



The Season of Advent

Come Lord Jesus, be present with us in every part of our lives. Come into our lives at school, at home, when we play, when we work, when we are with our families, and when we are with our friends. Come into our lives so we can go on this great journey of life with you.

Amen

Advent, in the Christian church calendar, is the period of preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ at Christmas and also of preparation for the Second Coming of Christ. Many Christians celebrate Advent, not only by thanking God for Christ's first coming to Earth as a baby, but also for His presence among us today, through the Holy Spirit.

In Western Christianity, Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day, or the Sunday which falls closest to November 30th, and lasts through Christmas Eve, or December 24th. When Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday, it is the last or fourth Sunday of Advent. Thus, the actual season of Advent can last anywhere from 22-28 days.

Christians utilize certain symbolism during this season. For example, in the Catholic Church, priests wear purple vestments during Advent and stop saying the "Gloria" during Mass, until Christmas.

One symbol of this period is the Advent Wreath. Lighting the wreath is a custom that began with Lutherans and Catholics in 16th Century Germany.



Typically, the Advent Wreath is an evergreen wreath with four candles (three purple and one pink), sometimes with a fifth, white candle in the center. During the season of Advent, one candle is lit on each subsequent Sunday, until, by the last Sunday of Advent, all four candles are lit. Some Advent wreaths include a

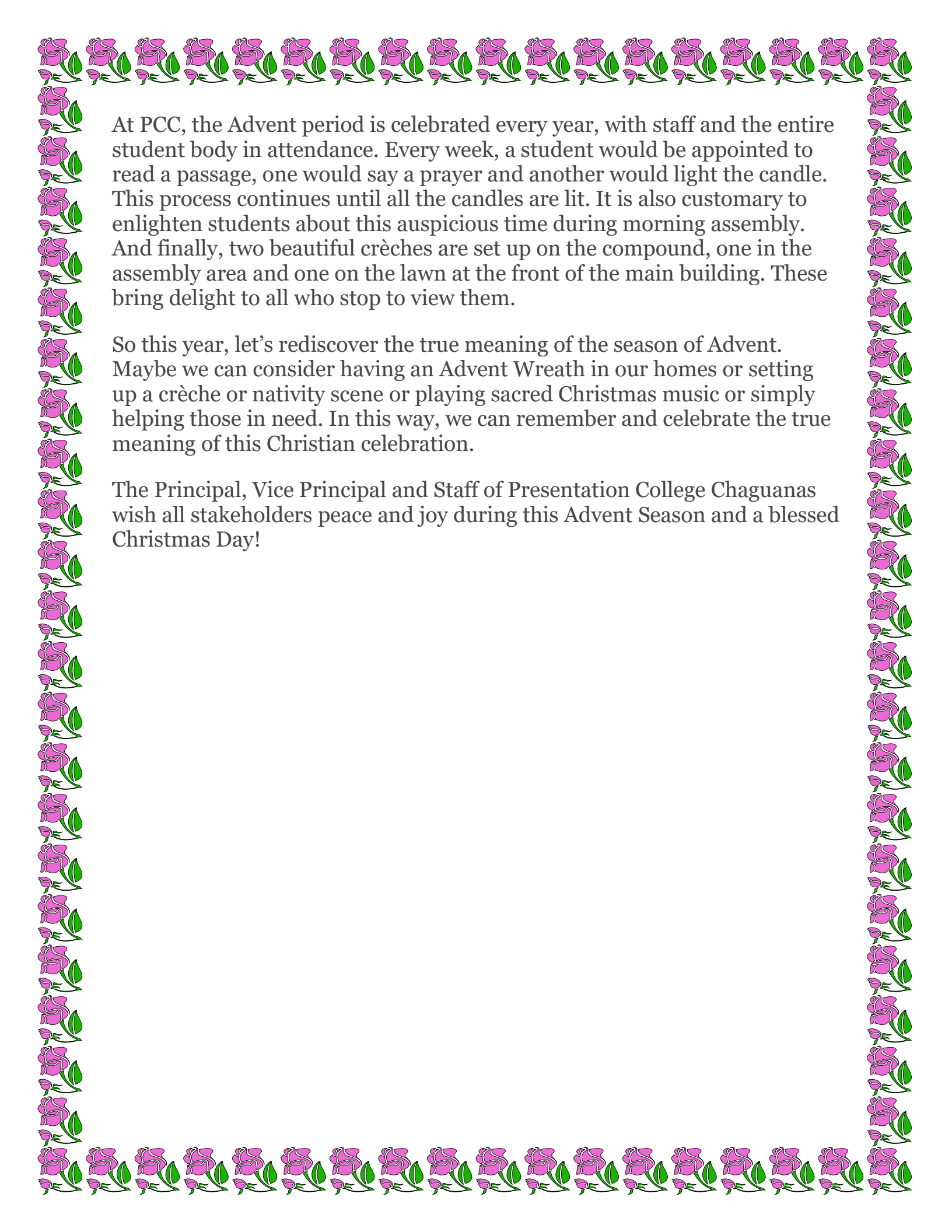
fifth, Christ candle which is lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. This custom originated in households but has become widespread in public worship.

The three purple candles and one rose candle, each represent 1,000 years. Added together, the four candles symbolize the 4,000 years that humanity waited for the Saviour.

The Advent candles and their colours hold great meaning. Each represents a specific aspect of the spiritual preparations for Christmas. The three main colours are purple, pink and white. Purple symbolizes repentance and royalty, pink represents joy and rejoicing and white stands for purity and light.

In addition, each candle carries a specific name as well. The purple candle is called the 'Prophecy Candle' or 'Candle of Hope'. The second is the 'Bethlehem Candle' or the 'Candle of Preparation'. The third (pink) candle is the 'Shepherd Candle' or 'the Candle of Joy'. The fourth candle (purple), is known as the 'Angel Candle' or the 'Candle of Love'. The last (white) candle is the 'Christ Candle'.

In medieval times, Advent was a period of fasting during which time, people's thoughts were directed to the expected second coming of Christ, but in modern times, many have forgotten this meaning and it has come to mean the lead-up to Christmas.



At PCC, the Advent period is celebrated every year, with staff and the entire student body in attendance. Every week, a student would be appointed to read a passage, one would say a prayer and another would light the candle. This process continues until all the candles are lit. It is also customary to enlighten students about this auspicious time during morning assembly. And finally, two beautiful crèches are set up on the compound, one in the assembly area and one on the lawn at the front of the main building. These bring delight to all who stop to view them.

So this year, let's rediscover the true meaning of the season of Advent. Maybe we can consider having an Advent Wreath in our homes or setting up a crèche or nativity scene or playing sacred Christmas music or simply helping those in need. In this way, we can remember and celebrate the true meaning of this Christian celebration.

The Principal, Vice Principal and Staff of Presentation College Chaguanas wish all stakeholders peace and joy during this Advent Season and a blessed Christmas Day!