



What is Advent?

Advent is the beginning of the Church Year. It is a time of anticipation, a time of preparation, and a time of remembrance.

Advent and Christmas are often confused. The confusion arises because most North Americans begin celebrating Christmas before it arrives. Folks start singing Christmas carols, and putting up Christmas trees. It's called "the most wonderful time of the year," and a jolly old time it is with its lights, family times, and cheer.

But, meanwhile, at the local Anglican church, you find a different atmosphere.

Suddenly, you have left behind the smell of pine and the celebration of Christmas and entered into a world of Old Testament Prophets, John the Baptist, and powerful angels announcing future events.

A subdued tone fills the music, minor keys abound, and a Christmas tree is (sometimes) nowhere to be seen.

Advent's tone and focus, however, is subdued for an important reason.

Each major festal celebration (Christmas and Easter) are prefixed with a season of preparation. The movement of the Church Year assumes that we will better understand and experience these feasts if we spend time in reflection and meditation upon why we need them in the first place.

We delve into the prophets and John the Baptist because they tell us of a time when the Messiah had not yet come. They take us as if back to the times of anticipation and longing. They remind us of how dramatic and powerful the Gospel story of God becoming a man really is. They prepare our minds and hearts for the joy of the Incarnation.

And so, Advent is necessarily a reflective, anticipatory season.