

Advent Spiritual Practice

Preparing for what is already on the way to us

Advent One ❧ Looking for God's Fingerprints

*Water dusts winter air.
Snowflakes fall.
No two the same.
God's fingerprints everywhere.*

Getting Ready:

Make snowflakes the old fashioned way, folding a square of white paper as many ways as you want in halves, until you are ready to cut little shapes in the folded edges. Unfold and hang from light fixtures or tape onto windows.

Reading: Isaiah 64:1-9

Praying:

Break through and shape my life, O Potter God.
Leave your fingerprints on me.
I want to know for sure,
that I am the work of your hand.

Living into the truth:

Tell someone else how you see God's fingerprints on their life.
Make a list of God's fingerprints on your own life.

Advent Two ❧ A Christmas Card from John the Baptist

*Wilderness driven,
sticky with sweet and Jordan damp,
locust legs landing in his beard
and stinky camel's hair around his body,
he declares we aren't ready
for what God is doing.*

Getting Ready:

Create a Christmas card from John the Baptist. Don't be shy about it. His seasonal greetings were words like "Repent", "Make the way straight" No wonder Hallmark never quotes him. But he's ours. Invite him into your Advent. Celebrate his message. Then send the card to yourself.

Reading: Mark 1:1-8

Praying: Keep me open, O God,
for the unlikely one with un-Christmassy words
who brings the challenge
that prepares me for Christmas coming.

Living into the truth:

Get involved in seasonal initiatives that pay attention to those among us who may seem “unseasonably decorated”, and whose presence sometimes carries a challenging message for our own lives. Perhaps it is caroling in a nursing home, responding to a drop-in centre’s call for underwear and socks for their guests, getting involved in the issue of affordable housing, or volunteering to cook and serve Christmas dinner in a shelter, or taking the Christmas Eve shift for Inn from the Cold.

Advent Three  **Bearing Witness to the Light**

*Advent seeks no perfect person,
no fortified fantasy of Christmas,
just a little room for a little faith,
a sideways glance
catching the Light
shining in the darkness.*

Getting Ready:

Make your room dark. Have a candle secure in a holder. Have matches in hand. Experience the dark. Share the feelings it brings. An adult then lights a match to light the candle. Experience the light shining in the darkness. Share the feelings the light brings into the darkness.

Reading: John 1:6-8

Praying: I am too used to working in the dark.
Open my eyes, O God,
to see the Light that comes.

Living into the truth:

Each day, set time aside to bear witness to the Light. Gather yourselves around a candle. Share events great and small from your day when Light shined into the darkness. Maybe it was a problem you overcame, a good news item from the newspaper, an experience of friendship, a job you were able to get done, a kindness received or offered, something special from nature, etc. When you are finished sharing, light the candle, for you have born witness to the Light, just as John the Baptist did.

Advent *four* ☩ Letting Your Soul Magnify the Lord

*Who would ever believe
they could be pregnant with God?
Not good enough, or smart enough,
not spiritual enough, or powerful enough,
not reliable enough, or strong enough, I know.
Still, Mary's story haunts me.
What if all I had to do was say "Yes"?*

Getting Ready:

Make a special beverage. Maybe it's a punch or hot cider. If you can prepare the beverage with others, do that. Choose some special cups or glasses to use. Set your table with the candle you used in last week's activity. Light the candle. When everything is ready, pour your special beverage in your special cups, then each one may offer a toast to God for something God has done (e.g. given us a home), or for who God is (e.g. just and caring). Gently clink cups with each person and meet their eyes, saying "My soul magnifies the Lord" to each one. Look up a definition of "magnify" to share, if needed.

Reading: Luke 1: 47-45

Praying: Do not let me be afraid
of the greatness growing within me.
It is only you, God, who loves me.

Living into the truth:

Mary's story is inspiring. She helps us to know that God does not look for powerful or perfect servants. God looks for someone who will say yes. When was the last time God asked anything of you? When was the last time you said yes to God? Spend some quiet time listening for God speaking into your life. What is God asking? Can you say "Yes"?