

WHAT IS ADVENT?

ADVENT IS ... a Latin word meaning a coming or arrival, which refers to the coming of the Lord - past, present, and future.

ADVENT IS ... REPENTANCE AND JOY

Advent has a *penitential* dimension, but also emphasizes the *joy-filled hope* of the coming of the Lord.

ADVENT IS ... RECLAIMING CHRISTMAS

Today, Christmas has become a secular and commercial holiday (as may have been its origin in 274 AD, before Christians in Rome resisted and adopted December 25 as the birthdate of Christ). Observing Advent can help us to *reclaim* Christmas as a celebration of the birth of Christ.

Today, observing Advent helps us prepare our hearts for Christmas. As we participate in Advent Worship Services and sing the Advent Hymns, we become keenly aware of our need for a Savior - God who became human for us.

ADVENT SYMBOLS

Advent Colors: Purple is the traditional liturgical color. Blue is also used to symbolize joy.

Advent Wreath: Candles are placed in a wreath. This symbolizes the Light (Jesus, the Light of the World) which overcomes the darkness (sin). In worship, one candle a week is lit, leading us to the white candle (Christ).

ADVENT TERMS

Emmanuel or Immanuel, is a Hebrew word meaning "God is with us".

Repent! John the Baptist's cry calling the Lord's people, both then and now, to change their hearts and lives in preparation for meeting their God.

Messiah is the Hebrew title for Christ meaning "anointed one" or "Chosen one."

Maranatha means "come, Lord!" which expresses our belief that Jesus, who came once as a child, will return as Lord of the Universe.

GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL ADVENT ACTIVITY

Each year, put out your Nativity Set a few pieces at a time. Bring out the Christ Child on Christmas Eve. Place the wise men at a distance, bringing them near on Epiphany (12 days after Christmas).

As you receive Christmas cards each day, read them at mealtime and include the senders in your prayers.