

Green Advent Meditation

by Courtney Pinkerton

The Advent Wreath

Advent wreaths are an ancient way of marking each of the four weeks leading up to Christmas and celebrating the feast. This wreath couples old-world style with a repurposed materials aesthetic. It evokes the charms of the season with a gold-leafed rustic wood base, flickering candle light (in safety-conscious glass-enclosed candles) and the rich smells of rosemary, lavender and other locally-harvested herbs.

This Advent wreath is designed to appeal to all the senses. It includes several elements which can be touched, smelled and enjoyed, including 1) a flexible outer “wreath” of wire and vintage buttons. This wreath drapes around the candles and herbs and is created with a 3:2 pattern. It can be used as a meditation tool with even the very young; the three button pattern representing “faith, hope & charity” or other centering words and the two button pattern representing the light and the humanity within each one of us. 2) The inner “wreath” of wire and buttons is wrapped around the Christ Candle and also can be a meditation tool: the red button represents all who suffer in our world, the blue button represents Mary, the mother of Jesus, the wooden button represents Joseph, the father of Jesus, the luminous metallic button represents the mystery of love, the yellow button represents the birth of the “child of light.” A few additional buttons can be added to the inner wreath which can serve as reminders of prayers for specific loved ones or other concerns on the heart. 3) The bundles of organic herbs: rosemary, lavender and thyme can be handled and rubbed to release more aromas, and even used for cooking. As they dry additional aromatic clippings (such from a branch of a Christmas tree) or other natural objects (leaves, feathers etc) can also be added to fill in and personalize the wreath.

The Season of Advent is a time of waiting in winter darkness and anticipating the return of the light. This shifting of the natural seasons reminds us to tend to the inner light, a light of clarity and peace. The green meditation shared below helps cultivate our awareness that we belong to a greater Whole.*

Advent starts this year on Sunday December 2. Begin the season by finding a home for your wreath. If you have children (old enough not to knock over the candles!) you might place it on a low table in the corner of a common room. The center of your kitchen or dining room table is also a good option. If you have a dark blue cloth/runner (the color of hope and waiting) you can drape it over the table. As the weeks go by a sense of expectancy and anticipation grows as new elements enter the scene. Each week we focus on different layers of our natural environment: mineral, plant, animal, and human as well as centering on the four traditional Advent virtues: hope, love, joy & peace.

First Week of Advent

In week one place beautiful stones and crystals around the wreath and light the first candle as you focus on “hope,” the foundation of our spirit.

Second Week of Advent

In week two add greenery to the house, mantle, and table. This is a great week to bring in a Christmas tree and take a quiet moment to light again the first candle and add the second candle of “love” and consider all the ways that you can nurture and grow love in your life and home.

Third Week of Advent

In week three bring out the stable or crèche with the animals in it. Light the first two candles and also the third candle in your wreath for “joy” and consider all the animals and other living creatures in our world -- the birds who surprise us with beauty on a branch, the farm animals who provide us with nourishing milk and eggs, and even earthworms who help the garden grow.

Fourth Week of Advent

Bring out Joseph, Mary, and the shepherds into the stable. Place the Magi across the room and move them slowly from windowsill to windowsill, nearer to the stable with each passing day. Light the first three candles and add the fourth candle of “Peace” and pray for peace for all areas of human conflict, including the conflicts within our own hearts. This is also a great week to make a special donation to an organization which supports peace, locally or globally.

Christmas Eve/Day

Jesus, the Child of Light, comes into the manger. Light all the candles, one by one, and remind yourself of all the hope, love, joy, and peace which has been cultivated in anticipation of this time. Light the center Christ candle, remember a baby born into a stable with only animals’ breath to keep warm and reflect on the mystery of our connections: one to another, one to the earth, one to the Light.

12 Days of Christmas

Historically Christmas was a feast which lasted several days. Observing these twelve holy days & starry nights can be a powerful antidote to the blues which come after the holiday rush—so stretch out time and savor it! Lighting the wreath every night until January 6, also known as Epiphany, is one way to continue to enjoy the season.

** I am indebted to Waldorf educator Sharifa Oppenheimer and her book [Heaven on Earth: A Handbook for Parents of Young Children](#) for elements of the meditation I share here. For more information about crafting home traditions and other supportive services please visit my website www.courtneypinkerton.com.*