

Did you know . . .

The Advent Wreath

Advent, which begins next Sunday, is the spiritual preparation for the coming of Christ at Christmas. There are many customs and traditions to help us celebrate this season, one of the most well-known and meaningful being the Advent wreath.

The Advent wreath is a circular garland of evergreen branches representing eternity. Christ is eternal; He has neither a beginning nor an end. Thus the wreath's circular shape reminds us of Christ's eternal presence.

On the wreath are four or five candles, three purple, one pink and a more modern tradition of a white candle in the center of the wreath. These candles represent the coming of the light of Christ into the world.

A Catholic tradition states that the four candles each represent 1000 years, to total the 4,000 years from the time of Adam and Eve until the birth of Our Savior.

The lighting of an Advent wreath began in 16th century Germany among Lutherans and Catholics. In Western Christianity, Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas, or the Sunday which falls closest to November 30, and lasts through Christmas Eve. People lit candles and placed them on wreaths during the dark days of December as a sign of hope for the light to come with spring. Over time, the wreath was adapted by Christians, likely during the Middle Ages to spiritually prepare for Christmas.

Evergreens were used to make the wreath, most likely because that was what was available. The branches were plentiful and pliable. Now wreaths are made of wood, metal, resin, ceramic and other materials.

The candles represent various passages of the Bible and the four themes: Love, Joy, Peace, and Hope. These will be explained over the next four weeks.

Judy Pearson

