hope: to many in this community and to many more around the world. Through the Mission and Service work in the church, we give hope to those who are hungry, homeless, sick, or in danger. They can count on us to lend support.

Voice: Let us pray together:

**Loving God, as we remember and anticipate
the arrival of Jesus in the world,
we rejoice in the gift of hope.
Help us today and every day to be grateful,
to hear your word, and to do your will
by sharing hope with others.
We ask it in the name
of the one born in Bethlehem. Amen**

Advent 2 (Scripture: Isaiah 40:11; 2 Peter 3:13–14)

Print the Advent prayer in the bulletin for reading together. Ask the congregation to open their hymn books to the hymn you have chosen.

Voice: Jesus is coming and we are preparing to welcome him again into the world and into our lives. We light the Advent candles to celebrate the gifts we are given and to name the gifts we can offer to others.

Voice: Last Sunday, we lit the first candle in our Advent wreath, the candle of hope. We light it again and remember the Advent gift of hope.

A person lights the candle of hope.

Voice: Isaiah paints a peaceful picture of God, the shepherd, feeding the flock: God lifts and carries the lambs, and gently leads the mother sheep. Peter reminds us of God's promise of a new heaven and a new earth, where justice reigns. In Advent, be at peace and be patient, we are told.

Voice: Today, we light the second candle of Advent, the candle of peace.

A person lights the second candle, the candle of peace and says:

Voice: As we light this candle we celebrate the peace we are given in our minds and hearts when we come to God in faith. We look forward to the promised day when nations will live together in peace; and when we learn, not about war, but about God and one another.

Congregation sings first two verses of VU 6 or 7 or similar hymn of your choice.

Voice: This light might be a candle lit in remembrance at a shrine or it might be waved with others at a peace vigil. We long for the gift of peace for our world, and we offer our support to those who struggle to make that happen. Through the Mission and Service of the church, we stand with others to bring peace to the world.

Voice: Let us pray together:

**Loving God, we thank you
for the gift of Jesus, light of the world.
We are thankful for peace
in our hearts at Christmas,
and we hear your call for us
to be peace-makers in the world.
Help us today and every day to be grateful,
to hear your word, and to do your will
by sharing peace with others.
We ask it in the name
of the one born again in our hearts. Amen**

Advent 3 (Scripture: Psalm 126:2–3, 1 Thessalonians 5:16–24)

Print the Advent prayer in the bulletin for reading together. Ask the congregation to open their hymn books to the hymn you have chosen.

Voice: Jesus is coming and we are preparing to welcome him again into the world and into our lives. We light the Advent candles to celebrate the gifts we are given and to name the gifts we can offer to others.

Voice: Last Sunday, the candle of peace was lit. We light it and the candle of hope, being thankful for these Advent gifts.

A person lights the candles of hope and peace.

Voice: The psalmist says that when the people saw the great things that God had done, they rejoiced with mouths filled with laughter and shouts of joy. Jesus tells us to rejoice and to nourish, not quench, our spirit. Christians are called to be thankful and joyful people!

Voice: Today, we light the third candle of Advent, the candle of joy.

A person lights the third candle and says:

Voice: This small candle of joy has great power. Touch it to dry kindling and a campfire springs to life, bringing warmth and light to a circle of happy faces. This day, we remember the joy and wonder of Mary and Elizabeth, and the angels singing joy to the world. We are thankful for the joy we experience especially in this season.

Sing the first three verses of VU 6 or 7 or a similar hymn of your choice.

Voice: Joy is a gift we can share with others. Through example and through deed, our joyful living and faithful living spread happiness to others. Through the Mission and Service of the church, we offer the joy of new beginnings and new possibilities: microloans for new businesses, health care for new moms and babies, school supplies for children, and training for those called to ministry.

Voice: Let us pray together:

**Loving God, we thank you for the joy
you give to our lives in so many ways.**

**As we anticipate once more
the arrival of Jesus in the world,
we celebrate with joy.**

**Help us today and every day to be grateful,
to hear your word, and to do your will
by sharing joy with others.**

**We ask it in the name
of the one born of Mary. Amen**

Advent 4 (Scripture: Psalm 89:1–4, 19–26; Luke 1:47–55)

Print the Advent prayer in the bulletin for reading together. Ask the congregation to open their hymn books to the hymn you have chosen.

Voice: Jesus is coming and we are preparing to welcome him again into the world and into our lives. We light the Advent candles to celebrate the gifts we are given and to name the gifts we can offer to others.

Voice: Last Sunday, we lit the candle of joy. We light it and the candles of hope and peace again in gratitude.

A person lights the candles of hope, peace, and joy.

Voice: The psalmist sings of God's steadfast love, God's faithfulness as firm as the heavens. The gospel describes God's love: it blesses us; it is merciful, strong and protective; it is benevolent and true.

Voice: The fourth candle of Advent is the candle of love. Jesus shows us God's perfect love.

A person lights the fourth candle and says:

Voice: Just as a candle shines a welcome in a window, so God's love invites and welcomes us home. Just as the glow of birthday candles reflects love and celebration, God's gift of Jesus reflects the greatest love for us.

Sing verses one through four of VU 6 or 7 or a similar hymn of your choice.

Voice: Love is also a gift we give to others. Through the example of God's perfect love, we offer love to others that is patient, kind, respectful, and enduring. Through the Mission and Service work of the church we love and serve others around the world: in Canadian hospitals, African refugee camps, Caribbean schools and villages, rural areas in China, and along the wall in the Middle East.

Voice: Let us pray together:

**Loving God, we thank you for your gift of love
shown to us perfectly in Jesus.**

You have given us so much:

**help us to give even a little
to those who need our gifts.**

**Help us today and every day to be grateful,
to hear your word, and to do your will
by sharing joy with others.**

**We ask it in the name
of the one born for us. Amen**

Christmas Eve Candle Lighting

Print the prayer in the bulletin for reading together. You may also print the creed or ask the congregation to have their Voices United turned to page 918.

Voice: Jesus comes tonight, and we are prepared to welcome him again into the world and into our lives. We light the Advent candles to celebrate the gifts we are given and to name the gifts we can offer to others.

Voice: Last Sunday, we lit the candle of love. We light it and the candles of hope, peace, and joy again in gratitude.

A person lights the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love.

Voice: Now we light our last candle to remember the birth of Jesus Christ.

A person lights the fifth candle and says:

Voice: We light the Christ candle to remind us that the light of the world was born this night. See the light of our Advent gifts all come to us in Jesus.

(a moment of silence to enjoy the brightness of the five candles)

Voice: As we celebrate Christ's birthday with all his people everywhere, we seek to bring God's light into the lives of those around us. We believe we can work together in our church to help create a better world. Let us say together our New Creed (*Voices United*, page 918):

**We are not alone,
we live in God's world.**

**We believe in God:
who has created and is creating,
who has come in Jesus,
the Word made flesh,
to reconcile and make new,
who works in us and others
by the Spirit.**

We trust in God.

**We are called to be the Church:
to celebrate God's presence,
to live with respect in Creation,
to love and serve others,
to seek justice and resist evil,
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,
our judge and our hope.**

**In life, in death, in life beyond death,
God is with us.**

We are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn: *Voices United* 6 or 7 or your choice of another hymn.

Prayer:

**God, we thank you for your great gift of Jesus.
Help us to spread hope, peace, joy, and love in the world
by the way we live and give, and in the things we do and say. Amen**

Reference: Lectionary Readings for Advent B

Advent 1
Isaiah 64:1–9
Psalm 80:1–7, 17–19
1 Corinthians 1:3–9
Mark 13:24–37

Advent 2
Isaiah 40:1–11
Psalm 85:1–2, 8–13
2 Peter 3:8–15a
Mark 1:1–8

Advent 3
Isaiah 61:1–4, 8–11
Psalm 126
or Luke 1:47–55
1 Thessalonians 5:16–24
John 1:6–8, 19–28

Advent 4
2 Samuel 7:1–11, 16
Luke 1:47–55
or Psalm 89:1–4, 19–26
Romans 16:25–27
Luke 1:26–38

December 24/25
Isaiah 9:2–7
Psalm 96
Titus 2:11–14
Luke 2:1–14, (15–20)

Mission and Service Candle-lighting Services for Home

For your church families

Before Advent, hold an Advent wreath luncheon. The UCW, youth group, or a committee could serve soup and sandwiches or a pizza lunch as an M&S fundraiser. There are many websites that give simple instructions for making Advent wreathes, and the sponsoring group can prepare the materials ahead of time and be on hand to offer instructions.

Alternatively, suggest that families just use candles at home. Advent practice is to have four candles of similar size and color for the four Sundays (purple or blue is traditional) and a white candle in the centre for Christmas Eve.

Print the following as a bulletin insert or use as a handout at your pre-Advent luncheon.

You are invited to celebrate Advent in your home with a family Advent wreath. Use the following Advent celebration each week as you light the candles. This is a good time to consider the meaning of Advent and Christmas and to counter some of the commercialism of the season.

Advent 1

We are getting ready because Christmas is coming; Jesus is coming.

Jesus brought hope to his world and to ours. We light the candle of hope.

Light the first candle.

Hope is like a candle shining bright.

This week we will remember to look for hope in our world.

Talk about what hope means for each one in the family. What gift can we give to others this week?

Prayer to say together or for children to repeat after their parents.

Thank you, God, for the gift of Jesus,
and the gift of hope.

We remember
that Jesus is the hope
and the light of the world.
Help us to be like Jesus. Amen

Advent 2

We are getting ready because Christmas is coming; Jesus is coming.

Jesus brought hope to his world and to ours. We light the candle of hope.

Light the first candle.

Jesus taught his followers and us to be peace-makers. This is the candle of peace.

Light the second candle.

Peace is like a candle shining bright.

This week we will remember to be peacemakers in our world.

Talk about what peace or peacemaker means for each one in the family. What gift can we give to others this week?

Prayer to say together or for children to repeat after their parents.

Thank you, God, for the gift of Jesus,
and the gift of peace.

We remember

that Jesus is a peacemaker
and the light of the world.

Help us to be like Jesus. Amen

Advent 3

We are getting ready because Christmas is coming; Jesus is coming.

Jesus brought hope to his world and to ours. We light the candle of hope.

Light the first candle.

Jesus taught his followers and us to be peace-makers. This is the candle of peace.

Light the second candle.

Jesus wants us to be happy and filled with joy. This is the candle of joy.

Light the third candle.

Joy is like a candle's dancing light.

This week we will remember to be joyful and to make others happy.

Talk about what each one in the family is happy about and about how each can bring joy to others. What gift can we give to others this week?

Prayer to say together or for children to repeat after their parents.

Thank you, God, for the gift of Jesus,
and the gift of joy.

We remember

that Jesus wants joy
and light in the world.

Help us to be like Jesus. Amen

Advent 4

We are getting ready because Christmas is coming; Jesus is coming.

Jesus brought hope to his world and to ours. We light the candle of hope.

Light the first candle.

Jesus taught his followers and us to be peace-makers. This is the candle of peace.

Light the second candle.

Jesus wants us to be happy and filled with joy. This is the candle of joy.

Light the third candle.

Jesus brought love to his world and ours. This is the candle of love.

Light the fourth candle.

Love is like a candle that brightens our life.

This week we will remember to be loving to others.

Talk about what makes each one feel love and how each can show love to others. What gift can we give to others this week?

Prayer to say together or for children to repeat after their parents.

Thank you, God, for the gift of Jesus,
and the gift of love.

Jesus showed us how to love everyone
and to treat others like we want to be treated.

Help us to be like Jesus. Amen

Christmas Eve or Day

We have been getting ready and now Jesus is here.

Jesus brought hope to his world and to ours. We light the candle of hope.

Light the first candle.

Jesus taught his followers and us to be peace-makers. This is the candle of peace.

Light the second candle.

Jesus wants us to be happy and filled with joy. This is the candle of joy.

Light the third candle.

Jesus brought love to his world and ours. This is the candle of love.

Light the fourth candle.

This is the Christ candle for Jesus' birthday.

Light the fifth candle.

Jesus came to the world as a tiny baby but he was a great gift from God.

He showed us how to bring hope, peace, joy, and love to others and to the earth.

The flames of the Advent candles remind us of all these things.

Talk about all the gifts we get at Christmas. Talk about the gifts we receive every day from God. Our church gives many gifts to others through Mission and Service: food, medicine, homes, education, safety, friendship, and love. How can we plan to give our money this year to help make that happen?

Prayer to say together or for children to repeat after their parents.

Thank you, God, for the gift of Jesus.

Christ is the light of the world.

Help us to be like Jesus. Amen