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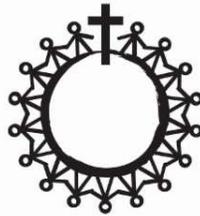
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FOR FAMILIES:

RETHINKING GIFTS

* SIMPLIFY AND DOWNSCALE -



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ADVENT: WHAT'S COMING?

Advent, that season of waiting, of thoughtful reflection on the gift of God's son, of stillness in the presence of God, is coming.

Or isn't that what your Advent season is all about? In our culture, it is more often a marathon, run as wind sprints, that leaves us winded, indeed. We are sleep deprived, crabby, in debt, and too busy to enjoy any of it. It has turned it into marathon shopping, baking, entertaining, doing that pulls our focus off the coming of the Messiah and onto the coming of the UPS truck, off receiving God's best gift and onto the dozens of gifts yet to purchase, wrap, ship, and deliver. It may look festive, but it is frenzy. This isn't what the angel announced to the shepherds on the night of Jesus' birth: "I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people: to you is born this day in the city

The list of those with whom we exchange gifts can take on a life of its own. Talk now about sharing time, rather than giving a tangible gift. (Bonus: nothing to eat, wear, dust ... or to exchange!)

* **HOMEMADE** - Do you have a special recipe for cookies, appetizer, cocoa mix, bread, or snack? Or, how about a collection of favorite recipes? If you knit, paint, or do needlework, share your gift. Every parent and grandparent loves some refrigerator art by their favorite young artist!

* **FRAMED PICTURE** - A picture of you and the recipient is always appreciated.

HONOR WITH A CHARITABLE GIFT - Give a gift to a charity or cause that reflects the interests, values, or passions of the receiver.

* **COUPONS FOR TIME TOGETHER AND/OR SERVICES** - Think about the gift of a leisurely day together or deliver a meal, do a load of laundry, run errands, babysit, or give a back rub.

* **TICKETS FOR A SHARED EVENT** - Is there a movie, concert, play, or art exhibit you'd both enjoy? Give tickets or a promise of that shared experience.

* **MEMBERSHIP** - By giving a membership to the zoo, arboretum, or museum (science, art or children's), you give the gift of time and experience together.

of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord."

How might we reclaim this holy season of Jesus' coming? How might we share it with others? Consider giving an Advent gift to yourself, your family, your close friends, neighbors, colleagues, and congregation this year. Here are some ideas that invite us to slow down, to rest in the presence of this God who came to be present with us, to reclaim this season as a time to journey in faith, to be filled to overflowing with God's love.

SOME IDEAS TO CONSIDER:

How could you do it differently, so that you experience joy and receive the good news?

Have a goal for the 26th of December. This is more than surviving, it is thriving! (My personal goal is 1. to experience Jesus coming for me, too, and 2. to have my family still be happy to be related to me!)

Prioritize. Ask your family, "What is the one thing that you need to see, hear, read, sing, eat, do or experience this Advent season to make it feel as though Christmas has really come for you?" Let that be the focus of your Advent and Christmas.

Delegate. One person can't do it all. Decide who will do what, and include everyone.

Collaborate. Have a family wrap-a-thon or make cookie baking a group activity. Put on carols. Enjoy one another, as well as accomplish what you have chosen to do.

Delete. Without apology, decide what you will not do this year. What are those things that drain the life and delight out of you. Decide not to do them. It makes space for those things that give you life and delight.

Do it differently. If you host Christmas Eve dinner, instead of slaving over a hot stove, consider serving a purchased lasagna, host a potluck, or make something ahead and freeze it.

Tell others what you are doing and why. Invite them to join you in a simpler, more joyous Christmas season.

* SOMETHING YOU ALREADY OWN - Pass on something a friend has admired or would enjoy or a legacy your child or grandchild would inherit.

* GIVE LESSONS OR CAMP - Here is something that kids love and don't expect. Think about an interest, sport, or skill in which they have expressed an interest. Camp will make memories for a lifetime.

* DO SERVICE TOGETHER - Shovel snow for a shut in neighbor, visit a friend or relative in a nursing home, serve a meal at a soup kitchen, or plan a mission trip together. This captures the meaning of the season.

* BAKE OR SHOP OR WRAP TOGETHER - We all do these things over the Christmas season. Turn a chore into a memorable time by doing it together.

Jesus is coming to your home this Advent. Welcome his presence and savior this time!

NEED SOME HELP?

Do you need some help gaining perspective, evaluating your ministries, reestablishing your priorities, discerning where God is calling your congregation now, and engaging all to participate? This might be the time for coaching with Marilyn Sharpe, a ministry partner who will focus, inspire, and walk with you and your ministry team to

FOR CONGREGATIONS: HELPING HOUSEHOLDS RETHINK ADVENT

Being now, considering how you might help households of faith do Advent and Christmas differently next year.

* HOST A FAITH-FULL BOOK FAIR

ENCOURAGE GIVING the gift of a family story Bible. No one gets points taken off for a Bible that tells God's story with rich, grace-filled, engaging language and beautiful pictures. I'll suggest two that I love: The Jesus Storybook Bible by Sally Lloyd-Jones and Jago (my grandkids love, love, love this one) and Desmond Tutu's Children of God Storybook Bible. Help families make reading the Bible a new family tradition.

OFFER SAMPLES OF DEVOTIONAL RESOURCES - Let families shop ahead and order the devotional that appeals to their family. Make sure they arrive before the first Sunday of Advent. Invite families to come for cocoa and cookies and sit as families, taking their new devotional for a spin.

* CANDLE TIME PRAYER STATIONS



Order Candle Time Prayer Kit from Lyle Griner at [<CLICK>](#) the Peer Ministry Leadership "store."



For only \$45, your congregation will have unlimited rights to reprint these 54 interactive, creative, amazing prayer experiences. You will use these for teaching people of all ages to pray, youth ministry experiences, at camp, on mission trips, and for retreats.

Now, schedule a time. Set up a large space with a few prayer stations and copies for each household to take home. Demonstrate how it is done. And unleash the

follow where God is leading.

CALL OR EMAIL NOW!

power of prayer by candle light for all of the generations.

* HOST A SERVICE OPPORTUNITY OR LOCAL MISSION

The sky is the limit in finding cross+generational service or mission opportunities for your congregation to do together. Frame it with the story of the Three Wise Men, bearing their gifts to the Christ Child. This is your opportunity to give gifts to Jesus, who is always coming into our lives.

The Living Room Summit

APRIL 26 - 28, 2016

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