

# The Advent Wreath

Advent is the time before Christmas, starting around the beginning of December and ending on Christmas Eve. It is a time of preparation for Christmas.

Some Christian people believe it is also a time for prayer and a chance to reflect on the times they have made the right choices and the times they could have made better decisions.

## Making the Wreath

The Advent wreath is made from evergreen branches which are twisted to form a circle. Then, four candles are put around the wreath and often a fifth candle is placed in the middle. One candle is lit each Sunday before Christmas Day.

In some Christian churches, there are three purple candles, one pink candle and a white one. On the first two Sundays of Advent, purple candles are lit. On the third week, the pink candle is lit on Gaudete Sunday to represent joy. The white candle is lit on Christmas Eve as a symbol of Jesus being born. It is called the Christ Candle.

## The First Advent Wreath

Wreaths have been used as Christmas decorations for many years but the first Advent wreath was thought to have been created in 1839 by a German man named Johann Wichern. He was the founder of a children's home.

The children were often asking him when it was Christmas. So, he decided to light a white candle each Sunday and a smaller red candle for each day in-between, as a means to show the children how many days were left until Christmas Day.

### Did You Know... ?

Candles in an Advent wreath can be red or white.

## The Meanings Behind the Advent Wreath

The Advent wreath has different meanings for different people.

- Some believe the wreath is circular because it represents the seasons ending and the beginning of another year. Others believe that the circle represents God's love lasting forever.
- Advent wreaths are made using the leaves of evergreen trees. They represent eternity.



- The candles represent light in the darkness and Jesus being born into the world to bring people hope and love in their lives in times of sadness and sorrow.

# Questions

1. What might Christian people do during Advent? Tick one.

- ☐ think about what they are going to get for Christmas  
☐ think about what they will do on New Year's Eve  
☐ think about how they might have done things differently in the past

2. Tick true or false for the following statements.

	True	False
Advent wreaths can have five candles in total.		
There are three purple candles and a green one.		
A pink candle is lit on the Third Sunday of Advent.		
The white candle represents joy.		

3. What is the name of the white candle? Tick one.

- ☐ the Gaudete Candle  
☐ the Candle of Joy  
☐ the Christ Candle

4. When is the Christ Candle lit?

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5. Find and copy one word which has a similar meaning to **forever**.

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6. Summarise what you have learnt about Advent wreaths in 30 words or fewer.

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7. How would you describe Johann Wichern? Explain your answer.

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8. In your own words, explain the symbolic meaning of the candles.

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# Answers

1. What might Christian people do during Advent? Tick one.

- ☐ think about what they are going to get for Christmas  
☐ think about what they will do on New Year's Eve  
☒ **think about how they might have done things differently in the past**

2. Tick true or false for the following statements.

	True	False
Advent wreaths can have five candles in total.	✓	
There are three purple candles and a green one.		✓
A pink candle is lit on the Third Sunday of Advent.	✓	
The white candle represents joy.		✓

3. What is the name of the white candle? Tick one.

- ☐ the Gaudete Candle  
☐ the Candle of Joy  
☒ **the Christ Candle**

4. When is the Christ Candle lit?

**The Christ Candle is lit on Christmas Eve.**

5. Find and copy one word which has a similar meaning to **forever**.

**eternity**

6. Summarise what you have learnt about Advent wreaths in 30 words or fewer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Advent wreaths are made in preparation for Christmas. For Christian people, each part of the wreath has a different meaning. The first wreath might have been made in 1839.**

7. How would you describe Johann Wichern? Explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that Johann Wichern was a kind man because he was a founder of a children's home.**

8. In your own words, explain the symbolic meaning of the candles.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Practically, the candles represent light in the darkness. Spiritually, lighting the candles is seen as Jesus entering the world of darkness and bringing love to everyone in their times of sorrow.**

# The Advent Wreath

Advent is the time before Christmas, beginning early in December and ending on Christmas Eve. It is a time of preparation for Christmas.

Many Christian people believe it is also a time for prayer, an ideal time to reflect on past choices and think about making improved ones in the future.

## Making the Wreath



The Advent wreath is made from evergreen branches which are twined to form a circle. Evergreen leaves, like holly and pine, are easily available during Advent.

In many Christian churches, there are three purple candles and one pink candle around the edge, with a white candle in the middle. Each candle represents something and one is lit each Sunday during Advent.

## The Meaning of the Candles



### Week 1 –

a purple candle is lit. This is known as the Candle of Hope and represents the prophets in the Bible who predicted the birth of Jesus.

### Week 2 –

a purple candle is lit. This is known as the Candle of Preparation or the Bethlehem Candle, remembering when Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

### Week 3 –

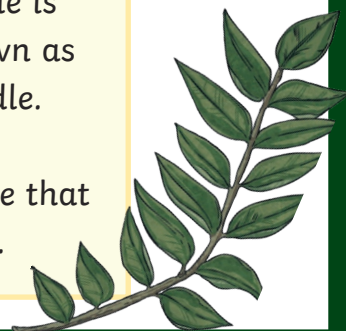
a pink candle is lit. This is known as the Candle of Joy or the Shepherd's Candle. It represents the joy of the shepherds when they were told the news of the Saviour's birth.

### Week 4 –

a purple candle is lit. This is known as the Candle of Love or the Angel's Candle and represents the angels telling the shepherds the news of Jesus' birth and his love for the world.

### Christmas Eve –

the white candle is lit. This is known as the Christ Candle. This reminds Christian people that Jesus was pure.



## The History of Advent Wreaths



Wreaths have been used in winter solstice celebrations for hundreds of years. People would get together to celebrate the winter solstice and welcome the longer days of sunlight.

A wheel would be laid down and covered with evergreen branches and candles. This represented a circle of light in the dark days. Prayers would be said to the god of light to turn the wheel of the earth back towards the sun to make the days longer. Pagan people called this time of celebration Yule. Later, wreaths were used as religious symbols during Advent.

## Symbolism of Advent Wreaths

The Advent wreath has different meanings for different people.



Some believe the wreath is circular because it represents the beginning of another year. Others believe that the circle represents God's unending love.

The candles represent light in the darkness of life with the flames offering light during the dark winter months. Christian people believe that lighting the candles represents Jesus coming into the world of darkness and bringing love to everyone in moments of sadness. Christian people use the white candle in the centre to represent Jesus being born and being the Light of the World.

### Did You Know... ?

The first Advent wreath was created in 1839 by Johann Wichern, who lived in Germany. He was the founder of a children's home. The children kept asking when it would be Christmas, so he lit a white candle each Sunday and a smaller red candle for each day in-between, to show them how many days left until Christmas.



# Questions

1. Which word is closest in meaning to **reflect**? Tick one.

- ☐ to look at oneself in the mirror
- ☐ to give serious thought to one's own behaviour
- ☐ to make other choices

2. When does Advent end?

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3. Give an example of an evergreen plant mentioned in the text.

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4. Explain in your own words what you understand by the term **prophet**.

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5. Identify **two** facts that we are told about the pink candle.

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6. What is the significance of the colour of the Christ Candle?

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7. Summarise the key details of the section called **The History of Advent Wreaths**.

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8. Tick true or false for the following statements.

	True	False
The first Advent wreath used purple and white candles.		
The person who created the first Advent wreath was German.		
Wichern made the first Advent wreath in 1939.		
Johann Wichern made the first Advent wreath for children.		

9. In your own words, explain the symbolic meaning of the candles.

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# Answers

1. Which word is closest in meaning to **reflect**? Tick one.

- ☐ to look at oneself in the mirror
- ☒ **to give serious thought to one's own behaviour**
- ☐ to make other choices

2. When does Advent end?

**Advent ends on Christmas Eve.**

3. Give an example of an evergreen plant mentioned in the text.

**Accept either of the following: holly or pine.**

4. Explain in your own words what you understand by the term **prophet**.

**Accept any suitable explanation of the term, such as: The term prophet refers to a person who has been given a message from God to give to others.**

5. Identify **two** facts that we are told about the pink candle.

**Accept any two of the following: The pink candle is known as the Candle of Joy; it is known as the Shepherd's Candle; it represents the joy of the shepherds when they heard of Jesus' birth.**

6. What is the significance of the colour of the Christ Candle?

**Accept any suitable explanation of the significance of the colour, such as: The colour of the Christ Candle is white which is a colour representing purity suggesting that the purity of God will be brought into the lives of Christian people with the lighting of the candle.**

7. Summarise the key details of the section called **The History of Advent Wreaths**.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Wreaths are used in winter solstice celebrations to celebrate longer days of sunlight. A circle is decorated with leaves and candles. Pagan people call this 'Yule'.**

8. Tick true or false for the following statements.

	True	False
The first Advent wreath used purple and white candles.		✓
The person who created the first Advent wreath was German.	✓	
Wichern made the first Advent wreath in 1939.		✓
Johann Wichern made the first Advent wreath for children.	✓	

9. In your own words, explain the symbolic meaning of the candles.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Practically, the candles represent light in the darkness. Spiritually, lighting the candles is seen as Jesus entering the world of darkness and bringing love to everyone in their times of sorrow.**

# The Advent Wreath

Advent is the time before Christmas, beginning early in December and ending on Christmas Eve. It is a significant time within the Christian calendar for preparation for Christmas. It is also a time for prayer, an opportunity to reflect on previous decisions and think about making improved ones in the future.

## Making the Wreath

The Advent wreath is made from evergreen branches which are entwined to form a circle. Evergreen leaves, like holly and pine, are readily available as opposed to using branches from deciduous trees which will have lost their leaves by Advent.



In many Christian churches, there are three purple candles and one pink candle around the edge, with a white candle in the middle. Each candle has a special symbolism and one is lit each Sunday during Advent.

## The Meaning of the Candles

### Week 1 –

a purple candle is lit. This is known as the Candle of Hope or the Prophecy Candle as it is symbolic of the prophets who predicted that a Saviour would be born.

### Week 2 –

a purple candle is lit. This is known as the Candle of Preparation or the Bethlehem Candle, celebrating when Jesus was born in Bethlehem and laid in a manger.

### Week 3 –

a pink candle is lit. This is known as the Candle of Joy or the Shepherd's Candle. It is lit on Gaudete Sunday, symbolic of the joy the shepherds felt when they were told the news of the Saviour's birth.

### Week 4 –

a purple candle is lit. This is known as the Candle of Love or the Angel's Candle. This is symbolic of the angels telling the great news of Jesus' arrival and the fact that Jesus was born because of his love for all people.

### Christmas Eve –

the white candle is lit. This is known as the Christ Candle. This reminds Christians people that Jesus was born a baby, pure and innocent.

## The History of Advent Wreaths

Wreaths have been used during celebrations for the winter solstice for hundreds of years, particularly by people with pagan beliefs. Pagans would gather to celebrate the winter solstice by welcoming the lengthened days and increased hours of sunlight which were to come in the new year.

To celebrate the event, a wheel would be laid down and covered with evergreen branches and candles. This was symbolic of a circle of light in the dark days. Prayers were offered to the god of light to turn the wheel of the earth back towards the sun to make the days longer and warmer.

Pagan people called this time of celebration Yule, which was also a celebration of the birth of the god of the sun.

Following the death of Jesus and the subsequent 'birth' of Christianity, wreaths were used as symbolic decorations for the time approaching Christmas Day.

The first Advent wreath was thought to have been created in 1839 by a man named Johann Wichern. He lived in Hamburg, Germany and was the founder of a children's home.

After the children repeatedly asked when it would be Christmas, he lit a white candle each Sunday and a smaller red candle for each day in-between, to count down the days until Christmas.

## Symbolism of Advent Wreaths

Advent wreaths are made using the leaves of evergreen plants, which have symbolic meanings. Some believe the wreath is circular because it represents the seasons ending, the beginning of another year and the continuation of life. Others believe that the circle represents God's everlasting love.

Some people believe holly, used in an Advent wreath, represents the crown of thorns Jesus wore when he was crucified on Good Friday. Others believe that pine and holly are symbolic of immortality.

On a practical level, the candles represent light in the darkness as the flames illuminate the dark winter months. On a spiritual level, lighting the candles represents Jesus entering the world of darkness and bringing love to everyone in their times of sorrow and misery.

Christian people use the white candle in the centre to represent Jesus being born pure and being the Light of the World, guiding people from the darkness and to the Lord's love.

# Questions

1. Explain why you think Christian people consider Advent an appropriate time to reflect on past decisions.

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2. What is your understanding of the word **deciduous**?

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3. Complete this table.

Week	Colour of Candle	Name(s) of Candle	What the Candle Represents
2			Jesus being born in Bethlehem.
	pink		
		Candle of Hope or Prophecy Candle	
			Jesus being born as a baby and being pure.
4			

4. Explain how it could be said that Pagan people began the tradition of wreaths as a symbolic object.

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5. Which event meant that wreaths became a more religious symbol?

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6. What sort of character do you think Johann Wichern had? Explain your thoughts.

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7. Identify **two** synonyms in the text that mean **as a sign or example**.

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8. What is significant about an Advent wreath being in the form of a circle?

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9. Explain the significance of the following items being used as part of an Advent wreath.

holly leaves: 

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candles: 

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10. Name another way of marking Advent and what this means to you.

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# Answers

1. Explain why you think Christian people consider Advent an appropriate time to reflect on past decisions.

**Accept any suitable answer, such as: I think Christian people consider Advent to be an appropriate time to reflect on past decisions because it is the time before Christmas which is a time of giving and sharing and thinking of others but also it is near the end of the year when people might think about making changes in their life.**

2. What is your understanding of the word **deciduous**?

**Deciduous means trees which lose their leaves during the winter.**

3. Complete this table.

Week	Colour of Candle	Name(s) of Candle	What the Candle Represents
2	purple	<b>Candle of Preparation or the Bethlehem Candle</b>	Jesus being born in Bethlehem.
3	pink	<b>Candle of Joy or the Shepherd's Candle</b>	<b>The joy the shepherds felt when they were told of the Saviour's birth.</b>
1	purple	Candle of Hope or Prophecy Candle	<b>The prophets who predicted the birth of a Saviour.</b>
5	white	<b>Christ Candle</b>	Jesus being born as a baby and being pure.
4	purple	<b>Candle of Love or the Angel's Candle</b>	<b>The angels telling the great news of Jesus' birth.</b>

4. Explain how it could be said that Pagan people began the tradition of wreaths as a symbolic object.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Pagan people were using wreaths hundreds of years ago as a means to celebrate the winter solstice and the birth of the sun god, as well as welcoming the longer days of sunlight. They laid down a wheel and decorated it with leaves and candles, which was a symbolic object of light in the dark. In a similar way, Advent wreaths are round and made of green leaves and candles.**

5. Which event meant that wreaths became a more religious symbol?

**Jesus was born and after his death, Christianity began.**

**Later, wreaths were used as a symbol of religion.**

6. What sort of character do you think Johann Wichern had? Explain your thoughts. **Accept any suitable answer, such as: I think Johann Wichern was a kind man because he was a founder of a children's home. He was also clever and inventive because he thought of a way to show the children how many days were left until it was Christmas.**

7. Identify **two** synonyms in the text that mean **as a sign or example**.

- **symbolic**
- **represents**

8. What is significant about an Advent wreath being in the form of a circle?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: It is significant that an Advent wreath is in the form of a circle because some people believe it represents the seasons ending, the beginning of another year and the continuation of life. On the other hand, it could be said that the circle represents God's everlasting love.**

9. Explain the significance of the following items being used as part of an Advent wreath.

holly leaves: **They represent the crown of thorns that Jesus wore on Good Friday.**

candles: **The candles represent light in the darkness with darkness being symbolic of sorrow and misery and the light being symbolic of Jesus being the Light of the World.**

10. Name another way of marking Advent and what this means to you.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Another way of marking Advent would be to have an Advent calendar. This means having the opportunity to celebrate Advent daily in a small way and count down to Christmas and receiving gifts.**