



Advent is a special time in the Christian calendar when many Christians count down to Christmas and reflect on what it means in their lives.

The History and Origins of Advent Wreaths

Wreaths and candles have been used to celebrate a **Pagan** festival for the **winter solstice** called Yule for hundreds of years before they were used by Christians. Throughout this festival, Pagans hang wheels of evergreen branches to represent the Pagan wheel of the year. Pagans also light candles to represent the sun. Even today, Yule is still celebrated by many people in a similar way.

In 1839, the first recognisable Advent wreath was made by Johann Wichern in Hamburg, Germany. In his mission school, the children kept asking him how long it was until Christmas. Using an old cart wheel, Johann decorated it with evergreen branches and candles and then used it to count down the days until Christmas.

The Branches of an Advent Wreath

Made from twisted evergreen branches, many Christians believe that the Advent wreath is shaped as a circle because it represents God's everlasting love. Often, holly, pine and ivy are used as they are sometimes thought to be symbols of eternal life.

Advent Candles

Throughout Advent, each candle is lit on a Sunday. In numerous Christian churches, the four main Advent candles are purple and pink. Many churches also include a white candle in the middle that is lit on Christmas Eve and always represents Jesus.

Did You Know...?

In some Christian churches, blue or red candles are used instead of the traditional purple and pink.



The Meaning of the Candles

Each candle has its own special meaning.

Week One

The Candle of Hope or the Prophecy Candle is lit. It is symbolic of the prophets who predicted Jesus' birth.



Week Two

The Candle of Preparation or the Bethlehem Candle is lit. It can also often represent the Bible or faith and is connected to Joseph and Mary's journey to Bethlehem.



Week Three

The Candle of Joy or the Shepherd's Candle is lit on **Gaudete** Sunday. It is often pink and symbolises the joy of Jesus' birth. It can also often represent Mary.



Week Four

The Candle of Love or the Angel's Candle is lit. This is often symbolic of the angels' announcement but it can also represent peace or John the Baptist.



Christmas Eve

In some churches, the central white candle is lit. This is known as the Christ Candle and represents Jesus.



Glossary

gaudete: Latin for the word rejoice.

Pagan: People that don't follow any of the world's major religions.

winter solstice: The shortest day of the year.



Questions

1. What does the word *gaudete* mean? Tick one.

- joy
- love
- preparation
- rejoice

2. On Gaudete Sunday, what colour candle is often lit? Tick one.

- pink
- red
- white
- blue

3. In some churches, what colour candle is lit on Christmas Eve? Tick one.

- pink
- white
- purple
- red

4. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order that they happen in.

- The Candle of Joy or the Shepherd's Candle is lit.
- The Candle of Hope or the Prophecy Candle is lit.
- The Candle of Preparation or the Bethlehem Candle is lit.
- The Candle of Love or the Angel's Candle is lit.

5. Look at the first paragraph.

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'think about' or 'review'.

6. Fill in the missing words.

In his _____ school, the children kept asking him how long it was until _____.

7. What is your favourite fact about Advent wreaths? Explain your answer.

8. Why do you think flowers are not included in an Advent wreath? Explain your answer.
