Advent begins the new Christian calendar each year. It begins on the Sunday closest to November 30th and ends on December 24th (Christmas Eve, also known as Adam and Eve Day).

How we choose to celebrate Advent is a personal choice.

There are so many ways you can make this a special time for your children.

Here is just one way to set up an Advent Wreath for Christmas.

A wreath is placed in the center of the table honouring the light found in stones, plants, animals and humankind. In the center stand four beeswax candles. These may be held by apples, teak seedpods or traditional candle holders.

Each week, we honour one of the four kingdoms by lighting a candle and saying a little verse.

The crystal kingdom comes first and is honoured by decorating the wreath with crystals, seashells, and little bones you may find.

The first light of Advent
Is the light of stones,
Stones that shine through seashells
Crystals and in bones.

In the second week the plant kingdom is honoured by placing little dried flowers, seaseas and pine cones around the wreath.

The second light of Advent
Is the light of plants,
Plants that reach up to the sun
And in the breezes dance.

The animal kingdom, in the third week, is honoured by adding to the wreath little wooden animals or beeswax creatures the children make.

The third light of Advent
Is the light of beasts,
The light of hope that we may see
In greatest and in least.
The fourth week sees us honouring humankind by adding a little felted or beeswax child or a small doll.

The fourth light of Advent
Is the light of man,
The light of hope, of thoughts,
To give and understand.

An alternative to the wreath is the building the crib each Sunday of Advent in the same order as the wreath - crystals and stones, plant, animal and human kingdoms. You can build the ‘crib’ by follow the same process as for the Advent Wreath, gathering your found objects from nature each week or maybe even start with a ‘crib’ that is decorated by the kingdoms and finishes with baby Jesus representing the human kingdom.

Whether you may choose to make the Wreath, Crib or an idea of your own, it will be a wonderful way to help your children count the days to Christmas.

In our family we wait until after dinner when the children are bathed and in their pyjamas. We settle around the advent table and light the candle/s while carols play quietly in the background. Stories are read from The Light in the Lantern - Stories for Advent by Georg Dreissig (Wynstones Press, English Edition 1992) and special Christmas treats are eaten while the children listen. These evening Advent ceremonies create a contemplative, magical mood each of the four nights we light the candles, and this carries a little brightness into the coming week.

More Thoughts

“Within the Waldorf Kindergarten the festivals are not meant to be “taught” but are offered in a light manner, much like telling a fairy tale, which allows the children great freedom to come to the festival as they will. When offered in a spirit of gratitude and with a sense of wonder and awe, something of the essence of the festival can speak to the children.”

“Just as you would not bring a fairy tale to your child that does not resonate with you, you would not try to bring a festival to your child that does not resonate with you. So choose your festival carefully, and also the traditions that you start with these festivals as the children will expect the same things year after year.”

“An Overview of the Waldorf Kindergarten,” edited by Joan Almon