

From the UMC Discipleship Ministries webpage: "The season of Advent has been with us since the fourth century, although it has not been a part of the liturgical observance of all denominations and churches. With the mixing of Christmas and Advent during the weeks leading up to Christmas Day, there is often confusion of the two. Here are the basics of Advent:

**When:** Advent marks the beginning of the church year. It begins with the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day and ends Christmas Eve. If Christmas Day falls on a Sunday, Advent will last four full weeks. If Christmas Day falls on any other day of the week, Advent will last less than four weeks. If Christmas falls on a Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday, all of Advent will be in December. If Christmas falls on any other day of the week, Advent will begin in November.

**What:** Advent comes from the Latin word, *adventus*, meaning "coming." It is a season to prepare for the coming of Christ in various meanings: the promised coming of the Messiah to the Jews, the coming of Jesus being born in Bethlehem, the promised return of the risen Christ in final victory, and the continual coming of Christ into the lives and hearts of believers.

**Liturgical Context:** Advent, which marks the beginning of the liturgical year, is part of the cycle of seasons that includes Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, all related in some fashion to the coming of Jesus. That cycle is followed by Lent, Holy Week, Easter, and the long Pentecost season.

**History:** Advent began in France in the fourth century. In various times and locations of the church, Advent has been observed for three, four, and six weeks leading to Christmas. Some churches today are experimenting with incorporating Advent themes and symbols in worship during the weeks prior to the actual start of Advent in the hope that they can avoid the conflict of Advent versus Christmas observance during the immediate weeks prior to Christmas.

**Color:** The color for Advent has traditionally been purple. Some churches have adopted blue for Advent," including St. Paul Church!

The Sacrament of Holy Communion will be celebrated **December 01/02**, the first weekend of Advent. The second weekend of Advent, **December 08/09**, Sue Dimmitt will offer piano music of the season prior to the 10:30 service. **December 15/16**, the third Advent weekend, will be graced by music of our faithful Joy Bells ensemble at all services and by the Children's Ministries re-enactment of the Luke passage telling of Christ's birth as part of 10:30 worship. Any who find themselves suffering in body, mind or spirit are invited to join as we observe a service of Blue Christmas during M&M worship Wednesday evening, **December 19** at 6:00 p.m. in the Roth Chapel. The 4<sup>th</sup> weekend of Advent, as part of **December 22** Chapel worship at 5:00 p.m. and another of our single Sunday services at 10:00 a.m. **December 23**, we will join in celebrating the traditional setting of Advent Lessons and Carols.

We gather to celebrate **Christmas Eve** with three services of candles, carols, and communion, all in the beauty of the St. Paul Sanctuary. The **3:00**, **5:00** and **10:30** services will include the singing of Malotte's "The Lord's Prayer" with The Choir leading the later worship. This rich tradition was established as collaboration between the Rev. Dr. Alva Clark and the Honorable Judge Walter Cropper in 1953. It will be the 65<sup>th</sup> consecutive year the beautiful melody has graced our worship. Finally, in bidding "auld lang syne" to 2018, we will keep Wesley's "Watch Night" observance in Roth Chapel, Saturday evening, **December 29** at 5:00 p.m. 2019 will be welcomed with the last single Sunday service of the year, **December 30**, where we celebrate the Wesleyan covenant with the Sacrament of Holy Communion. At this year's end, we give thanks for the dedication and vibrant leadership offered by the many volunteers who grace the Music Ministry of St. Paul Church. Your perseverance and commitment make worship a true blessing from God!