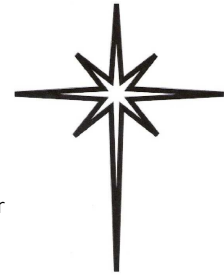


The Advent Wreath

The circle of the wreath reminds us of God Himself, His eternity and endless mercy, which has no beginning or end. The evergreen boughs of the wreath speak of the hope that we have in God, the hope of newness, of renewal, of eternal life. Candles symbolize the light of God coming into the world through the birth of His son. They also remind us that we are called to be a light to the world. As the candles are lighted over the four week period, it symbolizes the darkness of fear and hopelessness receding and the shadows of sin falling away as God's light is shed into the world.

from *The Season of Advent*, by Dennis Bratcher

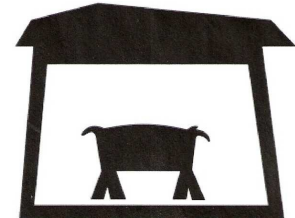


Where's the Tree?

The Chrismon tree was created in the late 1950's by a Lutheran woman in Danville, Virginia who wanted a Christmas tree that would be suitable to have in a church. The ornaments she created to go on the tree are symbols of Christ - his life, his work, his death and resurrection. Like the Christ candle, the Chrismon Tree will shine on Christmas Eve when we gather to celebrate his birth and second coming, and it will continue to stand throughout the Christmas season. Just as you were invited to help create our Advent Wreath on the first Sunday of Advent, on Christmas Eve you will be invited to choose an ornament/symbol and adorn the tree with it as you enter the sanctuary.

Why Don't we Sing Christmas Carols in Advent?

The Christmas season started in the stores the minute Halloween was over, maybe even before, but on the Christian calendar Christmas doesn't start until, well, Christmas. The people of Israel waited, longed for their messiah for four centuries. They watched and hoped and prayed for God's light, God's chosen one to come into their dark world. Jesus came, and he announced that the Kingdom of God had arrived, but obviously, the darkness of sin and injustice are still with us. We still wait. And long. And hope. And we prepare ourselves for his return. Our Advent hymns are expressions of our hope and anticipation; they are our prayers of longing. The joyful celebration of Christ's birth will come in just a few short weeks, but for now we watch and wait.



The Christmas Season

About the time the Christmas decorations go on sale in the stores, the Church begins her celebration of the nativity and the incarnation of God in our world. On Christmas Eve we will hear the stories of the manger and the shepherds, and, along with the multitude of angels, we will sing a multitude of Christmas carols. The Christmas story and celebration continue for the next two Sundays with wise men (or kings), and Herod, and the flight to Egypt, and a troubling trip to the temple for Mary and Joseph.