



# Advent: Why Do We Celebrate It?

*“Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”*

## Key Scriptures

Luke 3:3–16

Isaiah 44:21–22

### PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we thank you for sending Jesus to us. Teach us to love as you love. Forgive us for the times we have hurt you and others, times we meant to and times we didn't mean to. Make our hearts a splendid place for you to live. We ask this in the name of Jesus who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

## What's Advent About?

*Active waiting.* During Advent we both participate in and anticipate God's action in our world as we live into God's hope, peace, joy, and love.

Advent is a time when we think about waiting and what we're waiting for. Christians think about what people were waiting for back when Jesus was born and what they learned from that experience. God's response was not what they expected. Perhaps God's response to our wish list is not what we expect either.

*Preparing.* John the Baptist instructed people to “prepare the way.” Advent is a time of active waiting and preparing for what God wants to do in us and, through us, in our communities and in our world. It is first up to each of us to make our own decision to participate and then to join in God's family, God's community, to find out where and participate in what God is doing in our communities and in our world.

*Shalom, dude.* The four Sundays of Advent are represented by hope, peace, joy, and love. Together these ideas are the major components of the Hebrew word *shalom*, which is translated as peace but has a deeper meaning that gets at the total well-being of the person and the community. So even if there is no war raging, a community or a person cannot be said to be living in *shalom* if they are starving, dying of AIDS, unable to get clean water, in danger of contracting malaria for lack of a mosquito net, or unable to get the skills they need to better their lives and their communities. God places a high priority on the total well-being of creation. As we turn toward and choose to trust God, we get in line with God's priorities, which means we can't ignore injustice wherever we find it on whatever scale. It means we must relearn priorities of caring for our neighbors, our environment, and ourselves as God has commissioned us to do.

1. Part of this prayer adapted from the Collect for the Fourth Sunday in Advent, *The Book of Common Prayer*, 1979.

## Journal Activity

What am I hoping for this Christmas?

How can I help make it happen?

## My Christmas List

As you think about the people you want to give presents to this year, take time to pray about them and your relationship with them. Is it a loving one? Are there ways you can treat them better? Show God's love to them?