

THE ADVENT WREATH (ALL LEVELS)

FOR THE TEACHER:

The curriculum makes specific reference to the Advent wreath at Level 1. However, the wreath can be used to help children of all ages understand the movement through the four weeks of the season of Advent.



Light has always been a symbol of hope in the darkness. We know that the people of the Stone Age built Newgrange in such a way that the light of the rising sun enters the chamber at the darkest time of the year. This was a sign for them that the light was beginning to overcome the darkness. Long before Jesus was born the people of Eastern Europe made wreaths of evergreen branches and added lighted candles as a sign of hope in the dark days of winter. In northern European countries lights were placed on wheels and prayers were offered to the god of light to turn the wheel of the earth back towards the sun.

By the 1500s Christians had adapted this tradition and were using Advent wreaths as part of their preparation for Christmas. They were remembering what Jesus said, *'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.'* (Jn 8:12) By the 17th century the Advent wreath was used throughout Germany to mark the time spent waiting for the birth of the Christ child at Christmas. From Germany this tradition spread to the rest of the world.

THE ADVENT WREATH EXPLAINED

A CIRCLE OF EVERGREEN

The wreath is circular in shape to show the everlasting love of God, a love that has no beginning or end. Evergreen leaves such as holly, laurel, ivy, spruce or pine are used also help us to remember that God loves us always. The kind of leaves used can also have a meaning that can be related to our faith. Laurel leaves are signs of victory over persecution and suffering. The prickly leaves of the holly can remind us of the crown of thorns worn by Jesus.

4 CANDLES

THREE PURPLE AND ONE PINK

There is a candle to be lit at the beginning of each of the four weeks of Advent. There is also a tradition that says that each week of Advent represents a thousand years, so that the four weeks add up to the four thousand years from Adam and Eve until the birth of Jesus, the saviour of the world.

There are three purple candles. These remind us that Advent is a time when we are asked to pray and to think about those areas of our lives where we need forgiveness. Purple is the colour of repentance in the Church. During Advent people are invited to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation during parish Penitential Services.

The pink candle is lit on the Third Sunday of Advent which is also called *Gaudete Sunday*. This means Joyful Sunday or the Sunday of Rejoicing. We rejoice because we are more than half way through our preparation for Christmas and the birth of Jesus draws ever closer. On the Third Sunday of Advent the Entrance Antiphon at Mass echoes the theme of rejoicing when it proclaims; *'Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say, rejoice. The Lord is always near.'* (Phil 4:4-5)

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

The following are suggestions for helping the children understand the Advent wreath and the way it helps us to prepare for the birth of Jesus at Christmas.

ALL CLASSROOM TEACHERS: There are lots of different ways of making an Advent wreath and many of these can be found in previous Advent Resources; www.kandle.ie/resources/primary-resources/

THIRD – SIXTH CLASSES: This year you could make a traditional Advent wreath by buying a florist's wreath to use as a base. You will also need three purple and one pink candles.

Collect the evergreen leaves for your wreath by taking the children on an **ADVENT WALK**. Each classroom can make their own wreath and one class might take responsibility for the school wreath to be placed in the school Prayer Space.

Invite your priest to bless all the Advent wreaths at a School Assembly on November 25 or 28. Use the Assembly at which Advent wreath are blessed resource on **pages 7-9**

ACTIVITIES

INFANT TEACHERS: LEVEL 1

JUNIOR INFANTS: There is a picture of an Advent wreath to colour on **page 4**. Talk to the children about the wreath, its shape, the significance of the four candles and the colours used. Use the colouring activity to help consolidate their learning. Use the pictures as part of your Advent Prayer Space.

SENIOR INFANTS:

Grow in Love Senior Infant Teacher Book (p92) has three options for making Advent Wreaths. There is a picture of an Advent wreath to colour on page 19 of the senior infant workbook. This is designed to be done at home.

LEVEL 2

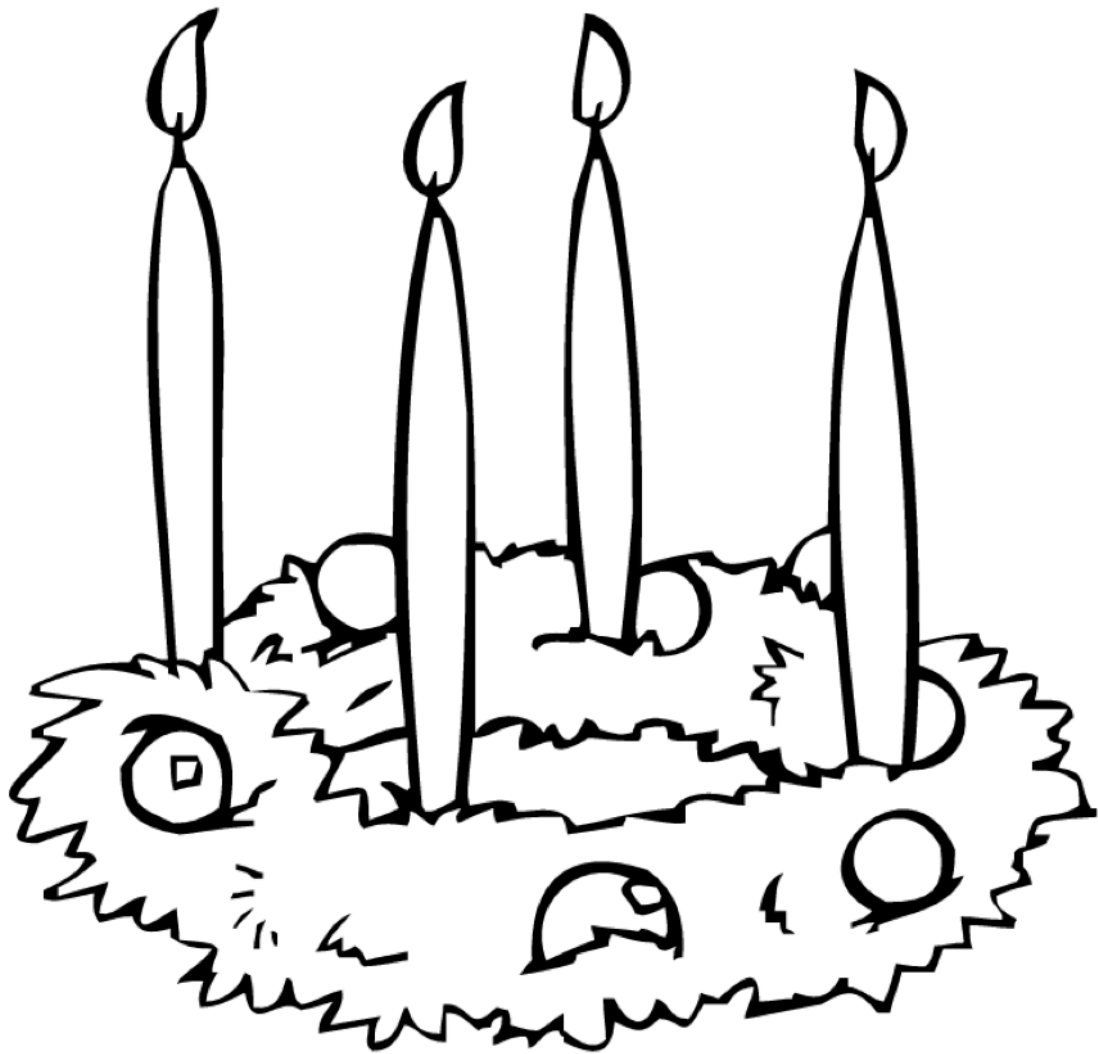
FIRST CLASS

Talk to the children about the Advent wreath, its shape and the significance of the four candles as the way we count the four weeks during which we wait for Christmas. Talk about the different colours of candles used and how they are lit in order. Use the activity on **page 5** to consolidate learning. Consider sending home the page with a note asking parents/guardians to help their child hang up their picture and colour a candle each week of Advent.

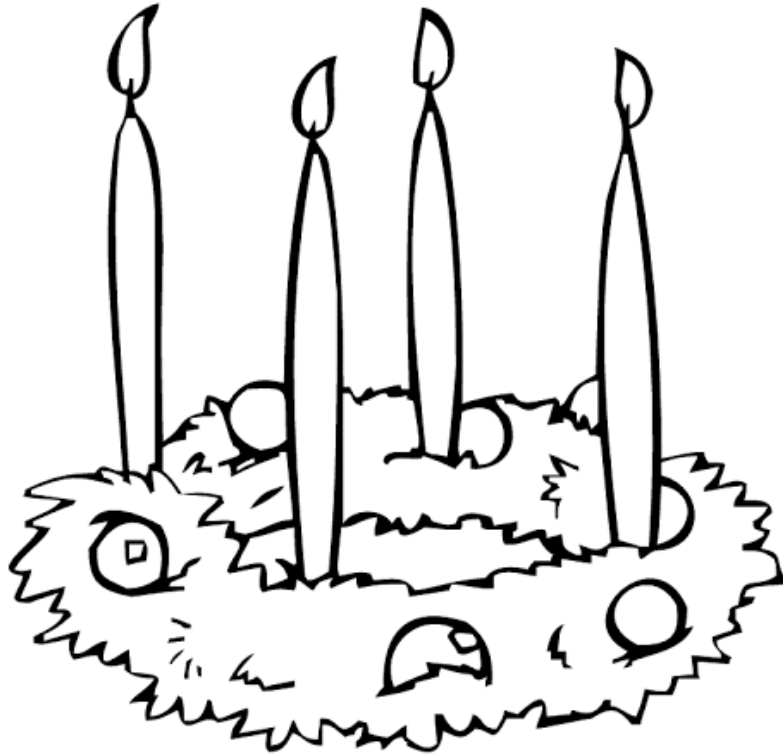
SECOND CLASS: Chatting about the Advent wreath on page 99 of the Grow in Love teacher book

LEVEL 3 AND 4: Ask the children to do some research on the origins and history of the Advent wreath. They can use the worksheet on **page 6** to present their findings.

Colour the Picture



Colour the Picture



Can you count the candles?

Circle the number: 1 2 3 4 5 6

What colour are the candles?

Circle the colours that you used:

Red Pink Yellow Purple Green

ASSEMBLY AT WHICH ADVENT WREATHS ARE BLESSED

This Prayer Service can be used as a school assembly at which all of the Advent wreaths in the school can be blessed or in individual classrooms. If your chaplain is available, you might invite him to bless the wreath/s using holy water.

You Will Need

- Children to carry the Advent wreath/s
- Table/s on which to place the Advent wreaths
- Four A3 sized Signs
 - Love
 - Peace
 - Joy
 - Hope
- Four Children, one to hold each sign
- Six Readers

LEADER: We begin our prayer today as we begin all our prayer by marking ourselves with the sign of our faith

ALL: In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit Amen

LEADER: This week the season of Advent begins. Advent helps us to get ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas. We have made Advent wreaths for our classroom/s and our school to remind us that Jesus comes to bring light to the darkness, the light of God's love for each one of us.

Students carry in and place the advent wreaths in the designated place

READER 1: The Advent Wreath is in the shape of a circle because just like a circle God's love had no beginning and no end.

READER 2: There are evergreen leaves on our wreath because just like these leaves that are always green, God's love for us is everlasting.

LEADER: Lord our God, bless this wreath and bless all of us gathered here today. May this wreath help us to focus on the coming of Jesus as we journey through Advent. As we light the candles each week may we be reminded of the love, peace, joy and hope that Jesus brings into the world. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

ALL: **AMEN**

STUDENT 1 HOLDS UP THE FIRST SIGN WITH WORD HOPE

READER 3: Today we light the first purple candle. This candle reminds us that Jesus is our hope that the light will come and conquer the darkness



LIGHT THE FIRST PURPLE CANDLE

LEADER: Let us thank God for Jesus, the light of the world

ALL: *Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen*

STUDENT 2 HOLDS UP THE SECOND SIGN WITH WORD PEACE

READER 4: Next week, we will light the first and the second purple candles. The second purple candle represents the gift of peace that Jesus brings to our world.

LEADER: Our world needs the peace that only Jesus can bring. Let us pray for peace in the world and for all of us as we say:

ALL: *Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit...*

STUDENT 3 HOLDS UP THE THIRD SIGN WITH WORD JOY

READER 5: In two weeks, we will light three candles two purple and one pink. The pink or rose-colored candle is for joy. Joy because we know that that Jesus will soon be here.

LEADER: Lord Jesus, help us to wait in joyful hope for your coming at Christmas. Together we pray...

ALL: *Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit...*

STUDENT 4 HOLDS UP THE FOURTH SIGN WITH WORD LOVE

Reader 6: As our Advent journey comes to an end we will light all four candles. This final candle represents love. God loves us so much that he gives us the gift of Jesus at Christmas. Jesus came to show us how to live and love like children of God.

LEADER: We thank God for the gift of Jesus as we pray...

ALL: *Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit...*

LEADER: Our Advent journey begins today and we pray that it will be a time filled with hope, peace, joy and love as we wait for the coming of the best gift of all, the gift of Jesus.

Let us bless the Lord

ALL: Thanks be to God

ALL: In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: Amen