

BY JIM MERRITT

Special to Newsday

Lighting a flame is traditional during Advent, the Christian observance that begins Dec. 1; as part of Hanukkah, the Jewish Festival of Lights celebrated later this month; and in Buddhist rituals — as well as in those of other world faiths. This week's clergy shed light on the religious significance of such rituals.

The Rev. Thomas Cardone

Chaplain, Kellenberg Memorial High School, Uniondale

In Roman Catholicism, as well as in many Christian traditions, Advent is marked by the lighting of the four candles on the Advent wreath. Generally speaking, the candle is symbolic of Jesus Christ who tells us in John's Gospel (8:12): "I am the light of the world, the one who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have light of life."

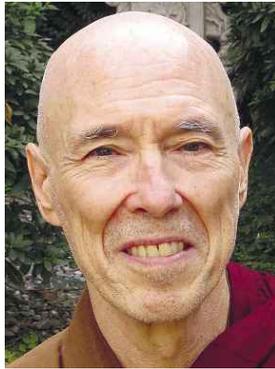
Christ is our light as we journey through Advent. The candles (three purple and one pink, lit on the third Sunday) represent the four Sundays that precede Christmas.

The first and second candle remind us of the prophets who foretold the birth of Jesus. The third candle is pink, the color for joy; we rejoice for the Lord is near. The fourth candle, prepares us to behold the coming of Christ.

The Advent wreath is a family activity in which individuals take turns lighting each candle, then leading the family in prayer. During Advent, may



Thomas Cardone



Bhikkhu Bodhi



Michael Stanger

ASKING THE CLERGY

What does lighting a flame symbolize in your faith?

the light of Christ shine upon all people of good will!

Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi

Buddhist scholar-monk, Chuang Yen Monastery, Carmel

In almost all Buddhist traditions, there are three indispensable objects of offering: lights, incense and flowers. Each of these has symbolic significance. Light represents wisdom, incense ethical conduct, and flowers inner virtues of character.

In Sri Lanka, rather than candles, lamps of clay or metal are filled with coconut oil and placed on the altar in

front of the image of the Buddha. Along with the offering, a verse is recited in the ancient Pali language: "With this oil lamp dispelling darkness, I venerate the supreme Buddha, the light of the world, who dispels the darkness of delusion."

When the Buddha attained enlightenment, it is said, a great light of inconceivable radiance appeared in the world.

This light was an outward manifestation of the wisdom that blossomed within the Buddha's mind. The offering of lights on the part of the devotee is a symbolic way of honoring this wisdom — and of expressing one's

own aspiration to obtain the light of wisdom that illuminates the liberating truth.

Rabbi Michael Stanger

The Old Westbury Hebrew Congregation

There is a verse from the Book of Proverbs (20:27) that states: "the lamplight of God is the soul of mankind."

As a result, it is customary in our tradition to light a *yahrzeit* candle marking the anniversary of a person's death every year on the Hebrew date they passed. Even when you first come home from the cemetery after a loved one has been buried and you are sitting shiva in your home, it is customary to light a large candle that will burn for the seven-day mourning period. The belief is that the soul of your loved one might yet still burn in your heart and memory.

However, it is also a *mitzvah* (commandment) to light candles at the outset of Shabbat and all Jewish holy days, as well as at the conclusion of Shabbat (and on all eight nights of Hanukkah as well).

One must remember that in ancient times, before the Advent of electricity, light in one's home came from candles being lit — that was the only source of illumination (and perhaps warmth) once the sun had set. And in the case of Hanukkah, which will occur later this month, the flickering flames from kindled candles can represent hope even in the darkest times, or during the coldest and shortest days.

Just as God created light from darkness at the outset of creation, the light of candles represents the renewal of life in the face of the gloom of night.

calendarwatch

THE WEEK AHEAD

KABBALAH FOCUS SERIES: PARENTING

EAST HILLS: Discover comfort in the concepts of Kabbalah — like cause and effect, and how to heal issues that appear beyond your control. Register, 7-8 p.m. Monday (first of five sessions), Sid Jacobson JCC, 300 Forest Dr., \$100, sjcc.org/havayahcentre, 516-484-1545.

MONDAY FEEDING PROGRAM

ROOSEVELT: Receive a free breakfast and bag of groceries, arrive on time, 9 a.m. Monday, Mount Sinai Baptist Church, 243 Frederick Ave., free, 516-868-0076.

TUESDAY ADVENT SERVICES

MINEOLA: There will be a time of worship, a short message and refreshments. Edge City Church, Main Street, 12:15-1 p.m. Tuesday, 516-503-4766.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE? A TWO-PART COURSE

DIX HILLS: What is heaven and hell? Can we return? Can we contact the deceased? Learn history of Jewish burial

SUBMIT NOTICES ONLINE three weeks in advance at newsday.com/submitevents. Look for "faith" in the "community" folder. When registered users of newsday.com submit an event online, it goes into our database with top priority. Upload photos and videos, too.

customs. Why is cremation not kosher? 7:30-9 p.m., Wednesday, Chai Center, 501 Vanderbilt Pkwy., \$25 for both weekends; \$15 for one, thechaicenter.com, 631-351-8672.

JEWISH HOLIDAYS 101: HANUKKAH

HUNTINGTON: Learn how and why Hanukkah is celebrated. Geared toward those new to Judaism. Materials, recipes provided, register, 7:30-9 p.m. Thursday, Temple Beth El of Huntington, 660 Park Ave., free, tbeli.org, 631-421-5835, ext. 206.

ADVENT LESSONS AND CAROLS

LINDENHURST: International Peace Light Ceremony and music by Combined Music Ministry, hospitality follows performance, 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, 240 S. Wellwood Ave., free, 631-226-7725.

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS RETREAT

WYANDANCH: Mass followed by light breakfast. Carol Mackey, certified spiritual director, bereavement counselor and retreat facilitator speaks. Time for individual prayer followed by group sharing. Bring lunch. Desserts, beverages provided. 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday, Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church, 1434 Straight Path, free, Facebook/Pax Christi Long Island, 631-643-7568, 516-238-6743.

CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD

STONY BROOK: Recording artist Peter Griggs performs

an international holiday music. 6-8 p.m. Saturday, All Souls' Episcopal Church, 61 Main St., free, allsouls-stonybrook.org, 631-655-7798.

LESSONS AND CAROLS SERVICE

WEST BABYLON: Prayer service with choir, deacons and priests and guest singer Father Gius Garcia. 7 p.m., Saturday, Our Lady of Grace Church of West Babylon, 666 Albin Ave., \$10, ourladyofgrace.net, 631-587-5185.

WHY CHRISTMAS? THE BACKSTORY BEHIND THE MAIN STORY

EAST MORICHES: Get fresh hope and perspective for daily living in this three-part series. Topics include Why the World Needed Christmas, Why God Needed Christmas, Why We Need Christmas, 5 p.m. Saturday, or 9 a.m. or 11 a.m. Sunday, South Bay Bible Church, 578 Montauk Hwy., free, southbaychurchli.org, 631-909-8241.

MULTIFAITH PRAYER SEMINAR

GLEN HEAD: Robert Keeler, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author moderates an exploration of prayer. Three Abrahamic faiths panelists will share perspectives on prayer. Food, networking to follow, 2-4 p.m. Sunday, Brookville Multifaith Campus, 2 Brookville Rd., free, Facebook/Brookville Church & Multifaith Campus, 516-626-0414.

— COMPILED BY ANN DONAHUE-SMUKLER

'Bima to Broadway'

Accomplished singer, author and Temple Judea cantor Deborah Jacobson, along with musicians and Broadway guests, will perform hit songs from beloved Broadway shows, film hits and American standards intermingled with Israeli and Yiddish songs. A few surprise guests will add to the excitement. A reception with light refreshments follows.

WHEN | WHERE 5-6:30 p.m., Dec. 8, Temple Judea of Manhasset, 333 Seatingtown Rd., Manhasset
INFO 516-621-8049, temple-judea.com
ADMISSION \$36-\$75 (reserve tickets online or call)



Deborah Jacobson

DAVID PERLMAN