

The Advent wreath is a visual symbol marking the Advent season's progress. This practice originated as a domestic devotion opportunity for household prayer and is now often included in community worship spaces. The wreath, candles, and weekly prayers function as a simple but meaningful countdown timer for the passage of Advent, which leads us to Christmastide.

Each part of the wreath has a meaning and a purpose: *The natural elements remind us of the gift of Creation and God's presence in the world around us. The base is a circle with no beginning and no end; this reminds us of our never-ending life in Christ. The light of candles reminds us of the Holy Spirit's guidance.*

While there are many different ways to make an Advent wreath, here at Good News Gardens, we find that using items found in creation are the most beautiful and meaningful. We also think this is an excellent Advent activity for the whole family or your congregation to do together. You might even consider hosting a simple "Blessing of the Wreaths" service followed by hot chocolate and S'mores around an outdoor fire.

Instructions

Prepare your base. We used a wood slice from a fallen tree about two inches thick. (If you don't have access to a fallen tree and someone who can cut your bases for you, you can often find wood slices at local craft stores or online.) For the candles: drill one 1-inch hole directly in the middle, going almost the entire way through the log slice. Drill four more holes the same way, in the positions of north, south, east, and west. (If you don't want to drill, you can use pillar candles instead of taper candles)

Gather your elements. Natural Advent wreathes should reflect the natural world around where you live. Shells, driftwood, succulents, pinecones, river rocks, palm fronds, cedar branches, berry clusters, nuts in their shells - there are so many options! Go out into nature and see what you find. *Note: If you are using fresh greenery, soak it for 24 hours in water before adding it to your wreath, and then mist it throughout December -this will help it last all of Advent.*

Prepare your candles. We made beeswax candles for our Advent wreath – you can purchase these kits online or at your local craft store, or you can work with a local beekeeper or candle maker to make your own kits. You can also use homemade jar candles or any other candle you prefer.

To assemble. Place your wreath on a flat surface. Add your candles, then your greenery. Finish the wreath by adding your smaller items – shells, stones, berries, nuts etc.