

taking⁺ faith home

The Advent Challenge



Hymn of
the Week



Mountain
Highs and
Valley Lows



Caring
Conversations



Devotions



Service



Rituals and
Traditions

During 2020 we have been observing restrictions. We wear masks, social distance, and wash our hands often. Most of us no longer leave our homes to go to work, to go to school, and to go to church. Thanks to the pandemic, we are now setting up special areas in our homes where we work and have school lessons.

How many of us have set up a special area, designated a space, or even set aside time in our homes during these times for sharing highs and lows, reading scripture, and prayer?

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 tells us:

These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

In what ways have we been encouraged or challenged one another to actually *impress them on our children and talk about them when we sit at home*?

Given our new normal, it is a good time to help all ages engage in faith practices beyond the church wall and in their homes.

- What affect would engaging in just one or two faith practices a day during the week as a household have on relationships?
- What affect would it have on the future of our congregations if we were intentional and actively listening, praying, and blessing one another daily?
- How can just four weeks during Advent challenge us to grasp an understanding of the essential role the home has and always has had in the life of the church?

The Advent Challenge

Taking Faith Home is a wonderful resource to help all ages take the challenge!

Whether your congregation is new to Taking Faith Home or has used it for years, Advent is a good time to take a look at the design and introduce one step at a time.

Launch the challenge on November 29th, the first Sunday of Advent. Consider making Advent wreaths and provide candles. Use the wreath as a centerpiece to gather around in homes during Advent.

NOVEMBER 29, 2020
FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

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Stay awake, for God is coming with power.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS
These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	Mark 13:24-37	The day and hour unknown
Monday	Isaiah 64:1-9	A communal prayer for help
Tuesday	1 Corinthians 1:3-9	God is faithful
Wednesday	Revelation 22:12-21	Jesus is coming soon
Thursday	Micah 4:1-5	Peace and prosperity
Friday	1 Thessalonians 5:1-11	Children of light
Saturday	Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19	Prayer for Israel's restoration
Sunday	Mark 1:1-8	The beginning of the good news

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK
Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. Mark 13:26 (NRSV)

PRAYERS AND BLESSING
A Prayer for the Week:
Deliver us from harm, O Lord God of hosts; let your face shine on us, that we may be saved through Christ our Lord. Amen. (Psalm 80:3, 7, and 19)
Mealtime Prayer:
Dear God, we thank you for this food; may it strengthen us that we may await your coming with power and glory through Jesus our Savior and Lord. Amen.
A Blessing to Give:
May you be blessed with hope and peace through our Lord Jesus Christ.

NOVEMBER 29, 2020
HYMN OF THE WEEK
Awake, Awake, and Greet the Morn

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WEEKLY MILESTONES
Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

CARING CONVERSATIONS
Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:
• When have you had a challenging or scary experience?
• What are some dangerous or alarming situations we face in our world today?
• Sometimes it seems easier to deny the dangers we face and pretend they are not really a problem. How does faith in Jesus give us hope and help us to face scary times?

DEVOTIONS
Read: Mark 13:24-37
Advent begins with an awareness of the frailty of life. We may come up with short-term fixes like finding shelter, warmth, and food. There is always the challenge of the unforeseen storm that can flood our lives with devastation, when the whole world seems to be falling down around us (vv. 24-25). No generation escapes these trials and sufferings (vv. 29-30). It happened to the people who returned from Babylonian captivity (Isaiah 64); it happened to the first Christians as noted by Mark in chapter 13; and, it happens all around the world today. What we need is the God who promises to show up and be the difference-maker. This Advent we are reminded to be alert to this God who shows up in Jesus of Nazareth. In Jesus we have hope because we have the one in whom the truth of his words will never pass away, never end, never fail (v. 31). So live life with gusto, with courage, with hope, and stay awake, keep alert, don't give up (vv. 33, 35, and 37). How does public worship, reading the Bible and prayer help you stay awake to Jesus' coming into our lives?
Pray: Almighty and living God, give us hope and confidence to await your coming into our lives with faith in your healing and renewing power through Christ our Lord. Amen.

SERVICE
Advent is a time to recall the basic needs of life: a loving and gracious God and justice and mercy that all may have enough to live. In what ways can you "stay awake" this Advent season by caring for the needs of others and providing needed resources for the homeless?

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS
The church year begins on the first Sunday in Advent. This coming year, the Gospel readings will be from Mark. To launch the new church year, gather together all the Bibles in your home. If you have an Advent wreath, place the Bibles near the wreath. As you light the first candle, the candle of hope, use this prayer of blessing Almighty God, we thank you for the Bible, and especially for the good news about Jesus our Savior. Give us hope as we read, listen to, and think about what the Bible says to us in this new church year. Make us into people who are strong in our faith and full of love. Amen.

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In addition to Taking Faith Home, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: www.milestonesministry.org

Three Easy Steps in Less Than 10 Minutes

- Share a Mountain High and/or Valley Low
- Read Scripture
- Pray/Bless

Do this in your home regularly during Advent. If you live alone, connect with someone online or with a phone call. Taking Faith Home bulletin inserts or cards provide a wonderful guide and outline that include scripture reading, prayer and blessing to use each week.

One step at a time is the challenge!

After Christmas, gather together online or face to face to share stories about what happened during Advent in your home. The prize?

Well, that may be the surprise if you take the challenge!