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Making Advent Wreaths at Church

Many churches host an Advent-wreath-making event on the first Sunday of the season. This is a great way to encourage spiritual practices at home. An event like this is relatively simple, but there are a lot of logistics. For tips and tricks, Building Faith connected with Kathryn Carroll at [Christ Church United Methodist](#) in New York City. It’s another example Building Faith’s BTDT - Been There, Done That - for Advent wreaths.

Adventfest: How it all Started

When I began working with children and families at Christ Church, I inherited the tradition of families gathering on the first Sunday of Advent to make Advent wreaths. This occasion was small, sweet, and simple. A few years later, some of our young, single adults asked if this was a families-only event. Of course not - have at it! By that point, it was quite a production, as the number of families had increased exponentially. Unfortunately, leadership for the event had not grown proportionately. Coincidence or divine intervention: those young adults jumped in and created Adventfest!

Adventfest has become an all-church, multi-generational event. My Adventfest gurus, Cory and Sean, have it down to a science. While mainly an Advent wreath-making event, it also includes lunch (grilled cheese and homemade soup) and a variety of crafts for a variety of skill levels. The event helps to position people to observe Advent as a spiritual season at home; not just a shopping days countdown. And it’s fun! As we say here in New York, *“What’s not to like?”*

13 Tips for Advent Wreath Making at Church

So here are our tips for offering (and surviving) a wonderful Advent Wreath making.

1. Remember the little ones

We recommend additional craft(s) for the younger children, because their attention span isn’t as great as older children and parents. Advent wreath coloring pages, play

dough, or an activity area are possible ideas.

2. Save money with “pot-luck” supplies

If your budget can't provide all of the materials, donations can be “pot-lucked.” The church could provide the greens and forms, and each household could be asked to bring something to contribute to the extras. You can ask ahead of time for specifics, e.g., a spool of craft wire, pruning snips, etc. or just hope for the best. We sometimes use an online invitation for events, and these can be set up with a wish list with quantities needed, which are automatically adjusted when someone signs up for the item.

3. Offer devotional booklets

Create or purchase written materials or booklets, so you can provide information on ways to observe a Holy Advent at home. Provide devotional materials, prayers, or a service families can use as they light the candles. If you can, provide a variety to suit a larger mix of congregants: the basics, for families, for singles, seniors, etc.

4. Consider the candles

Buying candles for all your attendees adds up. Consider asking families to purchase sets of candles or to provide their own. Many people have candles around the house, or leftover from previous years.

If you order candles, the 10”-12” skinny congregational candles work best. Emkay has boxes of 100 ct - but not in colors. We also supply one standard size white taper for the Christ Candle, but we don't supply a candlestick.

5. Gather and invite volunteers

This is not an event that you want to go at alone. Since this is a “one-time” event, it may be the perfect opportunity to invite someone to serve who has not yet jumped into a volunteer role.

6. Supplies list

In New York, we are fortunate to do most of our shopping in the Garden District, finding everything we need within a few blocks and asking them to deliver on Saturday morning. Of course, your context will determine what works best for you.

Supplies (for about 75 wreaths)

- Greenery: we get two large cartons of cut Frasier, one of Boxwood, one of Holly, and one of Juniper.

- Oasis forms 8½ ”
- 11” clear plastic dishes
- A few spools of wire
- Small and medium pinecones
- Small birds (cardinals and doves) for each wreath to have 1-2
- Some red berry twist ties
- A couple bottles of Wilt-Proof or Wilt-stop
- Some nice ribbon (remind people that ribbon can be flammable)
- Some small ornaments
- Small plastic trash can liners for carrying wreaths home

7. Prep the day before

This will avoid a lot of chaos on Sunday!

- Cut greens into manageable pieces
- Soak greens and oasis forms in water
- Set up tables, cover in butcher paper and tape down

8. Pre-set your tables, and make a “greens buffet”

We use long, double wide tables in the center (8 long tables total) for all the greens and supplies - like a buffet. People can take from both sides and we have volunteers offering (and portion controlling) fancier decorations and candles. Additional work tables are set up for making the wreaths.

9. Make Tool caddies

Each of the work tables is set with a caddie or tray with the necessary tools for wreath-making. This helps prevent tools from getting lost under piles of greens. Caddies might have:

- Pruning shears
- Some cut pieces of wire
- Scissors
- Other small decorations and fasteners

10. Offer individual trays for supplies

Instead of trying to balance greens and supplies, we provide cafeteria trays for people to carry supplies from the buffet table to the work tables.

11. Spray greens with Wilt-stop

Once you lay out the greens on the supply table, give all the greenery a good squirt of Wilt-Stop. Then leave it out if people want more.

12. Remember clean-up volunteers

Those volunteers that you invited? Make sure some are assigned to clean-up duty! Provide plastic container crates for neatly storing reusable supplies for next year.

13. Remove candles before transport

Everyone wants to put their candles in their wreath to see the “finished product.” While sturdy enough on your table, candles can wiggle loose or tear through the foam. We suggest that people take the candles out of their oasis form before transporting the wreath home.



Kathryn Carroll has been working with New York families for nearly two decades; teaching preschoolers, directing a sign language and musical theater program for children. Since 2006, she has directed the rapidly growing programs for Families with Children at [Christ Church United Methodist](#) in New York, NY.

