Advent is a season of preparation. We travel through these weeks with expectation and hope. We are preparing not just for the celebration of Christmas, when we remember the Incarnation of Christ, but also looking ahead to Christ’s coming again in glory!

Christmas is such an important celebration we have to prepare, not just for a big meal and giving gifts, but we need to prepare our hearts. That’s why we have four weeks of Advent: four weeks of preparation. The Advent Wreath includes four candles, one for each week: three purple and one pink. Purple is the colour in the church year associated with preparation and penitence. So, why just one pink candle? This goes back several hundred years in Christian tradition when the third Sunday of Advent was observed with the theme of joyful anticipation of Jesus’ coming in glory. The traditional Latin chant sung on this Sunday began ‘Gaudete’ or ‘Rejoice’.

As we light a candle each of the four Sundays, we are reminded of those who prepared the way for the coming of Christ:

Week 1: Israel’s patriarchs, including Abraham, Isaac and Jacob;
Week 2: the Old Testament Prophets who told of the coming of the Messiah;
Week 3: John the Baptist, who calls us to prepare the way of the Lord;
Week 4: Mary, the mother of Jesus.

The white candle in the centre of the wreath represents Jesus Christ and is lit on Christmas day.
1st Sunday of Advent

God of Abraham and Sarah, and all the patriarchs of old, you are our Father too. Your love is revealed to us in Jesus, born in David’s city of Bethlehem, born like him to be a king. Help us prepare to celebrate his birth. We ask this through Jesus Christ, the light who is coming into the world. Amen.

The Lord said to Abram, ‘...I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ Genesis 12:1, 3

2nd Sunday of Advent

God our Father, You spoke to the prophets of old Of a Saviour who would bring peace. You helped them to spread the message of his coming kingdom. Help us now, as we prepare to celebrate his birth, to share with others the good news of your power and love. We ask this through Jesus Christ, the light who is coming into the world. Amen.

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. Jeremiah 33:14-15
3rd Sunday of Advent

God our Father,  
You gave to Zechariah and Elizabeth,  
in their old age, a son called John.  
He told the people to prepare,  
for you were very near.  
Help us also to be ready  
to welcome him into our hearts.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ,  
the light who is coming into the world.  
Amen.

...The word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, ‘The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight…”’

Luke 3:2-4

4th Sunday of Advent

God our Father,  
blessed is Gabriel, who brought good news;  
blessed is Mary, called to be your mother,  
who responded to your call with joy.  
Help us, who are also called to serve you now.  
May we, like Mary,  
share in your great work  
of bringing to our world  
your love and healing.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ,  
the light who is coming into the world.  
Amen.

Mary said, ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour... He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.’

Christmas Day

God our Father,
Today the Saviour is born
And those who live in darkness are seeing a great light.
Help us who live by the light of Christ
To shine as lights in your world.
We ask this through Jesus Christ,
the light who has come into the world.
Amen.