

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
*A progressive and welcoming
Christian community*

Thank you for journeying through our progressive 4-week Devotional Bingo with us! Early next week we will share our final Advent Devotional, so be sure to see if you get a Bingo and thanks for playing along with us!

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

Trust is tricky.

By definition, Trust is the firm belief in the truth, consistency and reliability of someone or something. While trust can be difficult at times, it is also something that comes naturally. We do not question whether gravity will work today, for example. Nor do we ponder whether or not the sun will rise, spring will arrive or clean water will flow from our tap. However, it is not always that easy to trust. Many of our systems are broken, people sometimes misuse our trust, and change is inevitable. This collectively makes trust a little tricky. By using the courage that we cultivated last week, we can lean into trust even when it seems tricky.

Our first invitation is to read and reflect on the scripture Matthew 1:18-25.

From its opening moments, the Christmas story asks us to trust in God . His arrival required an inordinate amount of trust from his parents, especially Joseph. As we read in Jesus' Nativity story, Joseph had resolved to quietly divorce Mary. Being unmarried and with child was a sin punishable by death at the time our Savior was born. Joseph, acting in love and kindness, wished to quietly dismiss Mary so she would remain unharmed. This was a brave act in itself.

But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said,

"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." --Matthew 1:20-22

Upon waking, Joseph opened his heart, mind and eyes as he said *yes* to the monumental task God laid before him: becoming Jesus' earthly father. THIS decision required trust in God!

As part of this invitation, we ask you to reflect on this passage. Perhaps this is journaling, prayer or a moment of quiet contemplation.

The second invitation is to breathe.

Daniel's sermon this week integrated breath as a reminder for not only our (incredibly talented) musicians, but also our entire congregation. Deep breathing allows us to calm the nervous system, and destress our physical and emotional bodies. Breath is what gives us life and it is the last thing to let go when our lives on earth come to an end. While we can trust that in the usual course of events, our breathing happens naturally and automatically, we can also become aware of our breathing, even purposely changing the rate of our breathing at any given moment, if we choose.

Slowing down the breath allows us to find awareness. By taking deep, slow inhales and exhales, our mind begins to relax. This can help ease anxiety, worry, and stress, while bringing us into the present moment.

As a yoga teacher for the last 15 years, breath has been a crucial aspect of my work. As such, I have learned a lot about the etymology of the word breath and how it impacts us physically and energetically!

The word spirit comes from the Latin word *spirare*, which means "to breathe." The word *prana* is a Sanskrit word meaning "breath of life." And in Hebrew, the word *ruach* often translates to mean God's spirit, breath, or energy. All our linguistic understanding reminds us that breath and spirit are one and the same: **God breathes through us.** We inherently trust that we will continue receiving the breath of life from God.

Breathing, though natural, can often be a place of confusion or difficulty when we are asked to breathe intentionally.

Try one of these breath work techniques at home this week!

(1) Engage in slow, deep breathing. Begin on an inhale. As you inhale, do so to a count of 4-8 breaths followed by equal parts breath while exhaling. This allows us to calm the nervous system and relax into trust.

(2) Create breath of fire. Place your hand in front of your mouth and exhale forcefully. It will sound a bit loud and may feel as though you are creating fog on glass! Next, close your lips and using the same forceful exhale, breathing out and into the nose rapidly. This will begin to build heat in the abdomen.

While my digital library is a bit out of date due to being a seminary student, the invitation is before you to take a look at it using the link below to see if any resources may be helpful for you this week of trust.

<https://www.youtube.com/@Jennylaneyoga>

Our final invitation is to read this poem of hope and trust.

It will never cease to amaze me
That my heart still beats
Slowly like the tick of a clock
No matter how many times it is broken
No matter how many times I witness how deeply our systems are broken

It will never cease to amaze me
That no matter how many times my heart breaks
God wakes me up to do it all over again

It will never cease to amaze me
That I will answer the call
And say yes to love and compassion and kindness and actions of love
Over and over and over again

And it will never cease to amaze me
When I see community rally together in the name of love
Creating spaces for compassion and safety, spaces for conversation and connection
Over and over and over again

It will never cease to amaze me how beautiful hope truly is.

--Authored by Jenny Lane

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. God sees your courage, vulnerability and trust. Our wish for you is the ability to trust while we continue working through the discomfort of darkness.

~
Stay tuned for next week's devotional and thanks for joining us and 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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