

## The First Sunday of Advent

The setting out of the Advent Wreath in Churches marks the four Sundays of Advent. Week by week the Wreath announces the coming of the light of the world. Its increasing light signals the approach of the true Light who conquers darkness and the shadow of death. Let us pray that we may experience God's light as we embark on this journey for the next four weeks.

**Reader:** The Redeemer shall come (Is. 59:20).

**All:** A Light to lighten a world in darkness

**Reader:** This week we light the candle that symbolizes **watching**.

*The designated person lights the first candle*

**Reader:** Today is the first Sunday of advent, the first day of the liturgical year, the Church's new year's day. We do not begin by emphasizing the beginning of the year. Instead, advent opens with stirring readings about the last days. Just as Christ comes "like a thief in the night" (1Thess. 5:2) so advent interrupts our busy, well-intentioned lives with a summons to "wake up," put on the armour of Christ and watch for Christ.

The first Sunday of Advent foretells the last things in order to admonish us to tend to first things. How we behave today, how we treat others, and ourselves, matter ultimately. From Genesis to Revelation we are taught the necessity of vigilance and right behaviour **now**, in light of the Messiah's past incarnation and future final advent. The coming of Christ at the last judgement reveals that our judgement hinges upon how we treat Christ, present in all people, especially the least lovable, since **all** are members of Christ's family.

We are to watch as God watches us; with eyes of love and mercy. We are to be on guard against laziness and complacency, now, in light of God's coming. We are to be on the lookout for Christ's activity in our lives and in the world; we are to remain awake to tend the sick and broken-hearted through the night. We are to observe the progression of weeks during Advent with discipline, Bible study and prayer to make ready for the coming of Christ in us with humility, glory and love.

**Reader:** Let us pray.

God our light, quiet our minds that we may watch for you; make our lamps shine and proclaim to the world that darkness is ended; that there is Light for those who seek it and love for all people. Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!  
Jesus is the Light of the world.

All: Come and save us God of light! Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!

*The Service continues on page 101 in the BCP.*

*(Adapted from Teach us to number our Days, Barbara Dee Baumgarten, 1999)*