

# First Baptist Church in Beverly

*A progressive and welcoming Christian community!*

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# Advent 2024: Moving Through the Dark



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH  
IN BEVERLY  
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*Advent is officially here! Join us by journeying through our progressive 4-week Devotional Bingo (see the card below!), with a new email coming out every Monday, courtesy of Advent Planning Group member Jenny Lane! Print copies will be available at the church as well!*

Below you will find a festive FBC Beverly Bingo card, which you are invited to [click on to print](#). We will check off items from this card each week as we progress through the four weeks of Advent.

During the darkest months, we find most of our holidays are full of light.

**Diwali**, the Hindu Festival of Lights, celebrates victory of light over darkness by lighting fireworks and candles while devoting time for prayer and reflection.

**Hanukkah** is a Jewish holiday, meaning dedication. This is a time meant to mark the miracle of light, in times of darkness.

**Los Posada**, a Latin American holiday, reminds us of the journey Virgin Mary and Joseph of Nazareth took to Bethlehem for the birth of baby Jesus. A time of hope, light and love.

**Winter Solstice**, a reminder of the balance of light/dark, is the longest night of the year. We celebrate by recognizing grief and opening our hearts to the light that will come back starting that very evening.

**Christmas**, our Christian holiday, reminds us of the hope, joy and love Jesus brings to the world with His birth.

These festivals, celebrations and traditions ask us to **honor the light**. This advent season, however, we ask: What about **darkness**? What about the hearts that are full of grief, scared for their children and the changes in the world to come? What about the deep grief or loss during a first Advent season as a widower or a divorcee? What about those going through treatments who battle with love and light? Are they not too in darkness?

Our devotionals this year look at balance as we explore what it means to move through the dark together. We will journey with scripture, yoga, meditation, stillness, laughter, darkness, lament, courage, trust, and JOY!

### **Lament**

#### **We begin with lament. What is it?**

Lament is a passionate expression of grief or sorrow. Complaint is stating what is unsatisfactory. While they may overlap at times, they are not the same. Lament is a deep experience of pain, grief or sadness that can often bring us into physical expressions of those same emotions. We may feel exhausted, our nervous systems may be dysregulated and our hearts may physically feel sorrow. Darkness does not usually feel good because we are often uncomfortable in the dark.

Lament asks us: Where can we find stillness in the dark? Can we sit in uncomfortable emotions? Can we lean towards and on one another as we heal together? Is darkness 'bad'? Or do we need our moments that bring the dark night of the soul?

As we are reminded in Genesis 1:3; "God said 'Let there be light!' And there was light." Though light is good, darkness is not bad; we need the balance of darkness to create the night that shows us the star of hope lighting the way for the wise men to greet Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

As we move through lament together, we offer a series of **invitations**, which we invite you to move through at your own pace throughout the week.

**First, read Psalm 22.** It starts with darkness and turmoil, it starts with; "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" A plea for deliverance from suffering.

The dark beginning of Psalm 22 is a reminder that God can hold all of our sorrow, our anger, our lament. And yet, as the Psalm continues, it twists and turns, concluding finally in praise of God for all He has done and has yet to do.

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**Our second invitation** is an opportunity to write your own Psalm! Psalms can be prayers of thanksgiving, love and lament. Each psalm follows a similar pattern, so while this is a challenge, it has an outline to make it easier!

### ***Structure of a Psalm***

1. Address God
2. Describe your suffering
3. Name who is 'responsible' (kindly; it could be you)
4. Protest innocence or admit guilt
5. Petition for God's assistance
6. A sentence of faith
7. Anticipating His divine response
8. A song of Thanksgiving.

### ***Example***

Dear God, I am overwhelmed by the amount of work I have in front of me! I am angry at bureaucratic mistakes made by others that impact me as a mother and a student. I am innocent of these mistakes and beg for your assistance to ease my heart. I have faith you will provide all I need to ease my soul. Thank you, dear God, for the gentleness you will bestow on my heart. I am devoted and grateful to you!

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### **For the third invitation...**

Not feeling as though psalm writing is for you this Advent season, but still needing to work through lament? [Read this brief article](#) on Lions Breath and give it a try as a way to help release and let go of the darkness that swells within us. While darkness can be uncomfortable, we are reminded of the ways we can move through it and find the balance of light. Lions Breath is just one way to do this!

**DARKNESS IS NOT BAD. DARKNESS IS NOT BAD. DARKNESS IS NOT BAD.**

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To conclude this week, **we invite you to consider the following journal prompts:**

- (1) Ponder a dark night of the soul moment in your life and how it changed you
- (2) What does lament mean to you?
- (3) Are you afraid of the dark? Afraid to express lament or other 'bad' emotions? (No emotions are bad, they are simply clues).
- (4) When I sit in the stillness of prayer; can I be reminded that God wants to hear *all* my emotions?

This Advent season, as we move through the dark, we know that light needs darkness. Black is the absorption of all light. White is the reflection of light. Remember that when we feel darkness, the light is not gone, but rather it is deep within us awaiting its return. God is with us on every step of the journey. Our wish for you this week is contemplation, stillness, and working through the discomfort of darkness.

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***Stay tuned for next Monday's devotional and thanks for playing, Friends!***



# Advent

## BINGO

Read Psalm 22	Write your own psalm	Do Lions Breath	Ask someone for help	Journal prompt: What does lament mean to you?
Help someone else	Journal prompt: What does trust look like to you?	Attend Hanging of the Greens!	Volunteer	Attend or donate to Santa Parade
Watch Elf at the Cabot!	Ponder a dark night of the soul moment in your life and how it changed you	FREE SPACE	Attend Christmas Eve services!	Journal prompt: What does courage look like to you?
Do something that scares you	Do 'Prayer Pose'	Journal prompt: What does JOY look like to you?	Journal prompt: What does balance mean to you?	Set a ten minute timer for prayer
Watch Ang Sang Wahe Guru video	Shop local	Do something that brings you joy	Share your favorite scripture with someone	Take a perceived obligation off your calendar

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