

Supportive Invitations Resources for a Trauma Informed Advent and Christmas

These resources were curated by the Go And planning team for you to have a trauma informed Advent and Christmas but they are relevant at any time of the year.

Spiritual Practices

- Visio Divina
 - Pick an image you can hold in your hand and engage with. It can be a specific piece of art, a photo, or a scene.
 - Center yourself by taking a deep breath and relaxing your body as best you can. Open yourself up to hear God's voice.
 - Take a deep breath and look at the image. Notice the visual qualities of what you see: colors, lines, shapes, form, space, texture.
 - Pause for meditation
 - Take a deep breath and look deeper at the image. What are your eyes most drawn to? What parts of the image did you overlook the first time?
 - Pause for meditation and contemplation
 - Choose one of the following that feels appropriate:
 - Imagine yourself in this image, where would you be and how would you interact with what surrounds you?
 - Look at the image. What story do you associate with it from your own life or from scripture?
 - What emotions do you associate with this image? How does it make you feel? How do you think those in the image feel?
 - Pause for contemplation and prayer
 - Share your findings with others or use it to guide you in a closing prayer.
 - *Visio Divina is a great way to dwell together with people in the midst of a variety of emotions. My congregation did it instead of a traditional Bible Study one week when we really just needed to name all the grief and hurt we were experiencing. It was profoundly moving - Pastor Courtney Smith Westerlund, Messiah, Oakland, NJ*
- Lectio Divina/Dwelling in the Word

Worship Services and Sample Liturgies

Join Women of the ELCA for their virtual Blue Christmas service. The service offers a safe place to bring your grief, fear, and loss. Brief readings. Quiet and reflective music. Prayers. All are welcome. Spanish translation will be provided. The service takes place at 7 p.m. CST on Saturday, December 21, 2024. To register, visit: <https://bit.ly/3VIP2al>

Blue Christmas Winter Solstice Worship Service presented by the Center of Addiction & Faith, Thursday, December 19, 2024, at 8:00 PM ET via Zoom. This virtual candlelight service is designed for those who may not be feeling the happiness and joy that this season calls for.

Register Here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlufuqvrTsoGtGznxZ5QHwO26EReaJNbO0e>

- <https://lutheranmoxie.wordpress.com/2013/11/20/darkest-night-liturgy/>
- <https://pastorjoshevans.com/2019/12/09/liturgy-for-blue-christmas/>
- https://www.synodresourcecenter.org/wma/worship/church_seasons/christmas/blue/0001/longest_night.html

[Enfleshed.com](https://enfleshed.com) a platform providing custom liturgies, weekly subscription for worship prep materials, as well as a free liturgy library focusing on spiritual nourishment for collective liberation.

St. Thomas Mass/Worship: a more experiential worship service with stations that allow you to embody, experience, and reconnect with God. Learn more and see examples below:

- <https://www.reformedworship.org/article/march-2003/worship-doubters-and-other-good-christians-learning-thomas-mass>
- <https://www.lutheranforum.com/blog/the-st-thomas-mass#:~:text=Olli%20Valtonen,the%20wine%20and%20the%20bread.>
- https://rmselca.org/sites/rmselca.org/files/media/peace_not_walls_thomas_mass_0.pdf

Books/Devotionals/Articles

- Kate Bowler @KateBowler (Instagram)
 - The Lives We Actually Have: 100 Blessings for Imperfect Days
 - Have a Beautiful Terrible Day: Daily Meditations for the Ups, Downs, and In-Betweens
 - Podcast: Everything Happens
- Cole Arthur Riley @blackliturgies (Instagram)
 - This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation, and the Stories that Make Us
 - Black Liturgies: Prayers, Poems, and Meditations for Staying Human
- Living Lutheran
 - <https://www.livinglutheran.org/2017/12/when-advent-and-christmas-are-blue/>
 - <https://www.livinglutheran.org/2023/12/a-blue-christmas-story/>
- ELCA Blog
 - <https://blogs.elca.org/faithlens/december-25-2022/>
- Gather Magazine:
 - <https://www.gathermagazine.org/true-blue-christmas/>
- Faith+Lead
 - <https://faithlead.org/blog/spiritual-practices-for-trauma-informed-churches/>
- ELCA Published Books
 - <https://blog.broadleafbooks.com/books-holiday-grief>
 - <https://blog.broadleafbooks.com/2024-gift-guide> (Books for Spiritual Seekers)
- Trauma-informed Care Org Articles on Best Practice Trauma-informed Holiday Tips
 - <https://www.crossnore.org/safety-planning-for-a-trauma-informed-holiday-season>
 - <https://khironclinics.com/blog/trauma-informed-christmas/>
 - <https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/articles/trauma-informed-care-church-worship-and-life>
 - <https://network.crcna.org/topic/worship/leading-worship/it-well-their-souls-becoming-trauma-informed-worshippers>

Groups/Organizations/Artists

- [A Sanctified Art](#): We are a team of artists in ministry who create multimedia resources for worshipping communities of all shapes and sizes. We work collaboratively to bring scripture and theological themes to life through visual art, poetry, liturgy, curriculum, worship installation art, coloring pages, graphic design, and more. We founded *A Sanctified Art* with dreams to fill the Church with more art, inspiration, creativity, and God-breathed mystery. Our mission is to provide spiritual nourishment for church leaders and the communities they serve. We're committed to expanding imagination around the divine image and providing resources with inclusive and affirming theology.
 - *Advent Themes have been helpful for my congregation to dive deeper into the season of Advent using a different focus and emphasis. Included in their curriculum bundles are: words for worship, hymns, artwork and artists statements, faith formation material, bulletins, devotionals, branding, spiritual practices, and so much more.* - Pastor Courtney Smith Westerlund, Messiah, Oakland, NJ
- [Barn Geese Worship](#): We write approachable, inclusive resources to support creative preaching and worship. Our stuff is a little bit messy. Irreverently reverent. Held together by spit and Spirit.
- Unbound: (Journal and Podcast with devotional resources, many for Advent, available at <https://justiceunbound.org/category/devotionals/>) Unbound: An Interactive Journal of Christian Social Justice is an online journal and community that examines, expresses, and encourages commitments to social justice as inspired by the prophetic gospel of Jesus Christ. As both a journal and a forum for conversation, action and community building.
- [NakedPastor](#): Hey, I'm David. I'm a pastor turned artist painting, drawing, and thinking about what it takes to be free to be you. If you're interested in deconstruction, spiritual journeying, freedom of thought, or looking for your authentic self, you're welcome to join me while I search too. In case you're wondering, I'm not actually naked. The idea behind my name, NakedPastor, is to seek to tell the naked truth - no matter how vulnerable it feels. I used to be a pastor but I've been creating art and working towards freedom with this community for over 10 years now.
 - @NakedPastor (Facebook and Instagram)
 - David draws a new cartoon every single day that seeks to share God's love and light with the world while helping people begin to understand and believe in God for themselves.
- [Black Liturgies/Cole Arthur Riley](#)
 - Cole Arthur Riley is, more than most things, a writer. Born and for the most part raised in Pittsburgh, Cole studied writing at the University of

Pittsburgh, but traces her love of words back to her father, who would bribe her and her siblings to write poems and stories to get out of chores, or for cold hard cash; and her gramma who was part writer, part sage. Cole is also the creator of Black Liturgies, a space that integrates spiritual practice with Black emotion, Black literature, and the Black body; and a project of The Center for Dignity and Contemplation where she serves as Curator. Some thinkers who have formed her include, Audre Lorde, Octavia Butler, James Baldwin, Thomas Merton, Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Julian of Norwich.

- *Cole's writings and breathing meditations that she posts on her instagram have been so helpful in my personal practices. They combine contemplation, meditation, and justice. Here's an example from 11/9/2024: INHALE I keep my soul honest, EXHALE I feel with integrity. INHALE I don't have to prove my pain, EXHALE to earn the right to weep-* Pastor Sarah Fryman, Grace, Bayonne
- @blackliturgies (instagram)
- [Center for Action and Contemplation](#)
 - Franciscan Richard Rohr founded the Center for Action and Contemplation (CAC) in 1987 because he saw a deep need for the integration of both action and contemplation—the two are inseparable. As Father Richard likes to say, the most important word in our Center's name is neither Action nor Contemplation, but the word *and*. Contemplation is a way of listening with the heart while not relying entirely on the head. Contemplation is a prayerful letting go of our sense of control and choosing to cooperate with God and God's work in the world. Prayer without action, as Father Richard says, can promote our tendency to self-preoccupation, and without contemplation, even well-intended actions can cause more harm than good.

Tips for the Holidays from the [Center for Loss and Bereavement](#)

- Lean in or out of your grief: do what feels right to you
- Lower your expectations: it's okay to not be okay, remain mindful of what you can handle during this time
- Ask for help: recruit family, friends, and neighbors to help ease some of the burden that is often felt at the holidays