

Worship on the Web



Season of Advent

Advent is the four week period before Christmas. There are four Sundays in Advent.

The meaning of Advent

The word 'Advent' means 'coming' or 'arrival' and in this case points towards the birth of Jesus celebrated at Christmas.

During Advent, Christians prepare for Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Jesus into the world as a baby, and look forward with hope to the promise of his coming again at the end of time (Luke 21:25 to 21:36).

Advent is also a time to celebrate light in the midst of darkness. A candle may be lit each Sunday during Advent in anticipation of the coming of the Christ child.



Advent candles

In some traditions candlelight services are held throughout the festival of Advent and Christmas but especially on Christmas eve (24 December). One special service involving children is called Christingle.

The origins of Advent

Advent has been observed since the fifth century and was originally a period of six Sundays modelled on the festival of Lent. By the seventh century this was reduced to four and established as an important festival in the Christian calendar.

Christingle

The Christingle Service is a service of candle lights and can be held during Advent, Christmas or Epiphany.

The meaning of Christingle

The word 'Christingle' refers to the candle used in the Christingle service.

The Christingle is an orange, decorated with a red ribbon, sweets and nuts, in which is placed a small candle. The orange represents the world, the ribbon Christ's blood, shed for all creation. The sweets and nuts skewered on four cocktail sticks facing out to the four corners of the earth represent the fruits of the earth. The candle in the centre of the orange represents the light of Christ to the world.

The origins of Christingle

Christingle has its origins in a children's service held on Christmas eve 1747 in Marienborn, Germany. Bishop John de Wattville who was conducting the informal service gave each child a lighted candle, tied with a red ribbon, in memory of the Christ's coming which he said had kindled 'a flame in each heart which keeps burning to His joy, and our happiness'.

In 1968 the Church of England Children's Society adopted this service as a way of raising funds during the season of Advent. For more information about Christingle services visit their website www.the-childrens-society.org.uk