

MORAVIAN MOMENT #90
What is the significance of Advent?

Advent is the period of preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus and begins on the Sunday nearest to 30th November. Advent is the season four weeks before Christmas in which we prepare for the coming of Christ. **Its name comes from the Latin word adventus, which means "coming". The season celebrates Christ's anticipated coming again in the fullness of time to rule triumphantly over life in heaven and earth, as well as the coming of Christ as the infant Saviour whose birth we celebrate at Christmas. And because the season emphasizes Christ's comings and not just his birth, it's more than just a time to get ready for Christmas. It reminds us that the question is not whether Jesus will return to judge the earth, but when.** There is much about Advent to enjoy, the Advent wreaths found in our churches where they have five candles to be lit, one on each of the four Sundays in Advent and one for Christmas Day. In the midst of our church calendar we know that just as we prepare for Christmas, so we must make ourselves ready to welcome Jesus into our lives.

The season of Advent came into being toward the middle of the sixth century. At first, the Advent Season was determined as the six Sundays leading up to Christmas. This was then reduced to four Sundays by Pope St. Gregory the Great (591-604). Before the seventh century, Christmas was a secondary feast, especially in Rome, but as it came to take on more and more importance, so the season of Advent evolved in a similar manner. Advent became more solemn and its orientation changed. From just being a time to prepare for Christmas, it became a time to look to the glorious return of the Lord and now the Sundays of Advent reflect this double perspective of waiting for the Second Coming of Jesus (First and Second Sundays) and the immediate preparation for Christmas (Third and Fourth Sundays).

When Christ comes again in His risen glory to judge the world, His first questions to us might not be 'What have you done and how have you lived?' but 'Are you ready?' Advent is a time of looking forward and being prepared for the future festivities, both temporal and spiritual. How ready we are for the season may well depend on the preparations we have made.

In the Moravian Church, three very famous hymns are sung at this time: 1. **HAIL TO THE Lord's Anointed**, written by the English Moravian, James Montgomery, 2. **The Hosanna Anthem**, written by the Moravian composer, Christian Gregor and 3. **O come, o come, Immanuel**, written by J.M Neale . In addition, the Advent Star is lighted in Moravian Churches on the first Sunday of Advent and remains lighted through to January 6th, which is Epiphany. The star heralds the approaching Christmas season. It is also a reminder of the star that once led the Wise Men from their distant homes until it stopped over the place where the Christ Child was, and they fell down before Him and worshipped Him.

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