



A Season of Hope

We are about to enter the season of Advent. It is the four weeks before Christmas always beginning on the Sunday that starts the fourth week before Christmas Day. This year, First Advent Sunday is December 2.

The word 'Advent' means coming and the season of Advent is a time of preparation for the celebration of the fulfillment of God's promise to send His son to save the world.

During Advent, we remember Jesus is the light of the world. The season begins when the days are the shortest of the year, and is a celebration of the coming of His light which will overcome the darkness. Many people use candles to illustrate this transformation. Four candles; first one and then the others, added one each week to increase the light until Christmas Eve when a fifth candle is added. It represents the infant Christ Himself coming as light into the world. The candle light reminds us that, even in the darkness of winter and the darkness of a sinful world, the light of the Savior will come! As the candle light grows brighter each week and the days start getting longer, so the light of Christ can grow within us until it transforms us enabling us to add to the Christ Light in the world!

For some, society's push to consume has turned the weeks before Christmas into a long mad shopping spree or an all-consuming race to the 'big day'. For others, the older traditions of Advent preparation and contemplation keep the focus on the new beginnings Jesus offers us, on answering his call to serve, and on working together toward the future hope of a better world in Christ.

In a time when the darkness of fear, hate, and selfishness seem to be overtaking us, spend this Advent season seeking God's guidance as you look for the ways you can bring the light of Christ out into the open where it's healing, uniting, and forgiving love can transform the world through all of us.

This week pray for:

- God's transforming power to make a difference for peace with your life; for the courage to be everyday peacemakers.
- all those in desperate need of love, compassion, and protection - those facing violence; living in fear; dealing with tragedy; struggling with hopelessness.
- Pray also for the courageous bystanders who do not just stand by when others are facing abuse; bullying; hate; or violence.



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