

Home for Christmas: A 6-Week Small Group Spiritual Practice for Advent & Christmas 2021

BY REV. LISA STRAUS



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For many people, Advent is a time of counting down the days until the BIG celebration. The season often seems filled with extra work, extra people, extra spending. Advent 2021 may mark the first time since the onset of COVID-19 and the global pandemic that families have gathered. It will definitely be the first Christmas when most families feel safe enough to reunite. Advent 2021 is an invitation to come home, whether that is to a literal home or a spiritual home. We have an invitation to make Advent and Christmas 2021 more

intentional and to recapture our sense of wonder for the holidays by exploring our past memories and customs while intentionally creating new ones.

As a result of the pandemic, many of us have temporarily misplaced the participatory aspects of our faith. We watched virtual worship instead of speaking the words of the liturgy and singing the lyrics of the hymns. We slowly developed a spectator faith over a period of eighteen and more months. Re-engaging our ability to practice our faith will take a similar amount of time and effort. Using the liturgical seasons of Advent and Christmas as a jumping-off point, this small-group resource is designed to ease people out of practicing faith in isolation that quarantining for COVID-19 necessitated.

Each week will consist of: (1) a reading of a focus scripture passage from the Revised Common Lectionary (Year C), along with a brief, personal reflection; (2) a creative project or activity to prepare at home, drawing upon myriad gifts, skills, and artistic expressions; and (3) a small-group experience offering time for each participant to present a project, telling the story of how the individual developed an idea and then executed it. When possible, participants are invited to share artifacts of what they have made or done. Together, the group will process how the project has affected them, their relationships with others, and their relationship with God.

Click the links below to explore these resources:

- [First Sunday of Advent, Year C \(November 28, 2021\)](#)
- [Second Sunday of Advent, Year C \(December 5, 2021\)](#)
- [Third Sunday of Advent, Year C \(December 12, 2021\)](#)
- [Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year C \(December 19, 2021\)](#)
- [First Sunday after Christmas, Year C \(December 26, 2021\)](#)
- [Second Sunday after Christmas, Year C \(January 2, 2022\)](#)

NOTE: At the time I conceived of and developed this small-group experience, immunizations were on the rise and COVID-19 cases and deaths were declining. Since that time, new immunizations have leveled off and COVID-19 is once again surging. Some of the weekly activities were designed to be practiced alone, while others rely upon in-person engagement. Please use your best judgment and research the levels of disease in your community before engaging in any in-person activities.

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