

WELS Women's Ministry Guide to Advent by Candlelight

Advent by Candlelight is an opportunity for women of all ages to set aside the hustle and bustle of holiday preparation and focus their minds and hearts on the birth of Christ.



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Permission granted to download free of charge and duplicate for your church's women's group.

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What is Advent?

Advent is the first season of the church year. It includes the 4 weeks leading up to Christmas. During Advent we wait in anticipation for Christmas – the celebration of Jesus’ first coming to earth - and Judgment Day - his return to earth. This is a time of excitement and preparation. We prepare our hearts, and worship and praise our coming Savior.

What is Advent by Candlelight?

Advent by Candlelight is an event for women (sometimes girls/daughters are welcome, too) held sometime during the Advent season, usually the 1st or 2nd week of Advent. Advent is a time for us to prepare our hearts for Jesus’ coming. We want our focus to be on Jesus *throughout* this season, but all too often it seems we get caught up with the preparations in our homes, churches or communities. We have cleaning, decorating, shopping, baking and events that take up our time, in addition to all the normal daily routines and schedules. While these are all fun and good ways to prepare for our Christmas celebrations, we can easily lose our focus during the busyness. Advent by Candlelight is an opportunity for women to set aside all of those preparations and focus our hearts and minds again on Jesus. It is a beautiful evening filled with Scripture readings, narration, prayer, optional skits, songs of praise and Christian fellowship. There are certainly preparations to be done, but we can do them to the glory of our Lord while preparing for his coming! Enjoy the evening when it arrives as you encourage your sisters in Christ with the Word of God!



Where do we start?

Talk to your Pastor about the idea and work through some of the basic questions (when, where, who might get involved and who the target group might be).

Get Organized! – Depending on how many people you have to help, you can assign the tasks to individuals or small groups. You can do this with the help of your pastor or perhaps through your ladies' group. They will have the knowledge and connections of ladies who have the God-given gifts to help plan and organize events. Perhaps your Youth Group or Confirmation class would like to serve you for an evening!

Choose a date and time – Choose a time that suits your congregation the best. Some suggestions are Saturday afternoon or evening, Sunday afternoon or evening or the same evening that your ladies' group already holds their regular meetings or Bible Studies. Keep in mind other activities in your church, school or community that would affect attendance. Consider what works for all women of all ages since it is often gets dark early (elderly) and you want to consider home responsibilities for those with small children.

Place – Typically your church Bible Study/Fellowship area seems to work best for this type of event, but you may have other options available to you. You will need a place that has enough tables and chairs for the number of ladies attending.

Budget – Check with your Pastor, church council or ladies' group; ask for special donations if needed. You could also receive a free-will donation to offset expenses or support a special ministry effort.

Outreach – This can also be a great opportunity to reach people outside of your church who do not have a church home. You can consider that when planning for your event.

What are the typical duties of the Head Committee?

The head committee (or person) will oversee the entire event. They will communicate with all the sub-committees (or people) to help guide them in their planning. These ladies will likely be the ones to choose the date, time, place and theme or program/service. Their duties may also include being on any of the sub-committees as needed. In fact, you may find that it works best for your group if one person from the head committee "chairs" each of the sub-committees.

What if we have a very small number of ladies organizing this event?

The Committees listed here are simply suggestions. If you only have a few ladies who are organizing this event, each sub-committee is not necessary. However, you may find it helpful to read through the typical duties of each committee and have your few ladies work together on each area.

What sub-committees might there be?

Worship Team
Decorating Team
Publications Team
Hospitality Team

What are the duties of the Worship Team?

This team will be responsible for choosing a program/service if the head committee did not do this, finding musicians – piano accompanist, soloists, instrumentalists – choosing songs for the program/service, getting copyright permission for songs if needed and finding readers. You may also want to have background music during the fellowship time. Consider your church choir, hand chimes or other small groups for musicians.

What are the duties of the Decorating Team?

First of all, this team will decide how to decorate since there are many different styles. Tables are decorated with any or all of the following: tablecloths, table runners, dinnerware, water glasses and coffee/tea cups. Candles and other festive decorations will be included on each table, of course keeping all decorations reverent to Christ.

You may choose to have individuals (hostesses) decorate each table. This would give much variety to the décor of the evening. If you choose to take this route, find additional information titled “For Hostesses” near the end of this document. Or you may choose to have your decorating team decorate the tables the same or similar to each other.

This team will also be responsible for setting up the dessert tables or food plans.

What are the duties of the Publications Team?

This team’s responsibilities will include producing the sign-up sheets or registration process for hostesses, attendees and ladies to bring desserts. It is important to have an estimate for attendees as you plan table set up, food and beverages. This team will print inserts/notices for the bulletin/newsletter and fliers if you want to post some around your

church or school. Consider your outreach efforts for this event and you may want to prepare postcards or invitations for members to invite their friends. Finally, this team can also print the program/service either working with your church secretary or a professional print shop. For additional help, see “*For the Publications Team*” at the end of this document.

What are the duties of the Hospitality Team?

This team will have plates for desserts, cups for cider, tea, coffee, and water pitchers ready if the hostesses or decorators don't have these already set at the tables. The Decorating Team and Hospitality Team will communicate to decide who will take care of these items.

It is a nice touch to have greeters at the entrances to your church and/or your meeting space. The Hospitality Team can find ladies to welcome your guests.

Name tags are also a benefit for the fellowship aspect of the event. You can either have guests write their own name tags as they arrive or prepare name tags ahead of time based on those who signed up prior to the event. A welcome table is another great way to welcome the guests. You may include a guest book for ladies to sign as they arrive and you can keep the book and continue using it through the years. Consider adding photos and starting a simple scrapbook as a memoir.

Are there programs/services already written for our use or do we have to write our own?

WELS Women's Ministry has many Advent by Candlelight programs/services from which you may choose. They have been written by WELS women and have been reviewed by one of our theological reviewers. They are found at www.wels.net/women under the Advent by Candlelight tab or at wels.net/women/advent-by-candlelight

If you are writing your own Advent by Candlelight, we suggest that you have your pastor review it. We would love for you to share it with any other resources and ideas you find helpful! Not only do we love hearing about new ideas, but we may even be able to use it for posting on our website. You may email it to womensministry@wels.net.

For Hostesses

this or an adapted version could be printed and given to your hostesses

Suggested Hostess Responsibilities

You are asked to bake a dessert to serve 8-10 people. You will serve your dessert to the guests at your table (or however the group decides to serve the food).

Please have your tables set and decorated ½ hour prior to the event starting time.

About 15 minutes before the event begins, fill cream and sugar bowls, coffee carafe, glasses with ice and water. We suggest you also have a filled pitcher at your table.

Please have your candles lit at least 5 minutes before the event begins.

Your dessert should be placed on your table, and served from there when dessert is announced (note: if you have room, you might want to set up a few tables for the hostesses to use in cutting and serving their dessert to free up room at their table).

Guests will check in with _____ at _____, leave their coats, get their name tags (optional) and make their way to the punch table. As they enter the room, they will have the opportunity to mingle and view all the beautiful tables.

Candles

If individual candles are to be lit during a song, each guest should light her candle from one of your table candles. At the end of the song, guests should blow out their candles. Please make sure all individual white candles are fully extinguished and left on the table. We will collect them after the guests leave as they will be reused.

As always, we ask that you be very careful in lighting and extinguishing your candles. Also, caution your guests if they try to reach across the table and come near a flame. We want everyone to have a safe and glorious evening!

Follow-up with guests

If you desire to send follow-up letters to non-member guests, have 3x5 cards available. Ask non-member friends to write their name, address, phone number and church home (if any) on the card. Collect these and hand them to the Head Committee/Event Coordinator after your guests leave.

Clean-up

You are responsible for cleaning your table after the event. Thank you for your help in making this special evening a success all to God's glory!

For the Publications Team

Sample Bulletin and Newsletter Announcements

August Newsletter

It's never too early to mark your calendar for an important event! (Name of church) will hold an Advent by Candlelight for ladies of the congregation, their family members, friends and neighbors, on (day of week), (month and date) at (starting time) in/at (place of event). There is no charge for this event. This is a wonderful evening of the Word, music, and fellowship to help you prepare your hearts for the Advent season before the holidays get into full swing!

September Newsletter

(name of church) Advent by Candlelight will be held on (day of week, month, date,) This year's theme is _____. Please plan on joining us for an evening of fellowship, beautiful music and delicious dessert as the women of (name of church) and their friends prepare their hearts for Advent. Mark your calendar now for (starting time). There is no charge for this event. Reservations will be available in October.

Hostess Opportunities: Do you enjoy decorating? Volunteer to be a table hostess and we will reserve a table for you! Many partner with one or two others to host a table. Hostesses provide table settings, holiday decorations, candles and a dessert for a table of 8 to 10 ladies. It is lots of fun, and requires only a few hours of your time for planning, baking and decorating. If you want to host a table this year or need more information before committing, please contact (person) by (date) at (contact info).

October Newsletter

Ladies, you won't want to miss this year's Advent by Candlelight on (day of week, month, date, time and place). Please plan to join us for an evening of visiting, and enjoying beautiful music and delicious dessert. All women of (name of church) are invited, and are encouraged to invite their friends to prepare their hearts for Advent. There is no charge for this event. Seating is limited, so watch for the reservation information around the ____ week in _____.

November Newsletter

Advent by Candlelight. Invite your family members, friends and neighbors for a Christ-centered preparation for women this holiday season. (Day of week, month, date, time and place) There is no charge for this event. Space is limited; we recommend that you make your reservations early! Sign up on the narthex bulletin board or contact (person) at (contact information).

Weekly Bulletins

Save the Date! This year's Advent by Candlelight will be held on (date of week, month, date, time, place) You won't want to miss this opportunity to prepare your heart for the Advent Season. Keep watching the bulletin and newsletter for more information.

Do you enjoy decorating? Be a table hostess and we will reserve a table for you! Hostesses provide table settings for 8 or 10 people, holiday table decorations, candles

and a dessert. You can co-hostess a table too. It is lots of fun and requires only a few hours. Call _____ by _____.

Reservations are now available for (name of church) Advent by Candlelight. Invite your family members, friends and neighbors for a women's night of Christ-centered preparation for the holiday season on (day of week, month, date, time, place). There is no charge for this event. Space is limited; we recommend that you make your reservations early! Sign up on the narthex bulletin board or contact _____.

Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! God bless your efforts! To Him be the glory!