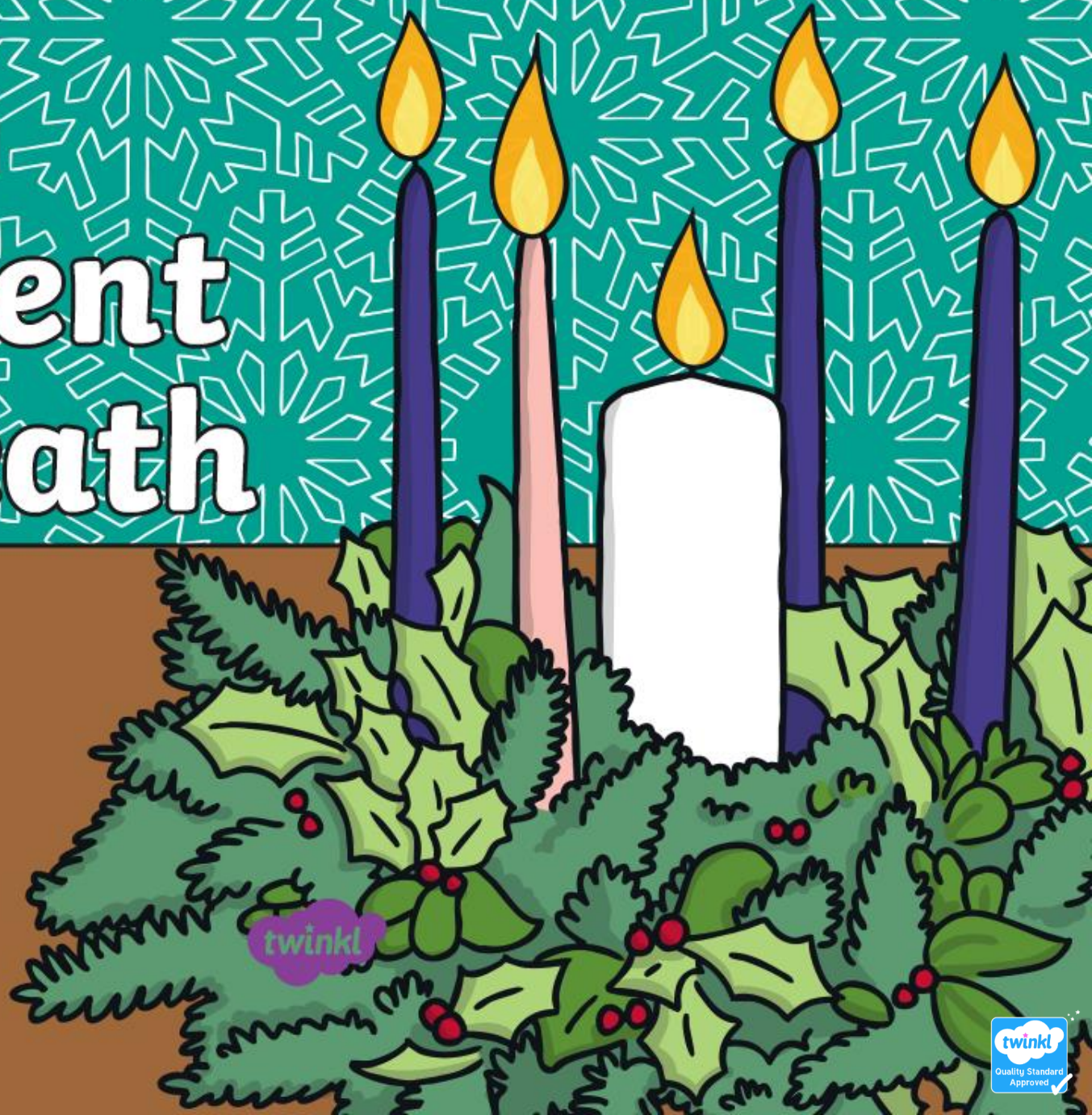


The Advent Wreath



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The Time of Advent

Advent is the time before Christmas.

It begins four Sundays before Christmas Day and ends on Christmas Day.

It is a time of preparation for Christmas.

Christians believe it is also a time for prayer and thinking about the times they have made the right choices and the times they could have made better choices.



The Advent Wreath

The Advent wreath is made from leaves which are twisted to form a circle.

The circular shape is a symbol that there is no beginning or end to God's love for the world.

Candles are put into the wreath.



Candles

Four candles are put around the wreath and often a fifth candle is put in the middle. A candle is lit each Sunday before Christmas Day. If there is a fifth candle, it is lit on Christmas Day.

In some churches, there are three purple candles, one pink candle and a white candle.

In other churches, the candles in an Advent wreath are red or white.



Week 1 – a purple candle is lit. This symbolises hope with the ‘Prophet’s Candle’ reminding people that Jesus is coming.

Week 2 – a purple candle is lit. This symbolises faith with the ‘Bethlehem Candle’ and remembers Mary and Joseph’s journey to Bethlehem.

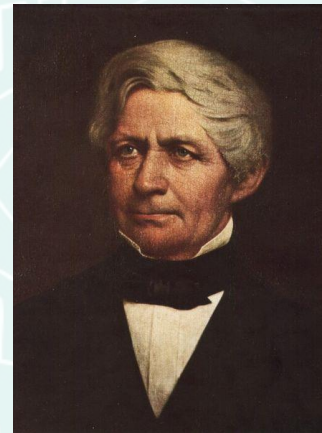
Week 3 – a pink candle is lit. This is known as the Candle of Joy or the ‘Shepherd’s Candle’ and represents the joy the world experience at the coming birth of Jesus.

Week 4 – a purple candle is lit. This symbolises peace and is called the ‘Angel’s Candle’. It reminds us of the message of the angels, ‘Peace on earth, good will toward men’.

Christmas Day – the white candle is lit. This is known as the Christ Candle.

The First Advent Wreath

Wreaths have been used as Christmas decorations for many years, but the first Advent wreath was thought to have been created in 1839, by a German man named Johann Wichern. He was the founder of a children's home. One year, the children kept asking him when it was Christmas so he lit a white candle each Sunday and a smaller red candle for each day in between to count down to Christmas.





Leaves

Advent wreaths are made using the leaves of evergreen plants, in part, because other trees have lost their leaves by the time it is Advent. Leaves from the holly bush and pine trees are available during the cold winter months.

It also is seen to symbolise eternity or never-ending love.



The Symbols of the Advent Wreath

The candles represent light in the darkness. The flames give light during the dark winter months.

Christians believe that the white candle represents Jesus being born and being the light in the dark world (bringing peace and joy).

Lighting the candles can also be seen as a sign of expectation and hope.



Advent Wreaths and Us

Advent wreaths are a lovely way to look forward to Christmas and to think about how we can help bring light into the lives of others.



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