



2018 Candle Readings

These candle readings aim for flexibility based on your context. They also utilize a different format for inviting candle lighters and readers than many of us may be used to. Instead of always using members from the same family, these readings encourage a wider participation, perhaps encouraging representatives from multiple different families to participate in each reading.

When deciding whom to ask to do your candle readings each week, consider choosing readers who may not always get asked to be involved—as an illustration of the hope we have for a kingdom for all people (although be mindful of people’s personal preferences and allow them to decline to participate if they feel uncomfortable).

The questions in these readings are open-ended for the purpose of including younger participants and/or non-readers in the lighting process. While very young children may be unable to light the candle, they can be included by blowing out the candle (with assistance) at the end of the service.

Be mindful that these scripts provide opportunity for some improv answers from children. If your participants (whether children or adults) aren’t comfortable engaging each other in that way, they can skip the *italicized* text and read just the **bold** parts (starting with the section called Lighting the Candle) for a more traditional candle-lighting process. Be creative and use whatever works for your community’s context.

First Sunday of Advent

DECEMBER 2, 2018

The Anticipation of HOPE

The Hope Candle

Adult: Today is the first Sunday of Advent, a season when we look ahead with anticipation and hope for the coming of Jesus. What do you think “anticipation” means?

Child(ren): [various responses]

Adult: The definition of “anticipation” is looking forward to something. What are you looking forward to this time of year?

Child(ren): [responses may vary but will hopefully include Christmas]

Adult: We look forward to Christmas because we remember that Jesus was born into our world to bring us hope, life, and love. In our scripture today Jesus talks about a fig tree and how, when we see leaves start to grow on it, we can begin to anticipate summer coming. What are some things that happen where you live that tell you summer is coming?

Child(ren): [various answers]

Adult: There are lots of things that show us Jesus is coming again, and we look for those with hope. Jesus coming back isn't scary for us; it fills us with hope because we know he is going to make all the bad in the world right. What are some things you hope Jesus will make right?

Child(ren): [various responses—you may need to guide some answers here, since this can be a heavy question even for young kids; though many answers could be silly, some might be difficult. Some possible answers and responses are:

- “I hope for my grandma and grandpa to be alive again.” (We are hopeful because Jesus brings resurrection, and we hope to see our loved ones again someday.)*
- “I hope my parents stop fighting.” (We know that Jesus wants to bring peace into the world in big ways and small ways.)*
- “I hope the kids at school stop bullying me.” (Jesus wants to create a world where we treat each other with love and kindness.)*

Lighting the Candle

We light the first candle of Advent today, the hope candle. As we do, we remember all the ways that we hope Jesus will make the world right. The light from the candle reminds us that Jesus

came into the world to bring us hope, love, and life. The candle also reminds us of our hope that Jesus will come again to make all things right. After lighting the candle, we'll say a prayer.

[Light the first candle.]

Prayer

Dear God, there are a lot of places in our world that are sad and broken. We hope for a lot of things: for wars to end, for families to stop fighting, to see our loved ones who have died, and so much more. Today we remember that you are coming back to make all things right. We anticipate the hope of your return, and we look forward to the celebration of your birth, when you brought the world hope, love, and life. Amen.