

## ARCHDEACON'S CORNER

### ADVENT TRADITIONS, continued

The liturgical colors have changed during Advent. The tradition is either a dark “royal” purple or Sarum blue (from the Medieval Sarum rite). Both symbolize preparation, penitence, and royalty to welcome the new King. The purple of Advent is also the color of suffering used during Lent and Holy Week. This points to an important connection between Jesus’ birth and death. While the oldest tradition is purple, the Anglican tradition is blue. England had its own pre-Reformation rites and while they went back and forth about the two colors, by the Victorian Age, the use of blue for Advent became the norm.

Advent calendars are also in use during the season. The calendars also originated in Germany and began to spread in the 19th and 20th century. Traditional Advent calendars feature manger scenes, Saint Nicholas, or winter themes. Many Advent calendars are made-up of tiny doors. One door for each day and often upon opening there is a piece of candy or tiny toy.

The Jesse Tree is also a popular Advent tradition. A Jesse Tree, named for the father of David, is a tree that is decorated gradually throughout Advent with symbols or pictures of biblical persons associated with the gradual coming of the Messiah, Christ. This includes, among others, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Joseph and Mary. The Jesse Tree is an older tradition still used by some today, to teach and remind children about the preparatory nature of Advent.

In England, especially in the northern counties, there was an Advent custom (thankfully now extinct) for poor women to carry around the "Advent images", two dolls dressed to represent Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary. A halfpenny coin was expected from everyone to whom these were exhibited, and bad luck was thought to menace the household not visited by the doll-bearers before Christmas Eve.

Over the centuries the season of Advent and Christmas have become one. Christmas Day (the birth of Jesus) is a wonderful celebration surrounded by the traditions of Christmas trees, Santa, presents, decorations, and other festivities. However, during the season of Advent we Episcopalians are still reminded of the oldest of Advent traditions that:

Christ has died  
Christ has risen  
Christ will “come” again!

Let us all celebrate Advent season by awaiting the coming of the Messiah, as we remember the old Advent hymn:

*Oh come, O come, Emmanuel*

*And ransom captive Israel  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the son of God appears  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

Praying that our Lord finds you and yours well,  
Archdeacon,  
The Ven. Mark Richardson