

**Something to cheer us up a bit**

We are in lockdown. It’s getting colder. The days are getting shorter. We all need something to cheer us up!

In fact, the religions of the world have been trying to do this for centuries. For example:

****On November 14th, Hindus, Sikhs and Jains around the world will celebrate the Festival of Diwali. This is a celebration of a great truth: light always triumphs over darkness, good always wins against evil in the end.

Traditionally, they celebrate this festival with very colourful street processions, giving away sweets and gifts to the great delight of adults and children alike. They also fill their homes with many lights

During the week of December 10th-18th, the Jewish world family has a festival of lights. It is called Hanukkah. It remembers a lovely story of when the great lamp in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, a symbol of God being with His people, miraculously kept burning till a new one could be found.

Jewish people celebrate the festival by having a row of lights in their windows. They light one each day for a week. Many non-Jewish people do the same these days but are often unaware of the rich symbolism of their actions.

From the end of November, the Christian church begins the Season of Advent. It should be a gentle time of spiritual preparation for Christmas – the coming of the promised Messiah, who Christians believe was Jesus. But it has become one of the most commercially ferocious times of the year in which we are encouraged to buy, sell, panic, fret, rush, prepare and party. No wonder people say we should remember to put the Christ back into Christmas.

Advent has also many interesting traditions. Have a go at answering the questions below:

a) When does Advent begin and when does it end?

b) How many Sundays are there in Advent?

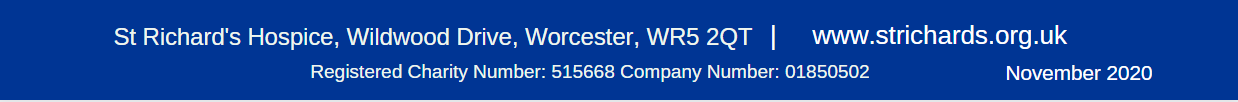
c) What is the main liturgical colour of Advent in churches? Why?

d) How many candles are there on an Advent Wreath? Why?

e) How many windows are there on an Advent Calendar?

f) Can you explain the decorations of a Christingle Candle?

g) Why do people go Carol Singing in Advent? (Answers on the next page)



Answers

a) Sunday, Nov 29th-Dec 24th.

b) 4

c) Purple. To invite people to admit and learn from their mistakes in Life.

d) 4. One for each Sunday. Each has its own theme.

e) 25

f) Christ, the light of the world and candles for North, South, East and West.

g) To spread the message of the real Christmas.

A thought: during Advent, people are often concerned about getting presents. Of course, only one present is needed – a better you and me.

That is why for Christians, Advent is about inner thinking, turning their lives around, adopting better habits, for their own sake and for the sake of other people.

