

FAITH @ HOME

Week of December 13, 2020

Third Sunday of Advent

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: John 1:6-8, 19-28

REFLECT: I take a walk every morning. I like to breathe the fresh morning air. I like listening to the birds as they sing the morning awake. I especially enjoy witnessing the sunrise. At first, the sky is inky blue – almost black. Then, the sky lightens, becomes a faint pink, orange, then glowing yellow and white. The light fills the air and the day begins.

We are also called to be witnesses to the light of Christ. We are called to tell others about Christ. What are ways we can be witnesses to the light of Christ? Where do we see the light of Christ? How can we be the light of Christ?

RESPOND: For this activity, you will need a clear glass votive, torn pieces of colorful tissue paper, white glue (thinned out with water), and a paint brush. You will create a stained glass votive by “painting” torn pieces of the tissue paper on the outside of the votive using the glue. The glue will dry clear and the outside of the votive will glow with many beautiful colors. If you want to keep this in your bedroom, you will need to buy a battery-operated votive candle – not one that uses real flames.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: ROGER HUTCHISON



Roger Hutchison is the Director of Christian Formation and Parish Life at Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church in Houston. An artist who paints with children and adults in a variety of contexts, he is the author of several books including *Jesus: God Among Us*, *The Painting Table*, and *The Very Best Day*. Roger serves as the chair of the Forma Council and is a member of the National Association of Grieving Children and the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. He lives with his family outside of Houston, Texas.

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

REFLECT: What does it mean to rejoice? It is more than trying to be happy all the time. That would be really hard. Rejoice originally meant to give joy or delight - to create ways for others to feel joy. I really like this definition because it's something we can actually do! We can show love and kindness to others and they will share joy.

Think about what it would be like to pray without ceasing. I don't think it would mean that we should spend all day in church on our knees, but that we should put God first in our hearts every morning and keep God there in our hearts all day, never forgetting that God is there.

To give thanks in all circumstances means realizing that even when things are not going our way, or when we are sad and hurt, we should still be thankful. Without knowing sadness, how would we recognize happiness?

RESPOND: Make a banner that says REJOICE. Make it as fancy and as big as you can. Hang it up in your room or outside so that you and everyone who sees it smiles. We all need to be reminded to share the joy and pray thanks to God.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: LISA PUCCIO



Lisa is the Coordinator for Special Needs Worship and Family Formation at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Houston, Texas. Lisa leads Rhythms of Grace Houston, a weekly worship service for special needs families, and oversees ministries for children and parents at St. Andrew's. She has worked in parish ministry since 2002, served two terms as vice president of Forma, and is a member of the diocesan formation advisory committee in the Diocese of Texas. Lisa and her husband Mike have four grown children.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: John 1:6-8, 19-28

REFLECT: Last week, we received Mark's perspective of the John the Baptist experience. This week, John's Gospel talks about John the Baptist as a witness of Christ's light. Then, we hear of John the Baptist's testimony to the priests and Levites from Jerusalem. In that testimony, instead of describing himself as the Messiah or a prophet, John the Baptist claims he is the one crying out from Isaiah's prophecy. When asked why he is baptizing if he is not the Messiah, John the Baptist responds that he is baptizing others with water. Instead of laying claim to the role of Messiah, Elijah, or the prophet, John informs those questioning him that there is one coming after him who is beyond amazing.

Who are you? When questioned, John the Baptist describes himself as the "voice of one crying out in the wilderness" and one who baptizes with water. When people ask you about who you are, how do you describe yourself? What about when people ask you about your faith? Do those answers change depending on who asks?

RESPOND: Find a partner (friend, trusted adult, sibling, etc.), and take some time asking get-to-know-you questions. Some of these you would probably know, such as where are you from, what brings you joy, what's your favorite animal, and how many states have you visited. After asking five of these types of questions, ask the questions below. After each answer, take one minute to pray for more understanding of your partner(s). Of course, after you ask the questions and they answer, allow them to ask the questions of you. 1. What is your biggest fear and why? 2. Where do you see hardship in the world? What about in your everyday life? 3. Who and/or what brought you to be in relationship with God? How? 4. Where do you experience God the most? 5. Where do you see God in me?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: WALLACE BENTON



Wallace Benton serves as the Assistant to the Rector for Youth Ministries at St. David's Episcopal Church in Roswell, GA. He's been fortunate to have grown up in the Episcopal Church and became interested in youth ministry after volunteering with his former youth program after college. Wallace has worked diocesan retreats and activities such as New Beginnings and Happening. Currently, he is the lay director for New Beginnings in the Diocese of Atlanta. He is also a member of the Episcopal Youth Ministry in ATL podcast (which you should check out immediately!)

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Luke 1:46-55

REFLECT: Many Latinx Episcopalians have an intimate experience of God through Mary, the mother of Jesus. In the Latinx tradition, she is regarded as the first vessel, the first disciple, given to all of us as a spiritual mother at the cross (John 19:26-27), who through centuries, and across the world has presented herself in divine apparitions to the most humble, bearing the same message: "Do whatever he tells you." (John 2:1-5). The Gospel of Luke portrays Mary as a prominent role player of the first Advent, (much more than the other Gospels). In Advent, we sing with Mary, my soul glorifies the Lord! And not just as chronological piece that gives sense to the birth story of Jesus. Mary sings God's praises after she has found out that she will be the Mother of the Messiah, and after she decides to go and help her cousin Elizabeth, who is also pregnant and in her old age will be needing support. Mary reminds us that our call is to set out and go with haste where we are needed the most. Be bearers of God's grace, and be witness of hope and joy, for God has looked with favor on us, God's servants, for we make one more generation of the blessed children of God, receivers of God's mercy. Advent is also time to rejoice for we know God is faithful to the promise of grace and freedom made to all nations through Israel, and through Mary, too.

RESPOND: Find a food bank in your neighborhood or your city. Churches and other not-for-profit organizations have food banks to help people who cannot afford to spend money on food and other needs. Can you afford to spend money on a couple of cans of food and donate them? Or can you spare some time to learn about this food bank and how to support it? Take a few minutes to go on social media and tell people what you learn about this food bank in your area.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: YURI RODRIGUEZ



Yuri Rodriguez is a seminarian at Sewanee, the University of the South. She is from the Diocese of Indianapolis. Yuri is also an artist, singer, and educator who specializes in Latin American Music and Culture.

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