



Bringing Light into the Darkness

Making Advent Candles at Home



Advent will be different this year because of COVID-19. One way that churches can support households to celebrate this important season is by equipping them to engage in faith formative traditions at home.

Evangeline Keeley, a member of Prairie Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg, Man., has led their church in making Advent candles out of beeswax for the last two years. This year, she has shared the instructions so that other households in The Presbyterian Church in Canada can engage in the tradition.

Advent Candle Making at Home

Written by Evangeline Keely

For years now, I've made a set of Advent candles to use at home. You can too! In Winnipeg, daylight gets short by late November and into December. Lighting first one candle, then two, three, and four reminds me that, as Christians, we celebrate the mystery of faith that Christ has come, and that He will come again. We begin in darkness, but the light grows a little each week as we wait for Christ's coming.

Don't feel you need to have a greenery wreath to use your candles. The ones described below will fit into any taper size holders and that is just fine. The point isn't so much about how the candles are displayed, but that we are preparing our hearts to celebrate Christ's coming at Christmas. Sometimes I've been given a booklet of Advent devotionals to read either daily or weekly. Some years I re-read the bulletin inserts provided through the national church office.

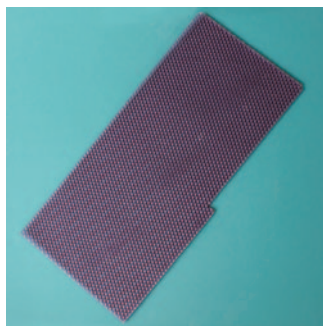
Your congregation can help equip households to make these Advent candles by ordering the supplies in bulk, dividing them up and delivering candle-making kits to the households who are interested. The kits should include the supplies, the instructions for making the candles, and printouts of the candle lighting prayers found at the end of this resource.



To Make Your Advent Candles

For each set of Advent candles, you will need:

- 3 sheets of purple or mauve, and 1 sheet of pink beeswax honeycomb craft sheets 20.25cm x 40.5cm or 8" x 16" (size may vary slightly). A quick online search for "beeswax honeycomb sheets" shows several suppliers across Canada with a variety of prices per sheet.
- 1.1m (40") of #2 wick – Cotton wick comes in different thicknesses for different sized candles. The best thickness for this project is #2 wick.
- A knife to cut the wax
- A blow dryer is very helpful, but not absolutely essential.



STEP 1

Cut a strip 1.25cm x 21.5cm (1/2" x 8 1/2") from one of the long edges. This is done so the base of the candle will fit into a taper holder, but the top will be thicker. The candles will burn better and longer when made this way. This is especially helpful if you're going to light them each week of Advent for an hour or so as you might in a worship setting.

STEP 2

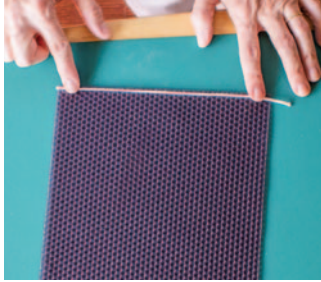
Cut four pieces of wick each 25cm (10") in length.

NOTE: If you're planning this as a larger group activity, steps 1 and 2 should be done to prepare the supplies ahead of time.



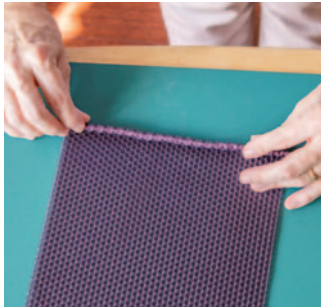
STEP 3

Warm the wax with a blow dryer on low. Keep the dryer moving, back and forth, over the wax for about 10–15 seconds. You *can* skip this step but rolling the wax is much easier if you warm it first. As well, a warm wax sheet is less likely to break.



STEP 4

Place one piece of wick at the end of the wax. It's important to extend the wick past the end of the wax in order to eventually light your candle.



STEP 5

Carefully fold the wax around the wick by starting at one end of the wax sheet and moving down the wick at small intervals. Once the wick is encased, slowly start rolling! Continue the technique of rolling a few centimeters of length at a time. NOTE: the first couple rolls are the hardest. Use a little pressure to keep the wax rolling tightly. A more tightly rolled candle burns slower (and better) than a loosely rolled one.



STEP 6

Keep the top edge (where the wick is sticking out) straight and even as you roll. You may have to unroll and re-try it. That's okay. The wax is very forgiving as long as you go slowly.




STEP 7

When you have finished rolling, seal the edge of the wax sheet. Warm the edge by using the blow dryer on low for just a few seconds or by using your fingers and 'sticking' the wax to itself.

If this is a new skill remember, you'll get better the more you do it. Maybe, like Prairie's congregation, making your own Advent candles is something to repeat next year, just because you had so much fun!

Evangeline Keeley recently retired as Music Director at Prairie Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg. She started making candles (with help from her Mom) when she was in elementary school and still finds it a relaxing pastime.





Prayers for Weekly Candle Lighting

Option #1 (multi-person household)

Advent 1: Hope

Light one candle

Person One: The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

Person Two: We are easily distracted by the darkness that comes with unease and anxiety.

All: Source of light, shine in our lives and in your world with your renewing hope.

Advent 2: Peace

Light two candles

Person One: The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

Person Two: We are easily distracted by the darkness of force and power and we often choose strife and turmoil.

All: Source of light, shine in our lives and in your world with your everlasting peace.

Advent 3: Joy

Light three candles

Person One: The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

Person Two: We are easily distracted by the darkness of despair or pessimism.

All: Source of light, shine in our lives and in your world with your life-giving joy.

Advent 4: Love

Light four candles

Person One: The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

Person Two: We are easily distracted by the darkness of isolation and fear.

All: Source of light, shine in our lives and in your world with your unending love.





Option #2 (single-person household)

Advent 1: Hope

Light one candle

I light the candle of hope as I await the coming of Jesus, who is the source of hope. Thank you, God, for the gift of hope in challenging times.

Advent 2: Peace

Light two candles

I light the candle of peace, knowing that Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Thank you, God, for the gift of peace in uncertain times.

Advent 3: Joy

Light three candles

I light the candle of joy, knowing that my comfort and help comes from God. Thank you, God, for the gift of joy in hard times.

Advent 4: Love

Light four candles

I light the candle of love, knowing that God is Love revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Thank you, God, for the gift of love in a time of social distancing.

Option #3

Visit the Presbyterian World Service & Development web page and download the free, weekly Advent prayers: presbyterian.ca/pwsd/category/advent

Candle making photos courtesy of Wes Keely.



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