



## Advent Candle Lighting Readings

### Welcome to World Vision Canada's Advent Candle Lighting Readings

The custom of lighting candles each week of Advent is familiar to many Christian traditions. Symbolically the light represents Jesus as the promised light of the world. With each successive week an additional candle is lit culminating on Christmas Eve/Day, when the full brightness of all the candles burn to remind us that Jesus has come and is leading us forth to be light for the world. Lighting advent candles is an ideal activity to nurture the participation of families in sacred services. Many churches intentionally focus on inter-generational involvement in the Advent activity of lighting candles.

It is our hope that these readings will provide fresh perspectives on a familiar story. And that these perspectives will lead to a renewed commitment by the Church to building God's Kingdom here on earth; a Kingdom of justice and peace for all people.

Each week's reading for Advent and Christmas Eve contain scripture readings combined with brief biblical reflection.

These readings can be used as a call to worship or during the service. You will need five candles that can be easily lit as the script is being read.

Each week's reading contains cues for the accompanying visual presentation found on the Advent Candle Lighting Readings Power Point file. This file can be downloaded at:

**[WorldVision.ca/churches](http://WorldVision.ca/churches).**



## ► **The First Sunday of Advent:** Waiting on LOVE

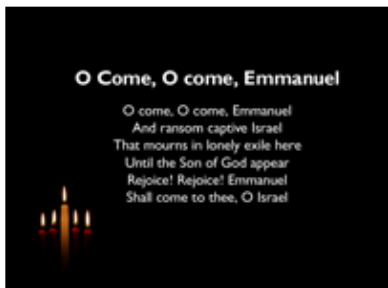


- **Reader 1:** Advent is a time of waiting, of holy expectation for what is to come. It is a time of preparing our hearts and our homes for Christmas joy. Just four weeks from now, we celebrate God revealing what love really is in the person of Jesus.

**Reader 2:** During Advent we remember the incarnation of Jesus. Born to a young woman who, but for love, would have been an outcast. Born in a barn, God incarnate had a rocky start.

**Reader 3:** The God we meet in Jesus is a God of compassion, of righteousness and of a radical love like no other. The God who created the heavens and the earth becomes flesh and dwells among us. Emmanuel, God with us.

[**Alternative Reader 1 for younger participant:** Advent is about waiting. And waiting can be hard, especially when you are waiting for Christmas.]



- **Congregation sings: O Come, O Come Immanuel, verse 1**  
O come, O come, Emmanuel  
And ransom captive Israel  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel



- **Reader 1:** There was a man in the desert once, who called people to wait for Jesus. He reminded people of an ancient prophesy and told them it was about to come true. "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all humankind will see God's salvation." His name was John the Baptist.



- ▶ **Reader 2:** There are valleys, the way is rough, the road is often crooked. The world is not how God intends it to be. Mary, the mother of Jesus, walked a very rough road. The world tried to condemn her but her strength carried her through like it does so many in today's troubled world.

### Lighting of the Candle:



- ▶ **Reader 2:** We light this candle in gratitude for God's divine and perfect love, made visible at Christmas, and our imperfect and sometimes clumsy ways of sharing it.

**Reader 3:** We light this candle as a symbol of God's light shining in the darkness. The Light has come into the world. It shines as brightly now as it did then. The darkness didn't overcome it then. It never will.

### Reader 1: Prayer

Let us pray,

God of Advent,

We are an impatient and busy people. We are propelled into Christmas and swept away by activity. Help us to slow down and savour Advent. Teach us in this rhythm of expectation to see you at work in our lives and in the world.

Your son was not born in a castle to strong rulers. He was born in a barn to a vulnerable young woman. That teaches us something about you. Open our eyes to the vulnerable around us in our own communities and in our global home. Guard every child that is in need. Equip us, your people, to fill in the valleys and make the rough smooth.

In Jesus' name we pray,  
Amen.



## ► **The Second Sunday of Advent:** Waiting for HOME



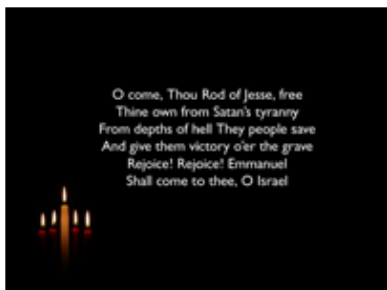
- **Reader 1:** As we prepare our hearts for the coming of our Lord, we prepare our homes for the arrival of family and friends. We imagine what it will be like to sit and dine and visit with loved ones. We treasure thoughts of home when home is safe and loving.

[**Alternative Reader 1 for younger participant:** Home is a great place to be at Christmas. I can't wait to open gifts, eat with family and friends and have fun. Home is the best place to be this time of year.]



- **Reader 2:** Mary and Joseph had to leave home, just when they needed home the most. Their difficult journey to Bethlehem meant they were alone at a time when they most needed community. Yet God was present to Mary and Joseph in their wandering. They experienced God as protector and sustainer, even as they traveled from their home to the unfamiliarity of Bethlehem for the census.

**Reader 3:** Once there, they experienced God as keeper of promises. Jeremiah 33:14-16 says: 'The days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will fulfill the gracious promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called The LORD Our Righteousness.'



- **Congregation sings: O Come, O Come Immanuel, verse 2**  
O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free  
Thine own from Satan's tyranny  
From depths of Hell Thy people save  
And give them victory o'er the grave  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel

**Reader 1:** God makes a promise in Jeremiah and he keeps it in Bethlehem. Jesus is born and nothing will ever be the same again.

**Reader 2:** Today, in a world that makes the barn in Bethlehem feel like a very long time ago, God calls for community to help keep children safe and to give the homeless shelter.

**Lighting of the Candle:**



► **Reader 2:** We light this candle for every child of God who has lost their way from home. We light this candle in acknowledgement that God wants children to live in safety, in repentance that this does not always happen, and in commitment that we will work to make it so.

**Reader 3:** We light these candles as symbols of God's light shining in the darkness. The Light has come into the world. The first chapter of John says that the darkness has not understood it. But the darkness will never overcome it.

**Reader 1:** Prayer

Let us pray,

Dear God,  
You are our heart's home. Your home is safe, loving, and eternal. But, so many of your children are trapped in homes that are not safe. Or they are forced to leave homes that are — for nightmares they barely escape.

You chose to incarnate yourself into a family that had little else but love on the night you were born. Rescue us from the danger of being obsessed with ourselves so that we can see the needs, and the hope, around us. Draw us closer to your light as we draw closer to Christmas.

In Jesus' name we pray,  
Amen.



► **The Third Sunday of Advent:**  
**Waiting to BELONG**

**Reader 1:** During Christmas, surrounded by family and friends, we feel the warmth of knowing we belong in this place, with these people. Or, we feel the jarring disappointment that can come when we sense we do not.

[**Alternative Reader 1 for younger participant:** When it is Christmas and family and friends are around, I feel I belong somewhere special. But I know that not everyone feels that way this time of year.]



► **Reader 2:** This season is a time of highs and lows, of joy and depression, of rushing when we want to stand still. Within the Christmas story itself, we find opposites.

**Reader 3:** Angels, heaven's most glorious citizens, mix and mingle with shepherds, Bethlehem's least. The God who chose to partner with an unwed mother and be born in a barn uses shepherds, the outcasts of the day, to be the first to hear the news that Immanuel has come.



► **Congregation sings: O Come, O Come Immanuel, verse 3**  
**O come, Thou Day-Spring, come and cheer**  
**Our spirits by Thine advent here**  
**Disperse the gloomy clouds of night**  
**And death's dark shadows put to flight.**  
**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel**  
**Shall come to thee, O Israel.**



► **Reader 1:** The world has a habit of creating gloomy clouds and of discarding what doesn't fit. Our God does the opposite. Isaiah 11 says that "He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart."

**Reader 2:** God sends angels to shepherds and gathers in what the world throws out. God restores people to health and heals their wounds because they are called outcasts according to Jeremiah 30:17 — and according to one night in Bethlehem.

**Reader 3:** In these final days leading up to Christmas we see angels visiting shepherds. And we remember that God cares for us as lambs. God loves when we do not. God calls us to love everyone, no matter what.



► **Lighting of the Candle:**

**Reader 2:** We light this candle for every child of God who has known what it is like to be an outcast. We light this candle in acknowledgement that God does not shut out but welcomes in.

**Reader 3:** We light these three candles as symbols of God's light shining in the darkness. A very long time ago, God said "Let there be light." And there was light.

**Reader 1:** Prayer

Let us pray,

Dear God,  
You are the light of the world. In you, there is no darkness at all. There are no outcasts, no one who is not good enough. As we continue on our journey through Advent, help us remember that those who the world says do not belong, you welcome with open arms.

In Jesus' name,  
Amen



► **The Fourth Sunday of Advent:**  
**Waiting on PEACE**

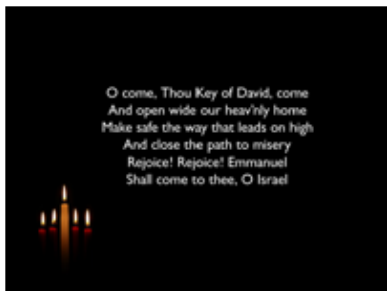
**Reader 1:** Our waiting is almost over. In these last days of Advent, we stand on the threshold of Christmas.

[**Alternative for a younger reader:** It's almost here. We are almost at Christmas.]



► **Reader 2:** As we have waited we have experienced the presence of the One for whom we wait. God's presence brings peace.

**Reader 3:** We have placed ourselves in the posture of God's people of the Old Testament, groaning for their Messiah. This is one of the promises that kept their faith strong: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace," from Isaiah 9:6



► **Congregation sings: O Come, O Come Immanuel, verse 4**  
**O come, Thou Key of David, come,**  
**And open wide our heavenly home;**  
**And open wide our heavenly home;**  
**Make safe the way that leads on high,**  
**And close the path to misery.**  
**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel**  
**Shall come to thee, O Israel.**



► **Reader 1:** Jesus was born into a time of turmoil. The Slaughter of the Innocents is the dark stain on the Christmas story. Herod, threatened by the birth of the child people are calling a king, ordered the murder of all male children in and around Bethlehem aged two and under.

**Reader 2:** We can hardly comprehend it. Like so many atrocities taking place around the world today, the powerful are threatened and the innocent die.



► **Reader 3:** But God promises that one day, the fighting will end. That those who fight will "beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore." The peacemakers will be blessed indeed.



## ► Lighting of the Candle

**Reader 2:** We light this candle for every child of God who has lost their families, their homes and their innocence to war.

**Reader 3:** We light these candles as people who long for Jesus and the peace of God for ourselves, our families and communities and for the whole world.

**Reader 1:** Prayer

God of Peace,

This Advent, we wait for the birth of the Christ-Child, the Prince of Peace. And we wait for Jesus' coming again in glory when swords will become plowshares. We pray for those who live in conflict, that they will be protected. We pray for the situations that create conflict, that they will be resolved peacefully. We pray especially for the children, who are hurt the most by conflict, protect them and bring caring adults alongside them to care for them. Show us how we can be peacemakers in our own relationships, our own families and workplaces, and in the world. Help us to be blessed as peacemakers in your name,

Amen



## ▶ Christmas Eve

**Reader 1:** We gather to celebrate the birth of the one who is the light of the world, the Prince of Peace, Home to the homeless, Refuge for the weary.



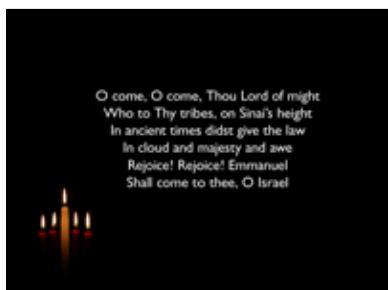
▶ **Reader 2:** We have explored what it is to wait expectantly for the best Christmas gift the world has ever seen.

**Reader 3:** We have acknowledged that the world needs the love, peace, joy and hope of Jesus Christ now more than ever.

Congregation sings **O Come, O Come Immanuel**, verses 1, 5



▶ **O come, O come, Emmanuel**  
And ransom captive Israel  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel



▶ **O come, O come, Thou Lord of might,**  
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,  
In ancient times did'st give the Law,  
In cloud, and majesty and awe.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel



▶ **Reader 1:** Christ is our hope and our salvation. Christ is God's promises with flesh on. Christ brings meaning and hope to a world short on both.

**Reader 2:** We light these candles again and remember how we have waited on love and love has not let us down.



▶ **Reader 1:** We light the Christ candle in the centre of it all. The Light of the World was born this night. His name is Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us. Our waiting is over.