

THE SEASON OF ADVENT

Fact File

Meaning: We wait for God's 'coming' or 'arriving' among us. There are various themes for this season including hope, peace, joy and love alongside waiting, accepting, journeying and birthing. We use the Hebrew word *maranatha* ("the Lord is coming") in our prayers.

Colour: Purple, the colour of penitence as well as symbolising royalty, Jesus comes to us in majesty (as the king of heaven) and in humility (the baby in the stable).



Fra Angelico, The Annunciation, c.1438

Duration: Four weeks, starting on Advent Sunday.

The first two weeks concentrate upon Christ's second coming. From December 17th we prepare to celebrate Christ's birth using the 'O' antiphons which describe something of the nature of God to be born in human likeness.

Special Features: The Jesse Tree demonstrates the link between Jesus and his ancestors in the faith. The Gloria is omitted in our worship. The Advent wreath is clothed with evergreen foliage demonstrating God's love is not seasonal but constant, forever alive!

During the four weeks of Advent we light a candle which helps us to focus on the fullness of God's relationship with his people in all ages:

- α **Advent 1.** Dedicated to the Patriarchs, the Old Testament heroes of our faith such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
- α **Advent 2.** We remember the Prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah and their message in the Old Testament, about watching and waiting for the Lord.
- α **Advent 3.** John the Baptist reminds us of the world's desire to know Christ. He proclaimed "the way of the Lord" through baptising sinners in God's name. This third Sunday of Advent is also known as Gaudete Sunday or "rejoice Sunday"; the mood is lightened as we rejoice in the possibility of Christ's arrival. The advent candle is rose-coloured to reflect the hope that we have in Christ.
- α **Advent 4.** Dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the God-bearer, who was afraid but also filled with joy to be the mother of God.

Mood: Solemn and penitential, as we watch and wait for the coming of our Lord. Advent is the first of the seasons of the Church's year. It is the beginning of "sacred time." Advent is the season of waiting for the coming of the Messiah. We await both the birth and the promised return of Christ.

Main Characters: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Isaiah, Micah, John the Baptist, Virgin Mary.

Source: The Promise of His Glory, Church House Publishing: 1991