

The image features a festive background with a dark red, textured surface. Scattered throughout are various white and gold star shapes, some simple and others more complex. In the center, four white candles are lit, with bright yellow flames and radiating lines indicating light. The candles are of varying heights and are partially obscured by a cluster of dark green holly leaves and red berries at the bottom. The word "Advent" is written in a clean, white, sans-serif font, centered over the candles.

Advent



## What Is Advent?

- The Advent season is a four-week period in the Christian calendar that prepares people for Jesus Christ's birth at Christmas, while also pointing ahead to his promised return.
- Each Sunday of the season traditionally spotlights a key theme—like **hope, peace, joy, or love**—to invite reflection, prayer, and expectant celebration.

# The Meaning and Significance of Advent

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- For many, “advent” means a countdown to Christmas. Whether we envision chocolate filled Advent calendars or outdoor sparkly lights and/or Christmas figures outside the front garden, Advent marks a happy season of celebrating.
- But the word “advent” comes from the Latin *adventus*, which is about a “coming” or an “arrival.” The Latin translation of the New Testament uses *adventus* to describe God the Son arriving on Earth, born as Jesus of Nazareth during the 1st century C.E.
- Still, throughout Church history, Advent has more traditionally referred to Jesus’ future arrival, when he comes to complete his work of restoring all creation.



# Advent

- The Advent season leads to the celebration of Jesus' birth and also emphasizes his future arrival. It's a season that includes practices like prayer, giving to those in need, and worship (plus more, depending on the tradition).
- Celebrating Advent also means living into it by practicing a generous way of love and care for our neighbours as we partner with Jesus to bring peace on Earth.



# The Four Weeks of Advent

- In most Christian traditions, Advent is a four-week season of celebration and observation prior to Christmas, each week often focusing on a particular biblical theme. Although the selection and arrangement of themes can vary, these are some themes commonly explored during Advent.
- Week 1: Hope
- Week 2: Peace
- Week 3: Joy
- Week 4: Love



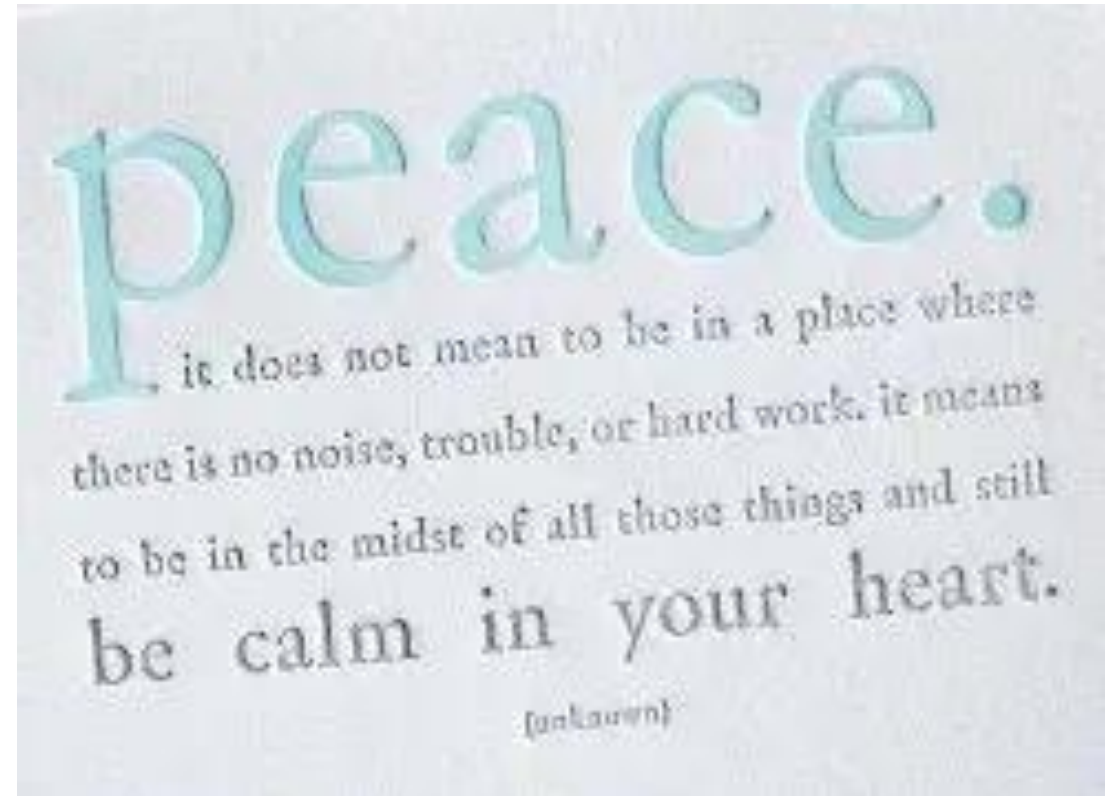
# Hope

- Sometimes hope feels wishful, like crossing our fingers and dreaming of a better outcome. We might hope for better employment, healed relationships, or a brighter future. But that kind of hope is based on things that may or may not happen. When things don't go as we hoped, it can be crushing—our hope disappears.
- As a season of reflection, Advent invites us to imagine a different kind of hope, rooted in the unchanging nature of God and his promise to restore every part of his creation. Advent hope does not minimize pain or difficulty, nor does it assume things will soon get better. Instead, it faces the darkness with courage and chooses to trust that God's promises will come to pass, guaranteed by his long-proven, faithful character.
- In the Hebrew Bible, the words most often used for hope—*qavah* and *yakhal*—are also translated as “wait.” To hope in God means to wait with patient expectation, trusting that he will fulfil his promises. This kind of waiting leans forward, anticipating the day when Jesus will return to make all things new. Such hope empowers people to persevere, to act justly, and to serve others as a sign of the restoration that will arrive through Jesus.



# Peace

- The kind of peace envisioned during Advent comes not through military victory or avoidance of reality but through the way of Jesus. He brings true peace by honestly addressing and working to heal the deeper sources of division, such as fear and pride, that compel people to violence. Jesus reconciles all things to himself, offering healing and restoration through love and forgiveness.
- As Jesus continues his work of bringing real, lasting peace throughout the Earth, we can participate in that work by living as peacemakers. We join with Jesus by embracing his non-violent way of forgiveness, caring for our neighbours, and extending generous love toward all people.



# Joy

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- We often think about joy as an experience of happiness based on favourable circumstances: a stroke of good luck, a personal achievement, or a long-held desire finally being satisfied. But when joy depends on circumstances, it fades fast when the good times end.
- Advent joy is not about general happiness stemming from good times. It's a deep sense of safety and freedom people feel because of God's loving character, which remains constant through all circumstances, and because God can be trusted to ultimately bless and heal creation as he promised. Like the joy a friend's presence brings on good days and bad, we experience joy as God walks with us through the ups and downs of life.
- In the Bible, people express joy both when God delivers them from situations of oppression and while still in the middle of exile, persecution, and pain. As people remember God's loving, rescuing actions throughout history, they wait in joyful hope for him to act in the future, even when that waiting requires patient suffering.
- This kind of joy is about being united with the God who walks with us and trusting that he will one day wipe away every tear. It looks to the future but also takes root in our present reality. The season of Advent invites us to experience joy not because everything is perfect but because God is with us and his joy is already breaking into the world.



# Love

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- Love is often seen as a force beyond our control, something people fall in or out of. Or it may seem like something satisfying that we can achieve, driving us to chase affection through relationships or status.
- The Bible invites us to see a kind of love that's neither accidental nor driven by desire for self-fulfilment. Instead, it involves a steady commitment to care for the well-being of others—never self-seeking, always self-giving—even when it costs us.
- Jesus shows this kind of love when he gives his life for friends and enemies alike. Jesus says to “love your neighbour as yourself”. But it means choosing to see all people as living miracles of God, each made in God’s image and deeply loved by him.
- The Advent season leads us to reflect on the future God is bringing, where every interaction will be shaped and compelled by love. Even more, it invites us to live into that coming world right now by loving others the way Jesus does. As we show care for both friends and those who we might not particularly like, we demonstrate the love that Jesus shows to all people.



## Discussion

- How many weeks are there in advent?
- Can you list the key themes of advent?
- How are these themes linked to our CHA values?
- How can we as a community show these themes in our community?



# Reflection

Loving God, As we journey through Advent, help us to pause and notice Your light in our world. Fill our classrooms with kindness, our breaktimes with laughter, and our hearts with hope.

Teach us to share joy with others, to listen with patience, and to welcome everyone as a friend. May we be ready to celebrate the gift of Jesus at Christmas, and to carry His love into every day.

Amen

