



# SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

St. James' United Church Christian Education Committee Newsletter

## Welcome

*Pamela Norman (She/Her), Chair of the Christian Education Committee*

'Tis the season! Welcome to the season of Advent. The season we begin our preparations. We prepare for winter, for the holidays and for Christmas. It is the time to prepare our hearts and minds for the opening chapter of the greatest story ever told. Rather than getting wrapped up in wrapping, let us make time for reflection.

It is the season of joy! We look forward to nestling in the warmth of our circle of family and friends. We may be able to do just that in a more familiar manner this year as covid related restrictions have relaxed.

Though it may be the greatest story ever told, Christmas comes with traditions, expectations and emotions. Joyful for many, it can be a bleak mid-winter for others. For some it is a blue season, as they reflect upon loss or isolation. In days gone by, a phone call or a Christmas card went a long way towards connecting us in fellowship. Let us take the time this season to revive that sense of community.

We all felt a measure of isolation over the last year or two. If covid taught us anything, it is the power of community. When that was taken away from us, ostensibly for extremely powerful health reasons, we felt the loss. While it is a good idea any time of year, reach out this season, revive the spirit of community and fellowship - it will go a long way toward spreading joy in the blue corners of this season.

It is the season of peace, hope and goodwill. We would like to wish you the merriest of seasons this Christmas and blessings for the coming year.

*Pamela*

## ad·vent /'ad,vent/

### noun

1. a coming into place, view, or being; arrival:  
*the advent of the holiday season.*
2. Usually Advent. the coming of Christ into the world.
3. Advent, the period beginning four Sundays before Christmas, observed in commemoration of the coming of Christ into the world.
4. Usually Advent . Second Coming.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

*(Romans 15:13 - NIV)*

# Susan's Advent Meditation

*Susan Sheppard (She/Her), DLM, Minister of Youth & Christian Education*

This is the season of Advent when we wait and prepare. This year how we wait and prepare continues to be a little different from other years. Here is a tradition which you can continue to practice in your own homes.

The Advent wreath and candles have been a part of Christian practice since the Middle Ages. The origins of the practice are uncertain but there is evidence that pre-Christian Germanic peoples used wreaths lit with candles during the cold and dark of December as a sign of hope in the future warm and lengthening days of Spring. In Scandinavia, lighted candles were placed around a wheel, and prayers were offered to the god of light to turn 'the wheel of the earth' back towards the sun to lengthen the days and restore the warmth.

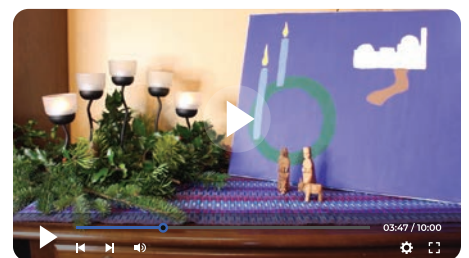
By 1600 the Christian church had established liturgies and symbolism around the advent wreath and its candles. The wreath is made of various evergreens, symbolizing the circle of life. Even the types of greenery used have meaning. Pine and yew signify immortality; cedar, strength and healing, while prickly holly reminds us of the crown of thorns. The circle of the wreath has no beginning or end reminding us of the eternity of God and everlasting life. Any pinecones, nuts or seed pods used to decorate the wreath symbolize life and resurrection.

The four candles represent the four weeks of advent. Before electric lights an extra candle would be needed each week to drive off the darkness as the daylight hours shortened approaching the Winter Solstice on Dec 21. By December 25, Christmas Day, there is a measurable lengthening of daylight as the earth tilts back toward the sun, and the Son, 'the light of the World' enters the world once again as a baby in a manger.

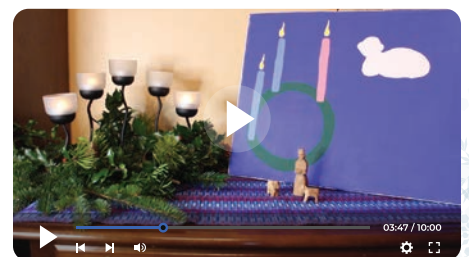
Lighting the candles each week symbolizes our expectation and hope surrounding Jesus' coming. In our tradition the candles are usually blue in colour representing waiting. The third candle is pink as a sign of rejoicing. We tend to name the candles by theme: Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. In other tradition, and in Godly Play, the candles have other names, the first being the Prophecy Candle in remembrance of the prophets, primarily Isaiah, who Christians interpret as foretelling the birth of the Christ. The second candle is the Bethlehem candle symbolizing the manger. Third is the Shepherds candle and fourth, the Angels candle. A more recent addition to the advent tradition has been the addition of the white Christ candle in the center of the wreath which is lit on Christmas Eve.



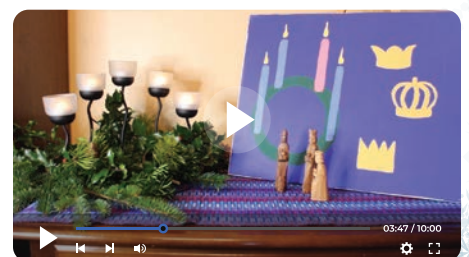
Advent 1 (<https://youtu.be/VKR91z5uaiY>)



Advent 2 (<https://youtu.be/etw6ycoEKCj>)



Advent 3 (<https://youtu.be/R7fGQRXlgok>)



Advent 4 (<https://youtu.be/X94ZEdrC7a0>)



Christmas Eve  
(<https://youtu.be/-UwxYA92e3M>)



Now that you know some of the history and symbolism of the Advent why not take a walk outside to gather some small piece of evergreens and pinecones to make your own advent wreath. (or purchase from a garden center) Add your candles and each Sunday of advent play the Godly Play video I have recorded for you (see youtube links on previous page) or read aloud the readings which come from our sister church, the United Church of Christ.

Have a Merry Christmas, stay safe and healthy.

*Susan*

## At a Glance - Seasons of Advent

### November 28, 2021 - Advent 1

- Jeremiah 33:14-16
- Psalm 25:1-10
- I Thessalonians 3:9-13
- Luke 21:25-36

#### *Hopeful Waiting, Active Trust*

With Jeremiah's promise of a "righteous branch," and with our eyes focused on God's reign breaking forth in the world, we begin Advent in anticipation and hope.

### December 12, 2021 - Advent 3

- Zephaniah 3:14-20
- Isaiah 12:2-6
- Philippians 4:4-7
- Luke 3:7-18

#### *What Should We Do?*

John brings good news that asks us to change our ways, turn toward God, and prepare the way for the Messiah with acts of compassion and justice.

### December 5, 2021 - Advent 2

- Baruch 5:1-9 or Malachi 3:1-4
- Luke 1:68-79
- Philippians 1:3-11
- Luke 3:1-6

#### *Messengers of Change*

We listen as Zechariah finds his voice in a song of praise and prophecy as he blesses his son, John; a promise that cascades into promises of hope for all.

### December 19, 2021 - Advent 4

- Micah 5:2-5a
- Luke 1:47-55 or Psalm 80:1-7
- Hebrews 10:5-10
- Luke 1:39-45, (46-55)

#### *Nurturing God's Promise*

Mary and Elizabeth's prophetic voices invite us to rejoice in the surprising joy and justice of God's reign and to bear this news to the world.



## December 26, 2021 - Christmas 1

- 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26
- Psalm 148
- Colossians 3:12-17
- Luke 2:41-52

### *Finding Joy*

During this Christmas season, we are invited to praise God and rest in the joy of God's presence in the birth of Emmanuel, God with us.

## January 2, 2022 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Christmas

(Epiphany readings)

- Isaiah 60:1-6
- Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14
- Ephesians 3:1-12
- Matthew 2:1-12

### *Pilgrims on the Road*

We hear a story of the magi's pilgrimage to see the Christ child and consider similarities between their journey and our own.

## January 9, 2022 - 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

Baptism of Jesus

- Isaiah 43:1-7
- Psalm 29
- Acts 8:14-17
- Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

### *Beloved*

As we begin the Season after the Epiphany, we rejoice that God's word continues to hold promise and power in our lives, calling each of us by name through living waters.

## January 16, 2022 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Isaiah 62:1-5
- Psalm 36:5-10
- 1 Corinthians 12:1-11
- John 2:1-11

### *Abundant Love*

As God's people, we live with an abundant spirit that stands in contrast to many of the world's realities and imagine hope and possibility where there is none.

## January 23, 2022 - 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10
- Psalm 19
- 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a
- Luke 4:14-21

### *Spirited Voice*

Anointed by the Spirit, Jesus brings the good news of God - release, recovery, setting free.

The Spirit empowers us with boldness and trust to practice God's good ways.

## January 30, 2022 - 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Jeremiah 1:4-10
- Psalm 71:1-6
- 1 Corinthians 13:1-13
- Luke 4:21-30

### *Speaking Out*

Jesus' mission and ministry continue to unfold on the edge, with those on the margins, and we learn more about what it means to follow God's ways.

**February 6, 2022 - 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

- Isaiah 6:1-8, (9-13)
- Psalm 138
- 1 Corinthians 15:1-11
- Luke 5:1-11

***Called into Mission***

In stories of call and commission, we hear an invitation to cast God's way of love, justice, and peace and gather all people into abundant life and explore what it means to be called into mission.

**February 20, 2022 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

- Genesis 45:3-11, 15
- Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40
- 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50
- Luke 6:27-38

***Living as Disciples***

We watch Joseph offer mercy to his brothers and continue to listen to the Sermon on the Plain, and consider what it means to go deeper, higher, wider and love as God loves.

**February 13, 2022 - 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

- Jeremiah 17:5-10
- Psalm 1
- 1 Corinthians 15:12-20
- Luke 6:17-26

***Blessings and Woes.***

In Jesus' Sermon on the Plain, we hear that we are blessed to bring healing and blessing to others, inviting them to participate in the vision offered in Jesus' teaching.

**February 27, 2022 - Transfiguration Sunday**

- Exodus 34:29-35
- Psalm 99
- 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2
- Luke 9:28-36, (37-43a)

***Holy Mystery***

On the last Sunday after the Epiphany, we hear the story of Jesus' transfiguration and pause to celebrate and hold within us the presence of Something More, which will strengthen us for the journey into Lent.

# A Taste of Christmas

Baking has been a staple of many a Christmas season. The smell of cookies and ginger bread fill our homes as well as our hearts, and make an excellent gift when looking to give a loved one something with a personal, homemade touch. Here we have two such recipes sure to delight any recipient. The first is an oatmeal cookie that mixes the light sweetness of white chocolate with the tart of cranberries, and the second, a fudge for those friends and family drawn more to the chocolate side of dessert. And for those on your list who love the act of baking itself, the dry ingredients can be arranged in a lovely glass jar and given with the recipe as a gift (The oatmeal cookie recipe already provides instructions for such).

## Christmas Cookies in a Jar

(Source: <https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/christmas-cookies-in-a-jar/>)

### INGREDIENTS

- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1/3 cup packed brown sugar
- 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/8 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup quick-cooking oats
- 1 cup dried cranberries
- 1 cup vanilla or white chips

### ADDITIONAL INGREDIENTS:

- 1/2 cup butter, melted
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

### DIRECTIONS

1. In a 1-qt. glass jar, layer the sugar and brown sugar, packing well between each layer. Combine the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt; spoon into jar. Top with oats, cranberries and chips. Cover and store in a cool, dry place for up to 6 months.
2. To prepare cookies: Pour cookie mix into a large bowl; stir to combine. Beat in butter, egg and vanilla. Cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes.
3. Drop by the tablespoonfuls 2 in. apart onto ungreased baking sheets. Bake at 375° for 8-10 minutes or until browned. Remove to wire racks to cool.



## My Christmas Fudge

(Recipe and Image Source: <https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/my-christmas-fudge/>)

### INGREDIENTS

- 4-1/2 cups sugar
- 1 can (12 ounces) evaporated milk
- 1/2 cup butter, cubed
- 2 packages (11-1/2 ounces each) milk chocolate chips
- 4-1/2 cups miniature marshmallows
- 2 ounces unsweetened chocolate, chopped
- 3 cups chopped walnuts, toasted
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 4 ounces white baking chocolate, melted

### DIRECTIONS

1. Line a 13x9-in. pan with foil; coat with cooking spray.
2. In a heavy Dutch oven, combine sugar, milk and butter. Bring to a rapid boil over medium heat, stirring constantly. Cook and stir 5 minutes. Remove from heat.
3. Stir in chocolate chips, marshmallows and chopped chocolate until melted. Fold in walnuts and vanilla. Immediately spread into prepared pan. Drizzle with melted white baking chocolate; cool completely.
4. Using foil, lift fudge out of pan. Remove foil; cut fudge into 96 squares. Store between layers of waxed paper in airtight containers.





# An Advent Reflection - Ends and Beginnings

*Rev. Ettie Gordon-Murray (She/Her), Member of the Christian Education Committee*

Dear friends,

As we approach the reflective season of Advent, I am glad to have been invited to make a contribution to this issue of our Christian Education Newsletter. During our ongoing journey through the coronavirus pandemic, I have missed the little chats before church, the cups of tea, the gatherings for fish dinners or pancake suppers - let's not forget the decadent desserts. It seems we are getting there! Healthcare and political leaders have recently determined we can gather in larger numbers (wearing masks of course) - a small price to pay for the social aspect of our devotions to God we long for.

It is not only coronavirus that has kept me from our church building - my work also keeps me away. I muse, it really does not matter whether our call is a few blocks away or "away" thousands of kilometers - we miss our family. I wish I could be home for Christmas... That thought brings me to the mood of longing, we have the Christ event when God as a babe broke into our world of troubles, tribulation, and dreams for peace - right relations, love, and joy (that mindset of inner peace - knowing everything has a place and (in fleeting moments of bliss) everything is in its place - a mindset that allows us to face the conundrum of daily living with steadfastness, courage, and resilience.

I sense, too, the energy and time it has taken to navigate the ever-changing COVID-19 regulations for health and safety has, over the past twenty-one months, taken its toll on my spiritual well-being. While I have been part of book studies, meetings to support the work and life of our congregation, and some physical activity I sense (some of the time) I have been in 'survival' mode. Now my soul is longing for something that only it can identify...

With that in mind and some intentionality, perhaps, that's what's missing - purposeful spiritual intent to nurture my inner being! Let me begin that part again - with that in mind and some intentionality, permit me to share with you my intent to be purposeful in following the cycle of our liturgical year from end to its next new beginning.

If you would like to adapt my practice to your requirements here it is:

Reflecting on the yearly cycle of our spiritual journey it is marked by many ends and beginnings. As each season merges into the next, there are ends and beginnings: Advent points toward Christmas; Christmas culminates at Epiphany; Epiphany gives way to Lent; Lent leads to Easter; Easter beckons Pentecost (Creation Time). Altogether the cycle of the liturgical year culminates in Reign of Christ - an end and a new beginning place as we prepare for the wonder-filled birth of the babe in a manger.

As seekers and pilgrims each time we move through the cycle of the liturgical year, it provides an opportunity to create a check list, and to take stock of our growth and development into Christian spiritual maturity.

In a few weeks (when we celebrate the secular New Year's Eve) customarily many in our neck of the woods pause for reflection, to take a look back on personal and community events of the past 365 days - often stopping to reflect on some event or another that holds particular significance -- to allow for deeper thought, before moving on to make a resolution or list of resolutions for the next 365 days.

What would it look like if we applied that pattern to the end of our spiritual year (Reign of Christ) and





the beginning of our spiritual year (Advent)? Then, pausing for some time of self-examination, through questions such as the following – a spiritual check in...

1. How would I describe my spirituality at the beginning of Advent last year? Or how am I becoming more Christ like? (Where have I changed? Where are my struggles? What have been my places for growth?)
2. What can I do to cultivate my spiritual growth over the next year?
3. Where would I like to be next Reign of Christ Sunday? How might I get there?

Essentially, what I've shared are my goals to nurture my spirit in the church year to come – a nudge and reminder to me to take time to process, rejuvenate, and cultivate my spiritual growth. My sense is that while we continue to navigate our 'new world', as the coronavirus pandemic continues to unfold and influence daily living, others may share a similar challenge and I invite you to participate with me in responding to the questions posed above – make new questions and find space to engage in some responses. We may even find some time to share our learnings.

Blessings for our Advent pilgrimage – may God bless each of us with deeper insight into becoming more spiritually mature followers of Jesus.

Peace, Health, Joy

*Ettie*

### **Let us Pray**

Holy One, "...in this Advent season, as the nights grow longer, let us wait—expectantly, longingly, anxiously, and thoughtfully—knowing that it was in the darkness of Mary's womb that the Christ child was conceived, and made ready.

We remember nations and peoples at war, countries torn apart by strife and conflict, cities and villages affected by natural disaster; let us pray for the needs of the whole world... We remember God's good earth, waiting for deliverance from neglect or abuse, destruction or misuse; let us pray for all creation ... We remember the church around the world, proclaiming Good News of liberty, freedom, and forgiveness; let us pray for the church in this community... And let us remember, in Jesus' name, all who are poor or hungry... all who are cold or lonely... all who are sick and all who mourn... and let us remember Jesus' call to be loving servants of all.

We gather these and all our prayers, joining with all who have dared to give birth to God's promises, with whom, in Jesus, we are one for evermore.

***Gathering our prayers together let us pray the words Jesus gave us.***

### **The Prayer of Jesus**

Our Father,\* who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done, on earth,  
as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil:  
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory  
forever and ever.

Amen.

*\*or Creator*

## Made with Love

(Image Source: <https://www.gathered.how/sewing-and-quilting/sewing/10-of-the-best-free-christmas-sewing-patterns/>)

There is a special charm to that which is crafted lovingly. Homemade decorations stay with us through the years, handed down onto subsequent generations, along with the stories that accompany them. With the current situation making holiday shopping expeditions more complex, why not create your own loving keepsakes this year? Below the heading is a link to a variety of Christmas themed projects, with everything from home-made, reusable Advent calendars and Santa-style gift bags, to the venerable Christmas stockings and tree ornaments. Here are a few samples of what the website has to offer:



**Christmas Stockings**

<https://www.gathered.how/sewing-and-quilting/sewing/how-to-make-a-christmas-socking/>



**Sack for Santa**

<https://www.gathered.how/sewing-and-quilting/sewing/how-to-make-a-christmas-gift-sack/>



**Scandi-style Advent Calendar**

<http://gathered.how/sewing-quilting/sewing/how-to-make-a-fabric-advent-calendar/>



**Christmas Tree Baubles**

<http://gathered.how/sewing-quilting/sewing/easy-sew-christmas-tree-baubles/>



**Christmas Tree Skirt**

<https://www.gathered.how/sewing-and-quilting/quilting/free-christmas-tree-skirt-pattern/>

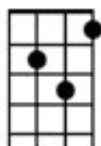


**Snowflake Cushion**

<http://gathered.how/sewing-quilting/quilting/how-to-sew-a-snowflake-cushion/>

# God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen

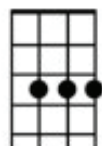
Gm



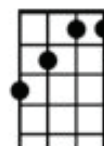
D7



Cm



Bb



F



Gm D7

God rest ye mer - ry, gen - tle - men; let noth - ing you dis - may. Re -

3 3 5 5 3 1 0 3 1 3 0 1 3 5 3

5 Gm D7 Cm

mem - ber, Christ our Sav - ior was born on Christ - mas Day to save us all from

3 5 5 3 1 0 3 1 3 0 1 3 5 5 6 3 5 6

10 Bb Gm F Bb D7

Sa - tan's pow'r when we were gone a - stray. O — ti - dings of com - fort and

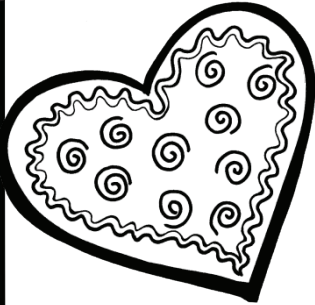
8 10 5 3 1 3 0 1 3 1 3 5 6 5 5 3 1 0

15 Gm F Bb D7 Gm

joy, com - fort and joy! O — tid - ings of com - fort and joy. —

3 1 0 3 3 1 3 5 6 8 10 5 3 1 0 3

# Prepare Your Heart



Advent is a time to prepare;  
As Christmas comes into scope;  
We remember the Christ Child,  
Who long ago brought **Hope**.

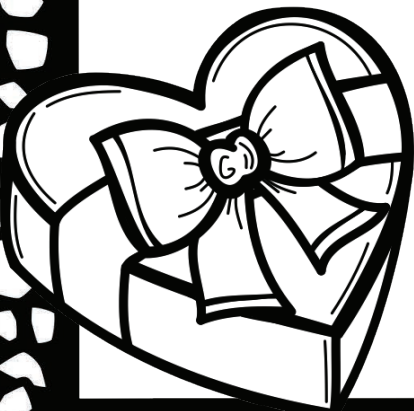


The world knew very well,  
This child's love would never cease.  
For God had sent his Son to earth;  
So that we may know **Peace**.

The world rejoiced aloud,  
At the birth of this baby boy.  
Who could of known a tiny child,  
Would bring the world such **Joy**?

Each soul was full of delight  
For the child who came from above.  
The Christ Child had finally arrived,  
And with him, he brought **Love!**

So during this Advent season  
Be sure to do your part.  
Our Savior is coming soon,  
You must prepare your heart!





# Advent Poem



A \_\_\_\_\_

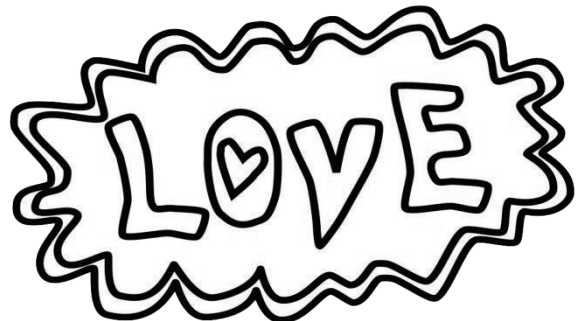
D \_\_\_\_\_

V \_\_\_\_\_

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T \_\_\_\_\_



# Advent Word Search

Advent

Joy

wreath

Mary

Hope

Love

candles

Emmanuel

Peace

prepare

Jesus

angel

Q	W	E	R	T	M	Y	U	I	O	A	P	A	S	E
D	F	G	H	J	A	K	L	Z	X	N	C	V	B	M
N	M	Q	W	E	R	R	T	Y	U	G	I	O	P	M
A	S	D	H	F	Y	O	J	G	H	E	J	K	L	A
Z	X	C	O	V	B	N	M	Q	W	L	E	R	T	N
U	I	O	P	P	A	F	G	H	J	K	L	Z	V	U
A	D	V	E	N	T	Q	W	E	P	T	Y	U	I	E
O	P	S	D	F	G	H	W	R	E	A	T	H	J	L
Z	X	G	J	L	I	O	P	F	C	B	P	L	D	H
A	K	B	Q	W	R	Y	O	P	A	R	Q	O	H	K
S	L	V	J	E	T	U	L	L	E	G	H	V	V	N
D	Z	N	E	R	A	P	E	R	P	M	V	E	W	T
F	X	M	S	Q	W	E	T	Y	Y	U	I	O	P	A
H	C	Q	U	S	D	G	H	J	K	L	X	C	Z	N
J	B	W	S	C	A	N	D	L	E	S	O	P	G	H

# Christmas Day



Christmas has arrived! Our wait has come to an end! We now light the final candle on our wreath – the Christ candle. Before Christ, our world was in darkness. Now, our world is full of light and hope! Advent ends on this day, and our Christmas season begins. Let us rejoice – for our Savior, Jesus Christ, is born on this day!