

# **A Year in the Church, Advent Through Epiphany Including Candlemas**

## **Discipleship Formation Program**

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**The Lord sets the prisoner free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow.**

## Advent

The earliest indication of the celebration of Advent was, “a few centuries after the introduction and reception of the Roman date of the nativity of Jesus (December 25).”<sup>1</sup> Although, we have records from St Ambrose of Milan (died in 397) that testifies to a season of preparation for the nativity of our Lord that occurred in Northern Italy. This season of preparation was not accepted widely.

Not all churches had accepted the date for the nativity of Jesus at this time as being December 25 as well. For instance in Spain in 380 they still observed Epiphany (January 6) as the date of celebration of the nativity of our Lord. As such, their Advent season ran “for twenty-one days in a row, from December 17 until the day of the day of Epiphany, which is January 6.”<sup>2</sup>

The length of time Advent was celebrated has also evolved over the years. As just mentioned there was a three weeks span in Spain. In Tours in 490, Advent lasted 40 days and ran from November 11, the Feast of St Martin of Tours, until December 25, the Roman date for Christmas.

Roman liturgical books of Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) “testify to a six-week span leading up to Christmas.”<sup>3</sup> In the late seventh and early eighth centuries, there was an “impulse to temporally restrain the season of Advent to the month of December alone.”<sup>4</sup> And while there is some evidence of Gaelic churches still bearing witness to 40 days of Advent as late as the thirteenth centuries, Roman liturgical books shaped the length of the season of Advent in the ninth and tenth centuries to what we still celebrate today.

As such, in four years of the seven-year cycle, the first Sunday of Advent falls outside of December between November 27 and November 30<sup>th</sup>. This remains the church's practice today.

### Symbols of Advent

The Advent Wreath, or Advent Crown as it is sometimes called, may be used at home as well as in church. The wreath is blessed on the first Sunday of Advent and it is appropriate that a parent or family member may bless it.

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<sup>1</sup> (Connell 2006) 57

<sup>2</sup> (Connell 2006) 64

<sup>3</sup> (Connell 2006) 70

<sup>4</sup> (Connell 2006) 71

Advent wreaths are circular, representing God's infinite love, and are usually made of evergreen branches, which represent the hope of eternal life brought by Jesus Christ. There are four candles in the Advent wreath that represent the four weeks of the Advent and their themes are hope (week one), peace (week two), joy (week three) and love (week four).

Many Advent wreaths also have a white candle in the centre to symbolize the arrival of Christmastide, known as the "Christ candle." It is lit on Christmas Eve after sunset or on Christmas Day. The Christ candle is coloured white because this is the traditional festal colour in Western Church and white represents holiness and purity.

The most popular colours for the four surrounding Advent candles are violet and rose, the colours of the liturgical vestments for the Sundays of Advent. Violet is the traditional colour of penitential seasons, like Lent. Blue is an alternative colour for both Advent vestments and Advent candles which comes from the Sarum Rite and has been adopted by All Saints'.

One interpretation holds that blue means hope and waiting, which aligns with the seasonal meaning of Advent, while another interpretation refers to blue as royal blue which aligns with the coming of our king. The colour blue comes from the old Sarum (Latin) rite developed at the Salisbury Cathedral in the UK. Rose is the liturgical colour for the Third Sunday of Advent, known as Gaudete Sunday from the Latin word meaning "rejoice ye". As such, the third candle, representing joy, is often a different colour from the other three.

### **The Blessing of the Advent Wreath.** <sup>5</sup>

*The advent wreath is to be placed on a table or in the home in a place of prominence such as a mantle. The following blessing is said over the wreath. After the blessing, there is a short prayer for each candle. The prayers for the candles are to be said on the Sundays in Advent. The candles may be lit during meals throughout the week.*

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord

All: **Who made heaven and earth**

Leader: Let us listen to the words of the prophet Isaiah (9:1-2, 5-6)

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have

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<sup>5</sup> (Roman Catholic Church 1989) 581-582

increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore.

Leader: Lord God, we joyfully await the coming of our saviour, who enlightens our hearts and dispels the darkness of sin. Pour forth your blessings upon us as we light the candles of this wreath; may their light reflect the splendour of Christ, who is Lord forever and ever.

All: **Amen**

### **The lighting of the Advent Candles<sup>6</sup>**

Leader: We light this candle as a sign of the coming light of Christ. Advent means coming. We are preparing ourselves for the days when...

#### *First Sunday in Advent*

Nations shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall lift up sword against nations, neither shall they learn war any more. (Isaiah 2:4)

#### *Second Sunday of Advent*

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. (Isaiah 11:6)

#### *Third Sunday of Advent*

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus, it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. (Isaiah 35:1)

#### *Fourth Sunday of Advent*

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<sup>6</sup> (Book of Common Worship 1993) 165-166

The Lord will give you a sign, Lord, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel (God is with us) (Isaiah 7:4)

*After each candle is lit the rite concludes*

All            **Let us walk in the light of the Lord**

### **Additional Blessings and Prayers**

Blessing of a Nativity Scene<sup>7</sup>

Leader:        Our help is in the name of the Lord

All:            **Who made heaven and earth**

Leader:        Brothers and sisters, listen to the words of the Holy Gospel according to Luke

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. (Luke 2:1-8)

Leader:        God of every nation and people, from the very beginning of creation you have made manifest your love: when our need for a saviour was great you sent your Son to be born of the virgin Mary. To our lives, he brings joy and peace, justice, mercy and love.

Lord, bless all who look upon this manger; may it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus, and raise up our thoughts to Him, who is God with us and saviour of all, and who lives and reigns forever and ever.

All:            **Amen**

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<sup>7</sup> (Roman Catholic Church 1989) 590-591

## A Liturgy for the First Snow<sup>8</sup>

*The snow is observed in reflective silence*

All: O Christ, King of snow, we bless you for bidding this blanket of white to cover us in a holy hush, that our hearts might be quieted at the sight, that we might sense the emptiness of canvas over which your spirit broods, and upon which you would create and recreate our hearts in the image of the one whose words first spoke snow into existence.

**Book for Advent:** Advent Conspiracy by Rick McKinley, Chris Seay, Greg Holder<sup>9</sup>

Week 1 Worship Fully, November 29-December 5: Read Chapters 1-3 and watch the video

Week 2 Spend Less, December 6 -12: Read Chapter 4 and watch video

Week 3 Give More, December 13- 19: Read Chapter 5 and watch video

Week 4 Love All, December 20- 24: Read Chapters 6-7 and watch video

## Christmas

The date for Christmas as December 25<sup>th</sup> did not emerge until the fourth century. Before that change, the Nativity of our Lord was celebrated on Epiphany, January 6. In many Eastern churches, such as Ukrainian Orthodox, January 6 is still the date of celebration. Even after all these centuries, there is no unanimity amongst the churches surrounding the date of Jesus' birth.

One hypothesis for the choice of the date on December 25 is that date closely coincides with the Winter Solstice and the Roman pagan celebration of *Sol Invictus* instituted by the Roman emperor Aurelian (214-275, reign 270-275) in 274.<sup>10</sup> I would suggest that adopting the date to coincide with the pagan celebration is more of an accident than a purposeful decision. Aligning the date with the solstice itself makes much more sense and something I have addressed earlier and to which we will return.<sup>11</sup>

The second hypothesis is the Calculation Hypothesis. This hypothesis dominated in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century after the publication of *On the Origins of Christmas and Epiphany*

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<sup>8</sup> (McKelvey 2019) 85

<sup>9</sup> <https://adventconspiracy.org/groups/>

<sup>10</sup> (Connell 2006) 101

<sup>11</sup> Please opening section on the Liturgical Year

by Bernard Botte. In it, we find the argument for the date of Easter being on March 25, and not according to the model from the Council of Nicaea in 325 (the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox.) This date for Easter, March 25, is also the date for the Annunciation when the Angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would conceive and bear a child.

Therefore it was, as we said when this angel announced to Mary on March 25, which was also the day of the equinox and the appearance of the light. For our Lord was conceived on the eighth of Kalends of April (March 25), in the month of March, which is the day of the Lord's passion and his conception. For on this day he was conceived and on the same day he suffered.<sup>12</sup>

The first strong evidence though for Christmas being celebrated on December 25 as opposed to January 6 occurs in 336 in Latin churches. Yet with the conversion of Constantine in 312, Rome's influence over the Christian world would rapidly fix the date for Christmas in the Latin West by 451 and the Council of Chalcedon.

### **Symbols of Christmas**

The Christmas tree originated in Northern Europe. The custom was developed in medieval Livonia (present-day Estonia and Latvia), and in early modern Germany, Protestants brought decorated trees into their homes. It acquired popularity beyond the Lutheran areas of Germany during the second half of the 19th century.

The tree was traditionally decorated with roses made of coloured paper, apples, wafers, tinsel, and sweetmeats. In the 18th century, it began to be illuminated by candles, which were ultimately replaced by Christmas lights in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the electricity grid being brought to every home.

Today, there are a wide variety of traditional and modern ornaments, such as garlands, baubles, tinsel, and candy canes. An angel or star might be placed at the top of the tree to represent the Angel Gabriel or the Star of Bethlehem.

In the Western Christian tradition, Christmas trees are erected on the first day of Advent or even as late as Christmas Eve. If erected in Advent, the lights are not turned on until the official start of the Christmas season on December 24<sup>th</sup> after sunset.

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<sup>12</sup> (Connell 2006) 105

There are two traditional days when Christmas decorations and the Christmas tree are removed: Twelfth Night or the night before Epiphany (January 5) or Candlemas (February 2) the latter of which ends what was once seen as the length of the Christmas season. With the season-ending on Candlemas, the length of the season last 40 days.

### **Blessing of the Christmas Tree (real)<sup>13</sup>**

Leader: O Immanuel, we find in our traditions these reminders of the wonders of your love: First, let this fragrant tree, cut down and then raised beneath our roof, remind us how once upon a time, the High King of Heaven consented to be cut off from the glories that were his birthright and descended instead to dwell with us in a broken world, beset by harm and evil.

All: **Praise to you, Immanuel**

Leader: Next, let the hard wood of the trunk and the outstretched branches remind us how the same heavenly king who had entered our world on that distant night, would soon act to redeem his creation and his people in it, though it would require the stretching out of his arms upon a cross of wood – his death for our lives.

All: **Praise to you, Immanuel**

Leader: Then, let these evergreen boughs be a reminder of his mighty triumph over death, of his resurrection unto life eternal which will never fade – an eternal life which he has also secured for us. There is no greater gift!

All: **Praise to you, Immanuel**

Leader: Finally, as we drape the branches of this Christmas tree in glittering finery and sparkling lights, let us imagine Christ our King, seated upon his heavenly throne, arrayed in the royal raiments of his glory. And when at last we set the star atop the tree, let us imagine Christ crowned in his splendour, and all creatures in heaven and on earth bowing before him, crying “Holy Holy Holy!”

All: **Glory to you Immanuel! Worthy are you, O Lamb of God, to receive all glory, honour and praise! Glory to you, Lord Christ!**

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<sup>13</sup> (McKelvey 2019) 129-130

**Or**

Leader Blessed be the name of the Lord  
All: **Now and forever**

Leader Brothers and sisters, listen to the words of the Apostle Paul to Titus.

But when the goodness and loving-kindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:4-7)

Leader: Lord our God, we praise you for the light of creation: the sun, the moon, and the stars of the night. We praise you for the light of Israel: the law, the prophets, and the wisdom of the scriptures. We praise you for Jesus Christ, you Son: he is Emmanuel, God-with-us, the Prince of Peace, who fills us with the wonder of your love.

Lord God, let your blessing come upon us as we illumine this tree. May the light and the cheer it gives be a sign of the joy that fills our hearts. May all who delight in this tree come to the knowledge and joy of salvation.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: **Amen**

### **Christmas Season**

Today, the 12 days of Christmas, the season of Christmas runs from December 25 until the Twelfth night, January 5. January 6 marks the beginning of the season of Epiphany. More on Epiphany celebrations and activities later, for now, we turn to activities that are prescribed for each day through the Christmas season.

#### 12 days of Christmas

Day 1-December 25	Watch 1 Old movie
Day 2-December 26	Visit 2 Friends you don't see often
Day 3-December 27	Play 3 Games of cards

Day 4-December 28	Make 4 Meals to Freeze
Day 5-December 29	Plan 5 Ways to volunteer in the New Year
Day 6-December 30	Clean 6 Drawers or closets
Day 7-December 31	Read 7 Pages in a New Book Out loud
Day 8- January 1	Give 8 Cans to the food bank
Day 9-January 2	Learn 9 Ways to Say Hello in other Languages
Day 10-January 3	Share 10 Good memories with someone
Day 11-January 4	Do 11 Jumping jacks or another exercise
Day 12-January 5	Write 12 things you are grateful for

A few years ago I stumbled across a children's book that paired the twelve verses of the 12 days of Christmas with twelve basics of Christianity (I wrote them down and forgot to write the title of the book). After digging around I learned that some people believe that the Twelve Days of Christmas was a way to teach children their religious catechism through symbolism and song.

Whether or not this story is true or modern folklore, the fact remains that you can easily pair each verse of this traditional Christmas tune with the most fundamental Christian teachings.

The pairings are as follows

- A partridge in a pear tree: Jesus on the cross
- Two turtle doves: The Old and New Testaments
- Three French hens: Faith, hope, and love
- Four calling birds: The Four Gospels
- Five gold rings: The Torah/Pentateuch, first five books of the Old Testament
- Six geese a-laying: The six days of Creation
- Seven swans a-swimming: Seven gifts of the Holy Spirit
- Eight maids a-milking: Eight Beatitudes
- Nine ladies dancing: Nine fruits of the Holy Spirit
- Ten lords a-leaping: The Ten Commandments
- Eleven pipers piping: The eleven faithful apostles
- Twelve drummers drumming: Twelve points of the Apostles Creed

## Epiphany

For the first few centuries the Magi were not the focus of Epiphany, but rather the Baptism of our Lord was the central theme and it was at this feast that new Christians would join the body of Christ. It was at this time of the year that new Christians would be introduced and welcomed into the body of Christ.

In Egypt in 215, the nativity of Jesus was still celebrated on January 6. This also coincided with the annual flooding of the Nile, which could explain the connection with baptism.<sup>14</sup> The churches in Egypt continued to resist the Roman date for Christmas until 427 and eventually universal acceptance in the Latin Church in 451 at the Council of Chalcedon.

Meanwhile in the West with the change of the date of the nativity of the Lord to December 25, January 6 became principally the feast as we have come to know it today. There is much evidence from the second half of the fourth century onward.<sup>15</sup>

The eastern church though resisted the Roman date for Christmas and as such many parts of the Eastern Churches still celebrate the birth of the Lord on January 6. With the separation of the birth from Epiphany, much of the season has lost its incarnational underpinnings. When Christmas/Epiphany was celebrated together the season of Epiphany reflected how God becomes human in the person of Jesus Christ and it was this incarnation that was celebrated throughout the season.

This loss has been detrimental to the church that has come to see Epiphany as the visit of the wise men only, rather than the arrival of God's light into the world as the days get longer. Because of this loss Candlemas itself is almost all but forgotten in modern Anglicanism; the day the light returns to our homes and points towards the annunciation to the Virgin Mary and the crucifixion of our Lord.

### Chalking the Doors on January 6

*Chalk will be blessed at church on January 3<sup>rd</sup>. Please use the chalk for the following rite.*

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<sup>14</sup> (Connell 2006) 152-153

<sup>15</sup> (Connell 2006) 163

*At the entrance to the home,*

Leader: Peace be to this house, and to all who enter here.

All: **Amen.**

Leader: May all who come to our home this year rejoice to find Christ living among us; and may we seek and serve, in everyone we meet, that same Jesus who is your incarnate Word, now and forever. Amen.

God of heaven and earth, you revealed your only-begotten One to every nation by the guidance of a star. Bless this house and all who inhabit it. Fill us with the light of Christ, that our concern for others may reflect your love. We ask this through Christ our Saviour. **Amen.**

*As the leader or participants take turns making the inscription (20 + C + M + B + 21) the leader says:*

The three Wise Men, [C] Caspar, [M] Melchior, [B] and Balthasar followed the star to Bethlehem and the child Jesus [20] two thousand, [21] and twenty-one years ago. May Christ bless our home, and remain with us throughout the New Year. Amen.

Leader As our Saviour taught us, let us pray,

All **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.**

*The following activities are to be done in the week following the Sunday listed*

### **Sunday, January 10<sup>th</sup> Baptism of the Lord**

Think back upon your experiences of services of baptism and baptismal renewal, such as the Great Easter Vigil. In what ways have these experiences impacted you? What is your understanding of the meaning of your baptism for your life now?

**Set** a small, clear bowl of water in a prominent place in your home and, if possible, your place of work. Whenever you see it, say to yourself (touching the water, or using it to mark

yourself with the sign of the cross), "I have been baptized; I belong to God; I am new in Christ."<sup>16</sup>

*During the week*

### **Week 1, January 10<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> Baptismal Covenant**

What is your Name?

Who gave you this Name?

Who are your sponsors (Godparents)?

What 3 things they did promise in your name?

1- That I should renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God and all sinful desires that draw me away from the love of God?

2- That I should believe and confess the Christian Faith.

3- Accept Jesus Christ as my Saviour, trusting in his grace and love and obeying him as Lord.

*Renounce, confess, and profess. Make this your mantra for the week. Pick a day to focus upon renouncing, a day to focus on confessing your faith and a day to focus on professing that Jesus is our saviour.*

### *Renouncing Day<sup>17</sup>*

Leader: Let us pray. Merciful and Compassionate Father, who received us as citizens of Your kingdom in Baptism by water and Your Holy Spirit, we lament the sins we commit, both voluntary and involuntary. Grant us the courage to renounce Satan and the spiritual forces of wickedness, to repent of our sins and seek your kingdom and its justice anew.

Leader: Let us renounce Satan, and all of his service, and all of his pride.

All: We renounce him.

Leader: Let us renounce murder and all acts of violence.

All: We renounce them.

Leader: Let us renounce slavery, human trafficking, and pornography.

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<sup>16</sup> (deSilva 2008) 24

<sup>17</sup> (Pray Tell Blog 2020) Adapted from Pray Tell Blog

All: We renounce them.  
 Leader: Let us renounce racism and nationalism.  
 All: We renounce them.  
 Leader: Let us renounce gluttony and corruption.  
 All: We renounce them.  
 Leader: Let us renounce self-glorification, gossip, and false witness.  
 All: We renounce them.  
 Leader: Let us renounce human acts that damage nature and creation.  
 All: We renounce them.  
 Leader: Let us renounce all the destructive passions of the flesh and heart.  
 All: We renounce them.

Leader: Merciful and Compassionate God, teach us to sustain life and seek peace; inspire us to protect the vulnerable; open our eyes to see your image in all peoples and to restore human dignity; give us the strength to fast from sin, to give alms, and to build up treasure in heaven; humble us, teach us to be agents of your truth and to offer You, and Your only-begotten Son, and Your Holy Spirit true worship.

Your mercy, Lord, endures forever. To you belongs worship, to you belongs praise, to you belongs glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. **Amen.**

*Confessing of Faith Day*<sup>18</sup>

Leader: I wish to turn again to the way of Christ, within the communion of the Church.

In baptism, we died with Christ so that we might begin a new life together in the power of his resurrection. In baptism we are marked with the sign of his cross; now we have come to enter more fully into the meaning of that sign. We re-examine the covenant made in our baptism and seek the help of God and the support of our community in embracing that covenant.

God's word is like bread to our hearts; we cannot live without it. God's word is like rain that comes down upon the earth; it brings forth fruit in our lives. Come now and share in hearing the word of the Lord. Let us prepare our hearts to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

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<sup>18</sup> (Canada 2019) Adapted from the Rites of the Catechumen

Let us confess the foundation of our faith

All **Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.**

*Professing day*<sup>19</sup>

Leader: I turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as my Saviour.

I put my whole trust in his grace and love.

I promise to obey him as your Lord.

Grant, O Lord, that all who are baptized into the death of Jesus Christ your Son may live in the power of his resurrection and look for him to come again in glory; who lives and reigns now and forever. **Amen.**

## **Week 2, January 17<sup>th</sup> -23<sup>rd</sup> Christian Faith**

Apostles' Creed, the 12 tenants of our faith for the 12 Apostles.

- 1) I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
- 2) I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
- 3) He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.
- 4) He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
- 5) He descended to the dead. On the third day, he rose again.
- 6) He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
- 7) He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
- 8) I believe in the Holy Spirit,
- 9) The holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,
- 10) The forgiveness of sins,
- 11) The resurrection of the body,
- 12) And the life everlasting.

What do you learn in this creedal statement? This may be distilled to the Baptism Creed.

I believe and trust in God the Father, Who made the world.

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<sup>19</sup> (Anglican Church of Canada 1985) Adapted from Promises fro Baptism, 154

I believe and trust in his Son Jesus Christ, Who redeemed humankind.  
I believe and trust in His Holy Spirit, Who gives life to the people of God.  
I believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Leader: Let us pray

Deliver us, Lord, from the way of sin and death.  
Open our hearts to your grace and truth.  
Fill us with your holy and life-giving spirit.  
Keep us in the faith and communion of your holy church.  
Teach us to love others in the power of the spirit.  
Send us into the world in witness to you love.  
Bring us to the fullness of your peace and glory. **Amen.**<sup>20</sup>

### **Week 3, January 24<sup>th</sup> -30<sup>th</sup> 10 Commandments**

The Ten Commandments, also known as the Decalogue, are a set of principles that guides the ethics of a community and their worship. They are foundational to both Christians and Jews and can be found in Exodus 20:2-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-17.

1. I am the LORD your God. You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.
4. Honour your father and your mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.
9. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife (spouse).
10. You shall not covet your neighbour's goods.

What do we learn from the Ten Commandments?

They can be distilled to Love of God and Love of Neighbour. We cannot worship God without caring and loving our neighbour. Jesus expressed this as the Two Greatest Commandments in Matt 22:35-40, Mark 12:28-34 and Luke 10:25-28

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<sup>20</sup> (deSilva 2008) 68

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.

Leader: We acknowledge you, O God, as creator and as liberator. You are the One who brought the captives out of Egypt and delivered them from the oppression of slavery. You gave laws which shaped how people were to relate to you, to each other and to the whole environment. You implored people to worship only you, knowing that whatever was put in your place would become the object of idolatry—would become the priority of people's lives.

In this time of worship, help us to focus on you, O God, as the priority of our lives. Remind us of your steadfast love revealed so clearly in the new commandment of love which Jesus disclosed with his life and with his death. Speak to us anew as we offer this prayer and our worship in Jesus' name and for his sake.

All **Amen.**<sup>21</sup>

*Prayer of Commitment*

Leader: You shall have no other gods before me.  
All **Lord, help us to love you with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind and all our strength.**

Leader: You shall not make for yourself an idol.  
All **Lord, help us to worship you in spirit and in truth.**

Leader: You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.  
All **Lord, help us to honour you with reverence and awe.**

Leader: Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.  
All **Lord, help us to remember Christ risen from the dead, and to set our minds on things above, not on things on the earth.**

Leader: Honour your father and your mother.  
All **Lord, help us to live as your servants, giving respect to all, and love to our brothers and sisters in Christ.**

Leader: You shall not murder.  
All **Lord, help us to be reconciled with each other, and to overcome evil with good.**

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<sup>21</sup> (Laidlaw 2020)

Leader: You shall not commit adultery.  
All **Lord, help us to realize that our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.**  
Leader: You shall not steal.  
All **Let us be honest in all we do, and to care for those in need.**  
Leader: You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.  
All **Lord, help us always to speak the truth.**  
Leader: You shall not covet.  
All **Lord, help us to remember Jesus said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive', and help us to love our neighbours as ourselves; for his sake.<sup>22</sup>**

#### **Week 4 January 31<sup>st</sup> – February 6<sup>th</sup> Prayer**

We the disciples asked Jesus how we ought to pray, he taught us the Lord's Prayer that is recorded in Matt 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4.

*For the week of prayer, I have separated each petition for reflection. You may wish to choose a petition for each day, or simply pick one petition to reflect upon throughout the week.*

- 1-Our Father, who art in heaven
- 2- Hallowed be thy name
- 3-Thy kingdom come
- 4-Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven
- 5-Give us this day our daily bread
- 6-Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us
- 7-Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil
- 8-For the kingdom, the power and glory are yours, now and forever.

#### **Week 5 February 7<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> The Sacraments**

The Anglican Church recognizes all seven sacraments. Sometimes we refer to them as two major (Baptism and Eucharist) and five minor (Confession, Marriage, Ordination, Confirmation and Unction). A sacrament is defined as an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace.

They are listed in Book of Alternate Service as follows:

Baptism: page 146 – 150 (Order of Service 151- 162)

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<sup>22</sup> (Scotland 2020)

Eucharist: Page 174 – 184 (Order of Service 193 -210)

Reconciliation of a Penitent Sinner (Confession): 166 (Order of service 167 – 172)

Confirmation: Page 623 (Order of Service 623 – 630)

Marriage: 526 – 527 (Order of Service 528 -550)

Extreme Unction (anointing the sick): 551 -553 (Order of Service 554-558)

Ordination: 631 -632, 642, 651 (Order of Service 633 – 666)

*Pick one sacrament from the BAS and read the preamble and the order of service, including the rubrics (the red print). If you do not have a BAS at home please see <https://www.anglican.ca/about/liturgicaltexts/>*

### **Week 6 February 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> Sevenfold Prayer**

The Sevenfold prayer is from the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer, page 305-306.

Deliver us, Lord, from the way of sin and death.  
Open our hearts to your grace and truth.  
Fill us with your holy and life-giving spirit.  
Keep us in the faith and communion of your holy church.  
Teach us to love others in the power of the spirit.  
Send us into the world in witness to you love.  
Bring us to the fullness of your peace and glory. **Amen.**<sup>23</sup>

*Pick one of the petitions and make this your prayer each day until Ash Wednesday*

### **Candlemas February 2<sup>nd</sup>**

February 2 is a cross-quarter day, meaning it is halfway between the solstice and the equinox. The Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple or Candlemas marks this day. This day is 40 days since the nativity of our Lord on Christmas. It was first introduced in the 4<sup>th</sup> century in Jerusalem.<sup>24</sup> It is tradition to remove Christmas decorations on this day. On Candlemas, many Christians also bring their candles to their local church, where they are blessed and then used for the rest of the year; for Christians, these blessed candles serve as a symbol of Jesus Christ, who referred to Himself as the Light of the World.

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<sup>23</sup> (deSilva 2008) 68

<sup>24</sup> (Connell 2006) 207

Because it echoes the Christmas festival, this day is a celebration of light in the darkness. The gospel appointed for the day tells of Simeon, an old man, calling Jesus a "light to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel."

It is tradition to bless candles on this day. Because of the simplicity and beauty, the candle is still used when the church gathers in prayer, whether at church or in the home. Candles blessed at church and brought home, please use the following rite. These candles are then lit at ordinary times, like at meals, and at special times, such as when communion is brought to the home.

*The candles will be blessed at church on January 31<sup>st</sup> as we anticipate February 2<sup>nd</sup>. Please use your candle for the following rite and throughout the year.*

Leader: Jesus Christ is the light of the world, a light no darkness can overcome.  
Blessed be the name of the Lord.

All **Now and forever**

Leader: This candle brings beauty and light to our home. In the darkness, they tell us God's gift of light is Christ, whose light we receive at baptism.

Listen to the words of the holy gospel according to Luke.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,  
according to your word;  
for my eyes have seen your salvation,  
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,  
a light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and for glory to your people Israel.'

Leader: This is the Gospel of Christ  
All **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

*After a time of silence, all hold lighted candles as the leader begins*

Leader        Let us pray

God of night and day, we praise you for the brightness of our sun, for the softer light of the moon and the splendour of the stars, for fires of the earth that brings us light and warmth even as they imperil all that use them.

By the great and small lights we mark our days and seasons, we brighten the night and bring warmth to our winter, and in these lights, we see light: Jesus whose light we receive in baptism, whose light we carry by day and by night.

In the beauty of these candles, keep us in quiet and in peace, keep us safe and turn our hearts to you that we may ourselves be light for our world.

All praise be yours through Christ, the light of the nations, the glory of Israel, forever and ever. **Amen.**

Leader        Let us bless the Lord  
All             **Thanks be to God**

*The service may conclude with Joyful Joyful We Adore Thee, Hymn #425 in Common Praise.<sup>25</sup> Here is a link to Mormon Tabernacle Choir <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3RhvVfCOII>*

### **Books and supplies needed**

Advent Conspiracy: Making Christmas Meaningful Again by Rick McKinley, Chris Seay and Greg Holder

White Candle

Chalk

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<sup>25</sup> (Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy National Conference of Catholic Bishops 1989) 161-164

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