An Invitation to Make Things This Advent

There are many things I love about all the activity and festivity that comes with Advent! I love giving gifts and planning parties, twinkling lights and familiar carols. Sometimes, though, it seems like it distracts my prayer life, and I have trouble connecting to the powerful message God is speaking in Christmas.

This year, I want to invite you to come with me on a journey to try to make all this season of busyness even more meaningful. Not just lovely, but life-changing. Not a burden of obligations, but a life-giving invitation to be a part of what God is doing.

Because I love all the energy of planning and preparing for Christmas, this year I invite you to join me in the work of preparing for Christ’s coming. I believe we can use all the activities of the season for something more than a Christmas party; I believe we can use it to help make the world ready for the coming of Christ’s kingdom.

Advent as a Christian practice has long been a season in tension with our culture: it speaks of longing, of patience and of waiting. For four weeks, we light candles on dark nights to remind us of God’s promise, which brings hope, peace, joy and love into our broken world.

Each week during Advent, this devotional invites you to focus on one activity word (growing, preparing, building, singing) that gives us real ways to use our time and energy to help show mercy, share love and work for justice. I hope you will use it at home, on your own or with your family, as a way of focusing yourself on Christ’s coming.

You will find a page of reading and conversation for each week of Advent. Please adapt it to what works for you. We will post additional stories that relate to the themes on our Facebook page every day--follow us at facebook.com/beachfaith. At the end of each week’s devotional is a prayer to say as you light candles in your Advent wreath. The first week, light just one candle; each week, add one more candle’s light until your whole wreath is glowing at Christmas. There is also a page for drawing with each week’s devotional. I encourage you to post your drawings to our Facebook page or tag us on Instagram: #beachfaithchurch

-Pastor Molly Vetter

These resources are also available online: www.beachfaith.com/Advent
Advent 1: **Growing Hope**  
*for the week beginning November 27*

**Scripture**

He shall judge between the nations,  
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;  
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,  
and their spears into pruning-hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war any more.  
*Isaiah 2:4*

**Reflection**

Planting a garden is hard work—it can include preparing and enriching the soil, digging holes, planting, covering and watering. When you plant seeds, you have to wait for them to grow. Advent is a time for that kind of waiting. Planting seeds is not nearly as immediately satisfying as buying things full-grown; it requires trust and hope.

The slow-growing work of gardening, though, leads to something incredible: nourishing food, delicious fruit, and beautiful flowers. Our scripture for this week talks about God’s vision for the world, when the quick-working tools of violence (like the sword and spear) are turned into tools for farmers (like ploughs and pruners).

- Have you ever planted a garden? Or visited one? Tell about a garden memory.  
- In what other ways are swords and spears different from ploughs and pruners?  
- What modern-day tools might you add to either list?  
- Go for a walk. Observe what is growing, looking for plants you hadn’t seen before.

**Stories to Inspire Us**

*We will share stories every day on Facebook: www.facebook.com/beachfaith*

Read about turning guns into garden tools, refugees growing their own food, & more

**Prayer for Lighting Your Advent Candles**

Hope,  
like a seed  
buried deep within the earth; hidden  
covered by layers, disappointment, struggle, pain; buried yet stretching,  
growing and becoming.  
Hope  
like a seed  
becoming new life.  
we light a candle for hope.

*(prayer by Katherine Hawker, found on www.liturgyoutside.net)*
Draw a picture of a beautiful garden—what plants and flowers would you grow?
Advent 2: **Preparing Peace**  
*for the week beginning December 4*

**Scripture**

The wolf shall live with the lamb,  
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,  
and a little child shall lead them.  
The cow and the bear shall graze,  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.  

-Isaiah 11:6-7

**Reflection**

There are so many delicious things to make and eat at Christmas time! More than any other season, people make food to share with others. We sometimes use the metaphor of “breaking bread” together to describe eating together—and we believe that sharing meals with others is not so very different from what happens when we share Christ’s grace at the communion table in broken bread and a shared cup.

Isaiah the prophet described a vision of a wildly new, beautiful world—where wolves and lambs live together in peace, and cows, bears and lions all eat grass together. It’s strange to imagine how this works—it certainly requires a change of diet for wolves and lions and bears! It reminds us that God is doing a new thing!

-Share a favorite memory of a holiday food. Who made it or taught you to make it?  
-Thinking about wolves and lambs, come up with a list of people who fear for their safety in communities around the world. What would it take for them to be safe?  
-Make a loaf of banana bread from too-ripe fruit and share it with a neighbor you don’t know well.

**Stories to Inspire Us**

*We will share stories every day on Facebook: www.facebook.com/beachfaith*  
Read about sharing communion through the border fence, redemptive jam making and more!

**Prayer for Lighting Your Advent Candles**

As we prepare for Christmas,  
Let us make space at the table for everyone.  
Give us grace to change our plans  
So we can be a part of what you’re doing  
Here, and everywhere.  
We light a candle for peace.
Fill this table with a delicious feast, to share with everyone.
Advent 3: **Building Joy**
for the week beginning December 11

**Scripture**

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

*-Isaiah 35:10*

**Reflection**

To help get people ready for Jesus, John the Baptist preached a stirring message of change. Quoting the prophet Isaiah, he told people to “Prepare the way of the Lord.” This getting ready for Christ’s coming requires a building project! The imagined highway that we build, according to Isaiah, makes way for the safe return of all of God’s family.

In a small way, the things that people enjoy building and making as holiday crafts and gifts are a symbol of this same spirit: we make and share them with the hope that they will offer safety, that they will strengthen our connection to each other (even when we are absent), and that they will bring joy.

-What is a favorite handmade gift that you’ve received? What do you like to make?
-Search out a story about someone who is a refugee. Include them in your prayers.
-Look in your recycle bin or trashcan, and see if you can make something out of things you’ve discarded. One idea: make a paper chain decoration out of advertisements from the mail or newspaper.

**Stories to Inspire Us**

*We will share stories every day on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/beachfaith](http://www.facebook.com/beachfaith)*

Read about building houses, welcoming refugees, radical recycling and more!

**Prayer for Lighting Your Advent Candles**

Joy is found in the moment when the tables turn and the veil of denial is lifted displaying vulnerability and fear, colliding with hope and promise, mingling together.

a tingle
growing warm,
lurching forward
is joy.
We light a candle for joy.

(prayer by Katherine Hawker, found on [www.liturgyoutside.net](http://www.liturgyoutside.net))
Draw a map of an amazing city. What kinds of buildings and spaces are in it?
Advent 4: Singing Love
for the week beginning December 18

Scripture

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!’
-Luke 2:13-14

Reflection

There’s something powerful about singing--it transforms what we say, affecting our whole bodies and adding incredible power and beauty. There’s something even more powerful about singing together with others. Whether at a rock concert or in worship, it creates a unity among people.

The Christmas story includes description of a heavenly choir that appeared to shepherds as they announced Jesus’ birth, singing together in praise to God. At that moment, it is as if all of earth and heaven are singing one song: a song of glory. They sing not because all the struggle is over, but because God’s glory is present in the very midst of the world (in the fragile, precious form of a newborn baby).

-What is your favorite Christmas song? Why? Where did you learn it?
-What do you think the angel choir sounded like? Do you think anyone sang along? What do you imagine the shepherds were thinking?
-Go Christmas Caroling--find a small group of people and go visit the home of someone who’s been going through a tough time, who is homebound, or who you don’t know well.

Stories to Inspire Us

We will share stories every day on Facebook: www.facebook.com/beachfaith
Read about people who sang in unlikely times, stories of Christmas Carols & more!

Prayer for Lighting Your Advent Candles

Dear God,
This Advent,
grant us the courage to share your love:
Love for the unexpected challenge, Love for the vulnerable one.
Love for the presence of God.
We light a candle for love. Amen.

(adapted from a prayer by Katherine Hawker, found on www.liturgyoutside.net)
Listen to a favorite Christmas song, and draw a picture while it plays.
Christmas: Sharing Grace
for the week beginning December 25

Scripture

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.

- John 1:14

Reflection

Christmas celebrates the radical love of God, who dared to become human as an affirmation of the gift and blessing of life that we share. In Christ’s birth, God moves into the world to be with us. God is not some distant, abstract force, but a visible, tangible, embodied love. We celebrate Christmas each year when the nights are long, to remind us that God arrives in the world in the very midst of brokenness. A fragile baby, he was born to migrant parents living under the power of the Roman empire, laid in a manger and celebrated by shepherds, angels and magi.

We are invited to celebrate Jesus’ birth by living out grace, wherever we are, with unexpected and unusual partners. If Jesus could come into the world in such difficult circumstances, surely we can find the courage and vision to share the gift of God’s unconditional love here, too. We sometimes name of gift of God’s love as grace: it comes to us because of who God is, not because of who we are or what we deserve. It’s a free gift. It affirms that God is with us, and loves us. All of us.

- Read the Christmas story in Luke 1:1-2:20. What were some of the challenges that Mary, Joseph and Jesus faced?
- Think of someone who you have lost touch with or who might be lonely--call them, or send a card, letting them know you are thinking of them.
Draw a Christmas nativity scene, if Jesus had been born today. Who do you think would come see him?
Join us at church this Advent!

Sunday, November 27: Pick up your devotionals and supplies for a home Advent wreath at church! Worship with us at 8:30am and 10:30am.

Sunday, December 4: Worship with us at 8:30am and 10:30am. Join us for our All-in-One Advent Fun Event, from 4-6pm in Fellowship Hall. This year’s theme is “Joy to the World,” and our celebration is going global! All are welcome to this free event, with crafts, songs, and Fair Trade Gifts to purchase from Ten Thousand Villages. Soup is provided--you are invited to bring a snack or dessert from your own culture’s tradition.

Sunday, December 11: Worship with us at 8:30am and 10:30am. During the 10:30 service, our Chldren’s Ministry will present our annual Christmas Pageant. This year, they’re taking us Down Under for an Australian celebration!

Sunday, December 18: Worship with us at 8:30am and 10:30am. At 10:30am, our Chancel Choir will present “The Christmas Story,” as arranged by Roger Wagner; also, our Walk to the Manger brings a live nativity scene into worship! In the afternoon, from 3-5, Pastor Molly invites you to the parsonage for an Open House and Caroling to some of our homebound members.

Saturday, December 24: Share in candlelight Christmas Eve worship. At 5pm, our family service includes carols, candles and the Christmas story. At 11pm, our choir will sing and we will share in Holy Communion, too. All are welcome.

Sunday, December 25: Worship with us at 10:30am--we have just one combined service on Christmas morning!

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