



2018 ADVENT DEVOTIONAL FROM THE
DIOCESE OF VIRGINIA AND FORMA



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF VIRGINIA



THE NETWORK FOR CHRISTIAN FORMATION

In 2017, Forma and The Diocese of Virginia began a partnership to provide support and resources to the wider church. Our goal is to bring together the creative talents of the Diocese of Virginia and the expertise of Forma's network of Christian Formation professionals through offerings like this Advent devotional.

In this second year of our Advent devotional for families and individuals, we are thrilled to have Aimee Bostwick, Forma Board President and Roger Hutchison, Forma Board member join with Paris Ball and Aisha Huertas from the staff of the Diocese of Virginia to write these reflections. Once again, you will find a brief overview of the scriptural themes for each week, ideas to try in your home to deepen your experience of Advent, and some short prayers and rituals to make your Advent experience complete.

This is merely a guide. Please do embrace the Advent season as a moment to pause, reflect, and push aside the secularization of Christmas. Advent was historically a penitential season. We certainly don't think that many people are going to return to a second Lent like season, but we are hopeful that you will find a few moments in each day to think about the coming of Jesus into your life. What does it mean to be waiting with anticipation for our Lord to come? What is holding you back from being with Christ as he is born? Now is the time to ask those questions.

We are weaving into the Advent Faith-at-Home resource some practices from The Way of Love: Practices for a Jesus-Centered Life. You can find the 2018 Advent Way of Love resources here: <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/journeying-way-love>. Journeying the Way of Love is a great resource for groups and individuals. We hope that you will utilize The Way of Love as much as possible as you use your Advent Faith at Home resource.

Please also consider purchasing, or creating, your own advent wreath for your home ritual. Ask your priest or lay minister in charge of Christian Formation for more information about what an Advent wreath is and where you can get one. There is nothing here that is complicated or unruly. This Advent devotional is designed for anyone to use at home, with friends, spouse, children, or anyone you want to deepen your faith with.

We invite you into a Holy Advent – Let's BEGIN!!



NOTE – How the Church Tells Time

Most of the world thinks of time as a line. We have what once was, we have now, and we have what will be. The Church does not think of time in this way. Advent is the beginning of the Church liturgical year, but in practice, we have no beginning or end. We have seasons: Advent (4 Sundays), Christmas (12 days) ending on Epiphany, Lent (6 Sundays), Easter (7 Sundays) ending on Pentecost, and the Sundays after Pentecost (also called Ordinary Time). The cycle repeats over and over again living through the life cycle of Christ and the Church, calling us into memorial and remembrance of what was, is, and will be.

About these devotions – The Advent offerings are formatted similarly to the weekly Faith-at-Home offerings sent out to Forma Members each week. Here, each week you will find a scripture to read, a thought to reflect on, and then several ways to respond according to the ages gathered. We encourage you to read the scripture with every age group, and the reflection with older children through adults before jumping into the response.

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Advent, Week 1 – Aimee Bostwick, Forma Board President

Theme: Waiting in Hope

Read: *Psalm 25*

*“Show me your ways O Lord
And teach me your paths.*

*Lead me in your truth and teach me for you are the God of my salvation,
In you I have trusted all the day long.*

Reflect:

One of my favorite hobbies is hiking. It gets me outdoors, disconnected from technology and more connected to my family and friends. There is something about hiking a new trail. There is the relief of being outdoors, but there is a bit of anxiety about where the trail will take me. What's around the bend? How steep is it going to get? Will I be able to finish the trail if it gets really hard? Who will I encounter along the way? What if the trail isn't well marked? Who will be my guide should I get lost?

Maybe you have experienced a “faith walk”. Everyone has a partner. One person is blindfolded and the other is designated as the guide. The person who is blindfolded is led along a path and relies on the guide to help them understand the way and to keep them safe. The guide is to make every effort to communicate with their partner to help them “see” where they are going and to be prepared for what they may encounter as they step blindly forward. As the blindfolded partner reaches out to take the guides hand, the first few steps will be crucial as trust between the two partners is built. With each step forward, trust is nurtured, and progress is made.

Such is our faith walk with God as we begin this season of Advent. As we put on our blindfolds and take our guide's hand, the first few steps will be crucial. May we open ourselves to what it is we are to learn along this Advent path. May our faith increase, and God's ways become clear. May we be led to unexpected places of peace and joy that leave us filled with hope.

Households with Adults and Children:

➤ **RESPOND:** There is much symbolism between walking and our relationship with God. Being in relationship with God is similar to the relationship we have with our children. Parents serve as guides for their children, especially when first steps are being taken. Ask: What are some of our favorite “walks” as a family? What made those walks so memorable? Parents, share with your children the memories of their first steps and reflect on how that is similar to a faith walk. Perhaps bring out family pictures of those moments. And/ Or Do a simple faith walk in your backyard or somewhere safe in your home. Process the experience afterwards.

Households with Adults and Youth (or older children):

➤ **RESPOND:** What have been some of the “first step” experiences that we have shared together as a family? (moving, starting a new school or job, traveling together) How did we help guide one another through those experiences?

Re-read Psalm 25 together and reflect on how that Psalm ties into your walking/ hiking memories. Plan a family hike to get out of the craziness of the season. Read Psalm 25 together before you begin. Once you have reached the “top” or have finished your hike, reflect on the experience in the perspective of being led by God.

Facilitate a “faith walk” between family members and process the experience afterwards.

you like to do to prepare? How do you stay patient when you are waiting for something to happen?

ound in other places.) Take a piece of paper with a magnifying glass drawn on it (see next page for an example) and



Households with Adults:

➤ **RESPOND:** Discuss the symbolism in experiencing life as a path with God as your guide and you as the one who is blindfolded. Reflect on times when you have distinctly known that you were being led by God. Have there been times when you didn't feel God's hand holding onto yours quite so strongly? How did you navigate your way back to the path and continue walking?

ADVENT WREATH PRACTICE: Light a small candle, LED candle, or the first candle of your Advent wreath. Gather with your loved ones as you are able and offer this simple prayer:

God, help us as we begin walking this path of Advent with one another. May we not forget that you are our companion along the way when things seem uncertain or we become afraid. Show us your path and teach us your ways so that we may prepare ourselves for the arrival of Christ into our lives.

Amen.

Way of Love Connection:

Go: Cross boundaries, listen deeply and live like Jesus

Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." – John 20:21
Send them into the world in witness to your love. – Book of Common Prayer, 306

As Jesus went to the highways and byways, he sends us beyond our circles and comfort, to witness to the love, justice, and truth of God with our lips and with our lives. We go to listen with humility and to join God in healing a hurting world. We go to become Beloved Community, a people reconciled in love with God and one another.

How can you practice Going this week, walking the path of hope to places that need to hear or feel the Good News of Christ' coming?

