

First Baptist Church in Beverly

A progressive and welcoming Christian community!

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Advent 2024: Moving Through the Dark



Thank you for journeying through our progressive 4-week Devotional Bingo with us! Please share and enjoy this final Advent Devotional from your FBC Church Family.

This week we welcome the end of this beautiful Advent season and our Advent bingo! We have a few more things on this list as we walk through our final week in joy. We began our season in darkness. Darkness asks us to sit in a place of discomfort, reach out for community and remember that lament is an important part of our journey toward the light. We shifted from lament to courage. Advent brings with it, joy and love, darkness and lament; but it also brings questions of vulnerability to the surface. The word courage asks us to “speak one’s mind telling all one’s heart.” This is true vulnerability. Our third week brought definitions, invitations and journal prompts around the idea and the experience of trust. Having moved through the dark together, we finally enter our final Advent devotional around *joy*.

"In whatever sense this year is a new year for you, may the moment find you eager and unafraid, ready to take it by the hand with joy and gratitude."

- Howard Thurman

Our first invitation is to lighten your load this week. Take at least one perceived obligation off your list!

This can be something simple such as deciding *not* to bake that extra dessert or to go back out to buy that one last gift. It could perhaps be a bigger decision to step away from an annual tradition because you need a break. While it may feel scary and will definitely require the courage and trust we have cultivated, taking a break for any reason is valid. Give yourself a bit more time by only committing to anything this week with a *holy yes!*

Our second invitation is to spend time in prayer.

Prayer can come in many forms. One suggestion is to take some time to sit with your Bible, journal or prayer list full of friends and family members. Another idea is to set a timer for five minutes of silence as a way to communicate with God. This would be an excellent time to reflect back on your homemade psalm from our first week of Advent as a final prayerful suggestion.

Prayer can also be physical. One yoga posture that can help us to enter a prayerful state is named the prayer pose! Finding prayer pose is easy. Sit in a simple seat and place your hands over your heart. While you are here, allow your breath to rise and fall for a few moments as you meditate on the final week of Advent.

Finally, prayer can also be written communication between you and God. Using the following journaling prompts, take time to journal, reflect or write your own prayers.

- 1. What does joy look or feel like to you?**
- 2. What does balance mean to you?**
- 3. What is one thing you can do to create joy in your life today?**
- 4. Create your own prayer or write out your favorite scripture.**

Our final invitation is to find things that bring you joy!

Christmas Eve this week brings the beginning of our walk toward Epiphany and the upcoming days of rest, too much cheese, and not knowing what day it is. This is the time to invite extra joy. Slow down and read a book, complete a puzzle and take an extra helping of your favorite annual dish. Sleep in. Spend time in nature. Create new traditions or relish in the old. Whatever it is that brings you joy and feels like a *holy yes* this week, say yes!

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 hears your cries and sees your courage, vulnerability and trust. And now, God brings us a nativity moment of pure holy light and joy!

Hallelujah, Christ is born!
Hallelujah, the Savior of the world.
This is the one we've waited for!
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Christ is born!



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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