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FOUNTAIN STREET CHURCH

## Living Advent Part 2

Spirituality and Seasonality in Liberal Religion:  
Advent

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## Spiritual Practices

Liberal religion is more about living rightly than believing rightly. **Four disciplines** or practices have shown themselves to be powerful ways to integrate thoughts and feelings with actions and values. They are: **Study, Sacrifice, Service** and **Worship**. Liberal religion does not expect uniformity of thought or belief in liberal churches. It does expect people to engage in conscious spiritual living

### Study

A student at the yeshiva asked the old rabbi why he prayed so fast and studied so slow. *“Because,”* the yeshiva said, *“When I pray I am talking to God and when I study, God is talking to me.”* Do we learn just to acquire facts and skills, or do we study in order to free our minds to wider, deeper and broader thoughts? Spiritual learning is about the latter—what you study, with whom and how, should stretch your world.

### Sacrifice

It is about giving and giving up, but it means to “make holy.” So the point is to give up in order to get something better. Parenting is a sacrifice. Marriage is a sacrifice as well. When we give money to causes or institutions we give up what that money could have bought *us* in order to make something else better.

### Service

This may seem like sacrifice, but discipline of service is about your vocation as a person. Service happens when you do for others something that you *want* to do; something that you would do anyway, in another context. Share yourself with others through your service.

### Worship

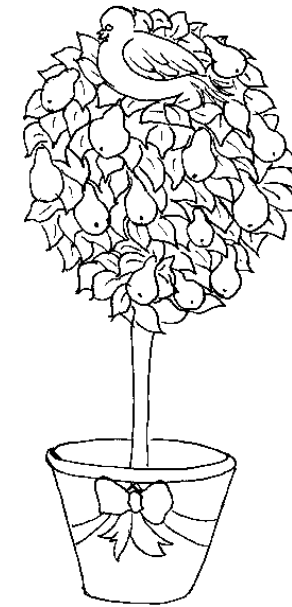
The conscious act of appreciating what matters most. The word derives from the Saxon terms meaning “shape” and “worth”, and implies that the act both declares and makes something worthy of worship. Anything can be an act of worship, but to be most effective you should strive to create deliberate places and moments when you worship – in other word create your own rituals.

## Using the Gift Bags

Once the gift is placed inside, the bag can be gathered at the top with a ribbon. Long twist ties may keep curious fingers at bay and ribbons can be tied over them. If each member of the family is assigned a different color ribbon, the need for gift tags is also reduced.

Use them every year and family members come to see them as part of the holiday experience. If you make at least 12 for each recipient, number them and have them open one a day from Christmas through Epiphany. This way the season does not come to a crashing end before Christmas Eve!

*Think of all the paper you won't buy, tear or throw away when you make your own Gift Bags Be part of a Green Christmas.*



## It's a wrap!

### Create your reusable, personalized Gift Bags for Christmas!

Start a new family tradition by creating fabric gift wrap bags which can be used year after year.

Purchase red, green, or holiday print fabric. There are scads of choices on sale even before Christmas. (Dark fabric conceals more than some light colored fabric.)

Cut out two rectangles of fabric one inch larger on each side than the desired dimension of each bag.

8" X 12" fabric rectangles make a Bag great for jewelry, CDs, DVDs

8" X 18" fabric rectangles make a Bag great for a wine bottle

14" X 22" fabric rectangles make a Bag great for books

18" X 24" fabric rectangles make a Bag great for most clothing

Bags in odd sizes made from leftovers are useful and amusing.

Bags made much larger can hold tricycles or snow tires!

### *Construction is very simple:*

- Stack two rectangles WRONG sides together, and stitch sides and bottom together with a quarter inch seam allowance.
- Turn resulting bag inside out and stitch those same three seams again, using a three/eighths seam allowance. In this "French seam" all the loose edges which could ravel are enclosed.
- Turn the top edge over twice and hem all around the bag.

*All that's involved is making bags that look like pillowcases in whatever size you need.*

## Advent

Advent has four Sundays, with the last Sunday coming just before Christmas. Historically, Advent was a penitential season, preparing for the second coming. The four themes were death, judgment, heaven and hell. Over time Advent has become a season of happy anticipation, and the themes have changed to **hope, peace, joy** and **love**. *At Fountain Street Church the themes are slightly different – faith, hope, love and joy.*

### Faith

Often, faith is understood to be belief in a certain constellation of ideas about God, sin, salvation and so on. But faith has its roots in the idea of loyalty and steadfastness. To have faith is to trust, to be loyal.

### Hope

What does a religious liberal hope for? A better life for everyone. That sounds obvious, but when your circumference extends beyond your own immediate world to people in poverty, persistent tyrannies and oppressions, economic and environmental perils ... to hope is rather daring. And it begs the question, "how will it happen?"

### Love

To love seems easy ... but is it really? Is love an emotion, like anger or fear? Or is it something more complex, involving conscious thought and effort of will? Of course it is complex, which is why the emotion of love is never enough when dealing with conflicts between people. How can we see love as a moral and rational as well as an emotional reality?

### Joy

Like love, joy is a sensation. Where does it come from? How is it different from pleasure or contentment? Perhaps the verb gives a clue to what joy ultimately is – to rejoice! Advent prepares us for something that should make us rejoice. What is it?

# Resources for "Living Advent"

## Advent and the Japanese paper crane

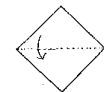

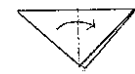

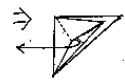
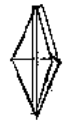


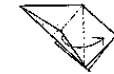

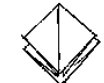





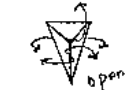





*An ancient Japanese legend promises that anyone who folds a thousand origami cranes will be granted a wish by a crane ...*

The crane in Japan is one of the mystical or holy beasts (others include the dragon and tortoise), and is said to live for a thousand years. The Thousand Origami Cranes has become a symbol of world peace through the story of **Sadako Sasaki**, a Japanese girl who contracted leukemia as a result of radiation from the atomic bombing of Hiroshima during World War II. Her story is told in the book *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*. Several temples, including some in Tokyo and Hiroshima, have eternal flames for World Peace. At these temples, school groups or individuals often donate Senbazuru (sets of 1,000 cranes strung together) to add to the prayer for peace. The cranes are left exposed to the elements, slowly dissolving and becoming tattered as the wish is released. In this way they are related to the prayer flags of India and Tibet.

*"The size of the origami paper does not matter when assembling a thousand paper cranes, but smaller sheets consequently yield smaller and lighter strings of cranes. The most popular size for Senbazuru cranes is 75x75mm, (or about 3x3 inches). Some people cut their own squares of paper from anything available, such as magazines." (Wikipedia article)*

Consider folding a crane a day in Advent, it takes no more than ten minutes. Treat it like a meditation, a time to focus your mind, center your thoughts and apply them to the angels' song which the shepherds heard.

	1. Fold along the diagonal		11. The paper looks like this NOW!
	2. Fold along the perpendicular		12. Turn over and repeat the process.
	3. Open the left side to form a pocket		13. The paper looks like THIS now!
	4. The paper looks like THIS now!		14. Fold the bottom left and right edges into the middle.
	5. Turn over and repeat the process		15. Turn over and repeat the process.
	6. The paper looks Like THIS now!		16. Fold up the left side.
	7. Fold the left & right sides into the middle. Also fold the top in.		17. Fold down the top to form a tail.
	8. Turn over and repeat the process.		18. Fold up the right side to form a tail.
	9. Open it up so it looks like Diagram 7.		10. Pull up the bottom point.
			<b>VOILA!</b> The final product!