**Resources & Notes from FFYM Zoom Gathering on 10-1&15&22-2020**

*The resources and ideas shared here were offered by this week’s Zoom group.*

Illustrated Ministry -- do not be afraid

<https://illustratedmin.s3.amazonaws.com/freebies/Advent-2020.pdf?ck_subscriber_id=480417479>

Illustrated Ministry Advent 2020 -- <https://store.illustratedministry.com/>

Several group members offered personal reflections of how user friendly Illustrated Ministry Curriculum is

Discussed the mosaic tile art that others have used by sending out pieces to all ages and collecting to assemble

They have one for Advent which might be a neat collective back drop for Christmas Eve

Sanctified Art - For Those Who Dream

Sanctified Art Advent 2020 -- <https://sanctifiedart.org/those-who-dream-advent-bundle-year-b>

Regarding Pageant or Family programs -- here are a few more ideas

Families make a video with their personal nativity, unboxing nativity idea

 set OR share about a special ornament --

PRC Webinar about Christmas Pageants and other topics can be found here

<https://www.prcli.org/webinars-2/>

Laura is using Illustrated Ministry nativity stickers to create a Nativity set for families and then planning a weekly piece of the Journey for Advent -- to move figures through the house

Alternatives for Simple Living has at least 35 years of focusing on Advent/Christmas/Epiphany....their signature piece every Advent was titled, "Whose Birthday is it, Anyway"

Carmen mentioned that their local church is building a “Creating Connections Team”

 -- and what this might look like for churches that all virtual and not all virtual -- making sure that members feel connected

And Liz’s church is looking at pairing older members with teens--mental health wise--extra pair of eyes Plus our teens with our littles

Virtual Sunday School Success - sending out boxes or packages with things like:

seasonal felt in liturgical colors, electronic candle, labyrinth with feather, ready for communion with chalice and plate, stone, wooden cross - popsicle sticks.

Also celebrating that folks are seeing families virtually that haven’t attended in person in recent years

Communion Music ideas

Keith mentioned Everlast's official music video of the song, "What it's Like" <https://youtu.be/qA1nGPM9yHA>

speaks of how life and perhaps communion in many white American churches is experienced by "people on the outside"...

calls toward Musician Andra Moran's song made during the pandemic for the celebration of communion - alone, but TOGETHER

The Many also have a beautiful Communion Anthem *All Belong Here* https://youtu.be/sJBEwqBfw3I

Excellent book to read: ***Inspired*** by Rachel Held Evans

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/36576151-inspired>

**Building Faith** (A Ministry of Virginia Theological Seminary) has great information on doing **Christmas pageants in 2020**: <https://buildfaith.org/christmas-pageants-2020/>

Building Faith is a great resource for faith formation. They have great articles and webinars on a variety of faith formation topics. You can sign up to receive their emails and access their webinars at: <https://buildfaith.org>

**Practical Resources for Churches** – Check out their Advent and Christmas webinars: <https://www.prcli.org/on-demand-webinars/seasonal-2/advent-and-christmas/>

Nicole Havelka (**Nicole Havelka Consulting**) is offering several opportunities to connect in the coming months (some have a registration fee and some are free!):

You can find her events on Eventbrite at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/nicole-havelka-consulting-26256480741>

* **Reinventing Advent and Christmas Webinar** - Nicole is offering this webinar that is hosted by the Wisconsin Council of Churches. They are suggesting a $25 donation, but you can also register at no cost. Description and registration info below:

**Wednesday at 1 PM CDT – 2:30 PM CDT**

Public · Hosted by [**Wisconsin Council of Churches**](https://www.facebook.com/WisconsinCouncilofChurches/)

<https://www.wichurches.org/2020/10/08/reinventing-advent-and-christmas/>

**Event description:**

Never has there been a better time (or more pressing need) for churches to reaffirm the deeper meaning of Advent and Christmas. The good news is that you don’t have to navigate this alone. Join Mindful Leadership Coach and Consultant Rev. Nicole Havelka in this 90-minute webinar focused on reinventing the rituals around this special season. In this session, you’ll go through a mindful and supported process of identifying why churches do Advent and Christmas in the first place, lean into the barriers and discomfort of the constraints presented by COVID restrictions, then begin to reinvent meaningful, purposeful rituals for the season ahead. In addition to discussion, this webinar will include mindfulness practices that Nicole uses to help release anxiety and create space for creativity in all of her work. These practices include but are not limited to: meditation, yoga, breathwork, and reiki. All who participate will leave with tangible resources to customize for your setting and dive into the coming Advent-Christmas season with renewed energy and purpose.

Nicole’s unique approach to team building and leadership coaching and consulting brings together her experience as an ordained clergy person and judicatory executive in the United Church of Christ, and training as a yoga and meditation teacher. Her goal: to use coaching, training, team building, and visioning to create mindful leaders and teams who communicate effectively and create administrative structures that encourage creative growth, adaptability, and resilience. Nicole is owner of and principal consultant at Nicole Havelka Consulting.

**Event will be held via Zoom. Once you register you'll receive a link to access the webinar.**

**Recommended donation $25. Register here:**[**https://app.etapestry.com/.../ReinventingAdventChristmas...**](https://app.etapestry.com/.../ReinventingAdventChristmas...)

**Need to take advantage of the free option? Register here:**[**https://app.etapestry.com/.../ReinventingAdventChristmasf...**](https://app.etapestry.com/.../ReinventingAdventChristmasf...)

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* Nicole is also offering an online retreat that starts this week: **It’s Not About You: Reinventing Ritual Retreat** ($40-95)

Thursday, October 22- Thursday, November 12 7 pm – 8:30 pm ET

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/its-not-about-you-reinventing-ritual-retreat-tickets-116059309519?aff=Nicole>

* **Yoga/Meditation for Election Anxiety & Support (FREE!)-** Tuesday, October 27 and Tuesday, November 10 at 7 pm CT

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/yogameditation-for-election-anxiety-support-tickets-122635890249?aff=Nicole> (Oct. 27) and <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/yogameditation-for-election-anxiety-support-tickets-122643517061?aff=Nicole> (Nov. 10)

* **Alternative Black Friday Yoga/Meditation (FREE!)-** Friday, November 27 at Noon ET

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/alternative-black-friday-yogameditation-tickets-123772267183>

* **Mindful Advent Series (FREE!**)- Multiple Dates

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/mindful-advent-series-tickets-125211287331>

Don’t forget to check **Nicole Havelka Consulting** out on Facebook! <https://www.facebook.com/NicoleHavelkaConsulting/>

Sign up to receive emails about Nicole’s upcoming offerings: <https://landing.mailerlite.com/webforms/landing/b5i2g3>

**Ideas for Pastor Appreciation month:**

* Jenn Ringgold’s church created a video with photos submitted by the congregation, saying “thank you”.
* Liz Kaprelian’s church submitted photos that were then glued on to hearts. The hearts were stuck on to the pews where people usually sit in the sanctuary. This was a surprise for the pastor when she came in to record her sermon.

**Interfaith resource:**

**“Who Was Abraham and What Does He Mean to Your Faith?”** is a panel discussion offered by the Turkish Cultural Center Long Island. The video is just under two hours and is a panel discussion that offers Christian, Jewish and Muslim perspectives.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkXety-i_-w>

**Suggestion for re-engaging youth who have tuned out from being online:**

Perhaps put them in charge of putting something together for the younger ones...a Zoom presentation for Thanksgiving or Advent. Doing something for someone else might draw them...

**Self-care Tip:**

We are more hopeful and creative when we are rested! It will serve us well to set boundaries and limit the hours we are working.

**More Advent resources:**

**“Super Christmas” play script-** <https://ministry-to-children.com/super-christmas-script/>

Darci Warner shared the link to her **Virtual Advent Room:** <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Y2qLq93FMfZ5jEpbJ0eymR67fJGzx2duQr3WIYPcsp4/edit?usp=sharing>

Darci is also working on a interactive build your own nativity online: <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1fI3k0RlxbZhXcV4AJHpHHY2q7J5_Kb-CBNM2U0SSAsY/edit?usp=sharing>

Darci got the clipart for the Interactive Nativity here for $3. It was worth it! <https://thehungryjpeg.com/?utm_source=GR&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=welcomeemail>

Jenn Ringgold share the link to her October Virtual Classroom: <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1RXYoTfgTuMoA8kxBIOsfNRpw2gzXnechT6j6NFNe43o/edit?usp=sharing>

As often happens, we turned to the ***Liberating Love: 365 Love Notes from God Daily Devotional.***

If you don’t have it, check it out at this link:

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/51344503-liberating-love-daily-devotional>

Suggestion from Jenn R… If you are looking for an **Advent Daily Devotional** -- I bought this one last year on a Treasure Box Tuesday recommendation -- it's powerful

***Keep Watch With Me: An Advent Reader for Peacemakers*** by Michael T. McRay, Claire Brown

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/44328428-keep-watch-with-me>

**Suggestions for Thanksgiving:**

 **Thirty Days Thankful** <https://vibrantchurchcommunications.com/store/30days-bundle-social-101-400> (Traci Smith included this resource in her Treasure Box Tuesday emails this year.) there is a 30 Day Gratitude Book and a social media package.

Want to see more from **Vibrant Church**? Check out their homepage: <https://vibrantchurchcommunications.com/>

This **Gratitude Practices Calendar** from Traci Smith is from 2018, but could be updated for 2020:

<http://www.traci-smith.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/November2018GratitudePractices.pdf>

Liz Kaprelian is preparing boxes for each family. The boxes will contain **Talking Point" cards** for families to use to generate discussion. Each box will also have a rock that says “gratitude” on it. This can be used as a talking piece. (When you are holding the rock, it is your turn to talk.) Liz is also including an Alphabet Thanksgiving Game…for each letter of the alphabet, name something you are thankful for. —If you want more info, contact Lisa Hart (Lhart@wcucc.org) to connect with Liz.

**We talked about creating gratitude table cloths** using and fabric markers or Sharpies. Each family could receive their own cloth and be encouraged to write or draw what they are grateful for each day. Another idea is to create a **Prayer Table Cloth** by having people write/draw their prayers on a table cloth. You can also use roll paper and markers, crayons or colored pencils to cover a table or wall…create a gratitude table cloth or banner. Another idea would be to create place mats.

**Thankfulness/Gratitude/Blessing Quilt**- use cloth squares to have people write/draw on. The squares can be sewn together into a quilt. This could be a collaborative project. Quilters in the church could sew the quilt and they could be donated to a homeless shelter (or another place that could use quilts) or they could be given to members/friends of the congregation who live alone and/or are confined to home.

**Thankfulness Pumpkin**- Place a real or plastic pumpkin in center of table. Every day, members of your household can write what they are thankful for on the pumpkin. This makes a great centerpiece!

**Gratitude or Blessing Jar-** Every family receives a jar (or each family member can have a jar). Write what you are grateful for or name your blessings on slips of paper. Put them in the jar. If each family member has a jar, write something nice about each member of your family every day and place it in their jar.

(**Post-It Notes**…instead of using a jar and slips of paper, you can write nice things about the members of your family on a post-in note, then stick it on their bedroom door or a designated place in the home.)

**Gratitude Tree-** Families/individuals can create (or buy… see links below) a Gratitude Tree. Write what you are grateful for on the leaves and stick them on the tree.

* [**https://www.uncommongoods.com/product/gratitude-tree?country=US&utm\_source=google%20surfaces&utm\_medium=organic&aw\_cid=419001177&aw\_aid=23041672977&aw\_dev=c&aw\_loc=9018750&aw\_key=&aw\_mtype=&aw\_net=g&aw\_ad=90124539657&aw\_pos=&aw\_shopid=50754&aw\_prod\_partid=741922935359&gclid=CjwKCAjwz6\_8BRBkEiwA3p02VdLo1JaBMN1hFtu\_iAxkPf8iIRx3gr8Do0LdO0-Ffp39NAkZlTJ\_ORoCkvoQAvD\_BwE**](https://www.uncommongoods.com/product/gratitude-tree?country=US&utm_source=google%20surfaces&utm_medium=organic&aw_cid=419001177&aw_aid=23041672977&aw_dev=c&aw_loc=9018750&aw_key=&aw_mtype=&aw_net=g&aw_ad=90124539657&aw_pos=&aw_shopid=50754&aw_prod_partid=741922935359&gclid=CjwKCAjwz6_8BRBkEiwA3p02VdLo1JaBMN1hFtu_iAxkPf8iIRx3gr8Do0LdO0-Ffp39NAkZlTJ_ORoCkvoQAvD_BwE)
* [**https://www.orientaltrading.com/diy-bulletin-board-set-tree-of-thanks-a2-57\_6133.fltr?sku=57%2F6133&BP=PS544&ms=search&source=google&cm\_mmc=GooglePLA-\_-1398795105-\_-58038632067-\_-57%2F6133&cm\_mmca1=OTC%2BPLAs&cm\_mmca2=GooglePLAs&cm\_mmca3=PS544&cm\_mmca4=FS39&cm\_mmca5=Shopping&cm\_mmca6=PLAs&cm\_mmc10=Shopping&cm\_mmca11=57%2F6133&cm\_mmca12=DIY-Bulletin-Board-Set---Tree-of-Thanks&gclid=CjwKCAjwz6\_8BRBkEiwA3p02VYzaTCgVut\_jonpc5PYlLO5X-9-haDU5XCuYqlh9NPHdiFF4pdOD8hoC0j8QAvD\_BwE**](https://www.orientaltrading.com/diy-bulletin-board-set-tree-of-thanks-a2-57_6133.fltr?sku=57%2F6133&BP=PS544&ms=search&source=google&cm_mmc=GooglePLA-_-1398795105-_-58038632067-_-57%2F6133&cm_mmca1=OTC%2BPLAs&cm_mmca2=GooglePLAs&cm_mmca3=PS544&cm_mmca4=FS39&cm_mmca5=Shopping&cm_mmca6=PLAs&cm_mmc10=Shopping&cm_mmca11=57%2F6133&cm_mmca12=DIY-Bulletin-Board-Set---Tree-of-Thanks&gclid=CjwKCAjwz6_8BRBkEiwA3p02VYzaTCgVut_jonpc5PYlLO5X-9-haDU5XCuYqlh9NPHdiFF4pdOD8hoC0j8QAvD_BwE)
* [**https://www.etsy.com/listing/203169204/thankful-tree-branches-not-included?gpla=1&gao=1&&utm\_source=google&utm\_medium=cpc&utm\_campaign=shopping\_us\_thanksgiving\_Home\_and\_Living&utm\_custom1=\_k\_CjwKCAjwz6\_8BRBkEiwA3p02VfGz5XnI6m-g734cOcsMM7-hhn26krdrxTy-OsGcNvhgOLYh8w1gaRoCjX0QAvD\_BwE\_k\_&utm\_content=go\_1707961425\_69268699409\_331635231576\_aud-424578309341:pla-303628061699\_c\_\_203169204\_123161576&utm\_custom2=1707961425&gclid=CjwKCAjwz6\_8BRBkEiwA3p02VfGz5XnI6m-g734cOcsMM7-hhn26krdrxTy-OsGcNvhgOLYh8w1gaRoCjX0QAvD\_BwE**](https://www.etsy.com/listing/203169204/thankful-tree-branches-not-included?gpla=1&gao=1&&utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=shopping_us_thanksgiving_Home_and_Living&utm_custom1=_k_CjwKCAjwz6_8BRBkEiwA3p02VfGz5XnI6m-g734cOcsMM7-hhn26krdrxTy-OsGcNvhgOLYh8w1gaRoCjX0QAvD_BwE_k_&utm_content=go_1707961425_69268699409_331635231576_aud-424578309341:pla-303628061699_c__203169204_123161576&utm_custom2=1707961425&gclid=CjwKCAjwz6_8BRBkEiwA3p02VfGz5XnI6m-g734cOcsMM7-hhn26krdrxTy-OsGcNvhgOLYh8w1gaRoCjX0QAvD_BwE)

**Other ideas shared:**

***Praying In Color*** (doodling) is a great alternative to journaling. To learn more: <https://prayingincolor.com/>

**Christmas/Epiphany Banner-** Create a banner to hang in your church that can be seen during online worship services. Send stars to everyone in the congregation. Ask them to write their name on the star (you could have them decorate them, too) and then return the star to the church. Attach the returned stars to a banner that can be hung in the sanctuary so that it is visible during online worship services. If services are not recorded at the church, a photo of the banner hanging in the sanctuary could be included in the worship video.

(Thanks to Marsha Meyer for this idea…it is based on the banner she created to hang at her church during the time they are away from the building…the banner Is a sign of hope and will hang in the church until the congregation can gather in person again. If I remember correctly, Marsha had people write their name on butterflies and send them back to the church. These butterflies were then attached to the banner.)

 **Scripture Jar-** Fill a jar with slips of paper with scripture verses written on them. Select one of the slips of paper each day… what you pull out always has a way of being perfect at the time.

**Butterfly/Memory Jar-** Cover a jar with 3-D butterflies. Give the jar to grieving families (or individuals) and encourage them to write down memories of their loved one and place them in the butterfly jar. Another suggestion was to have the jar and slips of paper available at a funeral or wake. People can write down memories and place them in the jar. This will be a nice keepsake for the family.

We also talked about **mental health/wellness** and the importance of having conversations about mental health/wellness, as well as having resources available to share. This is likely to become increasingly important in the coming months, so please share any resources you may be aware of that you think would be helpful for our group.

**Color your way through Advent as you anticipate the Christmas celebration of Jesus!**

Available through Pilgrim Press. $2.99/copy or 10 for $25. Order yours today! What a great gift to share with the children in your congregation! Also, a great gift for parents, grandparents and Godparents to give!

<https://www.thepilgrimpress.com/collections/new-releases/products/emmanuel-gods-gift-to-the-world-coloring-book>

From the creators of Picture the Bible -- a stunning new children's Bible forthcoming from The Pilgrim Press in 2021 -- Emmanuel highlights the life story of Jesus for the Advent season.

Emmanuel is an educational coloring book for all ages, featuring 12 short stories about Jesus. Great for “quiet bags” in worship, faith formation programs, and family time at home.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Storyteller and pastor Stacy Johnson Myers, and artist Kathryn Brewer, designed Emmanuel based on the vivid images and straightforward stories of Picture the Bible.

First Congregational Church UCC (River Falls, WI) designed Picture the Bible educational materials as a fresh new approach to Bible study, especially with children, for use in church and home. The Emmanuel ﻿coloring book is a product of FCC.

Paperback: 16 pages (8.5" x 11")
2020

# **November Focus: Gratitude**

As we head into the month of Thanksgiving, we return to a very important spiritual practice. Gratitude is the practice of giving thanks. We can give thanks in so many different ways.

* **Paper Chain -** Each day make a link with something you’re thankful for written on the link. See if it can stretch all around a room.
* **Gratitude Tree -** Write your gratitude on leaf shaped ornaments and hang them on a tree outside. (Put a branch in a vase for an easy tree!)
* **Alphabet Gratitude -** List one thing you are grateful for that starts with the letter “A” and then continue with the letter “B” until you’ve reached the end of the alphabet.
* **More than Words -** Draw a picture of something that makes you feel grateful.

**Memory Verse**: This is the day that the LORD has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. (Psalm 118:24)

**Faith Practice Spotlight: Gratitude Cafe** - This practice comes from the book Faithful Families, Creating Sacred Moments at Home. Each person gets a warm beverage (tea, hot chocolate, and coffee) and takes turns talking about what they’re thankful for. The warm drink makes you slow down and savor, and adds to the practice of gratitude.

**Links on Gratitude:**

* [30 Days Thankful](https://email.mg1.substack.com/c/eJwtUMuOwyAM_Jpy24hASdIDh73sb0Q83MZbAimYVvn7JdtKfsj22COPMwS3lHe9pUKsFsgzeq2GSY3iwrzmo3CjZVjmawZYDQbNtmoDOkOY4gEWcpRntmg7KQlWeqe4HIQcrBlEC9MVrhc1mYEdFLOpHiE60CmGfd4Mehb0QrSVk_w-iZ9mT7TZRHJLzW5xaV1r_NCVrpUNUShlaFlyb_byhdHjE301gaEWXPD-8J4rybu-S-483H8f9_g4nfl667tSbSHj7scxlnVYTKY2ernqXJfy7Xhw_vDSPkM0NoDXlCswegv1_wrtG-gIrxKACPK72QTppeL9dOlZI_KpaRbbrnFYVqTlD3tOgAc)
* [Snuggle Time Fall Blessings](https://email.mg1.substack.com/c/eJwlULluhDAQ_RrcgXxgvFu4SBRtujRJj4w9AWeNzfoQIl8fk5XejDRv7qdVhjnEQ24hZVQSxNEayYcLF_SKjMSCajEhm8bvCLAq6yTayuSsVtkGfxZTJliPFsk476-UEqYnQzUMQA1jk6C94pxqI9C5YlTFWPAaZPDuGDdlDXJyyXlLDXtp6K1i3_dOreo3-E6HtRKfvsyzg_bLrtC-OkjJ-jm17w78kdoPcM6mXOvMVh1mBItBcELPaexm9GKdadgbaejwRIo1vLQEWUkxxeQ0gjnDHemC7of7z-PuH02P15l0qUwpK30_b0FRukXFXFO7Llp3Ic6nHGPNrcXbfIzg1eTAyBwLoPyU9f_xfGwgPezJQc4Qn2SVjzCOyeVKUF1kQlXY116lbVptXv4Ak9mJaw)
* [Paper Leaves](https://email.mg1.substack.com/c/eJwlUEluwzAMfI11s6El3g46pAiCnNuiPRpaGFuNLDmSDMN9feUGIAmQQ3LIUSLB6MPOFx8TWiOEwWheN13d0h5pjluqWolMHO4BYBbGcrSs0holkvHuaKasZSc0cSYbSpQkrai7phd33ZOadl2tiYQOkx4dFINYtQGngHtn92ERRiPLp5SWWLBzQa_Ztm2rxCx-vauUn3PhIwXjxlieUxJqAl2-Gym9i-U3aJ2R8ias9RuAy816yeENt5-X2_WrpcdKdtVqMlYX7EIK2rwshpx2JUWGU0wxOZzgmuGKVF6dmsfP8-GexQnPI6niKmPmfhwHocDtJELK0KZWpSofxkOTIWPz6kzaB3BCWtA8hRVQemn7_33aF-AOtmghJQivYtaQsBqTricoE2mfZXZ5VigTZ5OmP8y6i7g) (for your gratitude trees!) You could also just tape them to the walls.

**Kindness Campaign**- created by Ashely Rice, Plymouth UCC, Grand Rapids, MI

*(This was used with the K-6th grade children in Ashley’s church. She was inspired by a story t during our Thursday morning Zoom gathering.)*

Micah:6 :6-8

[6] What God Requires “With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?

[7] Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

[8] He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you **but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God**

Holy Bible (NRSV) The New Revised Standard Version Do something

 <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.book.bible.nrsv>

**Week  1**

**Do something** **kind** and take a picture or write about it and send it to me via email or text xxx-xxx-xxxx. These acts will be shared with the church during one of the church services, on the website or via FaceBook.

**Week 2**

**Say something kind** to someone. record or write about what kind words you said to someone and send it in to me via email or text xxx-xxx-xxxx.. These words will be shared with the church during one of the church services, on the website or via FaceBook.

**Week 3**

**Spread kindness** -Pick up chalk project bags and draw a picture or write a statement that shows kindness take a picture/ write about it turn it in to me via email or text xxx-xxx-xxxx. **More details to come on how and when to pick up your child's project bags.**

Please note if you don't want your child's pictures or writings shared on a certain platform please make that known when sending in your entry.

**Here is a video to watch** <https://youtu.be/3FTiWQ9Ihnw>

and **questions to prompt conversation as you document this kindness**, these come from Douglastalks.com Please note that the video does reference to being a Christian. I do understand that not everyone who attends Plymouth may not identify as Christian.

* Is there anyone in your life that you have a hard time being kind to?
* Is there anyone that’s easy to be kind to?
* Why are some people easier to be kind to than others?
* Why does God want us to be kind to everyone?
* Who can help us to be kind?

Fruit of the Spirit

Galatians:5:22-25

[22] The Fruit of the Spirit By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness,

[23] gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.

[24] And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

[25] If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

Holy Bible (NRSV) The New Revised Standard Version

 <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.book.bible.nrsv>

*Ashley did put together project bags with supplies for the children to use. If you want details on what was in the bags, let me know and I will put you in contact with Ashley.*

*Ashley also created a chart for the children to keep track of the kindness they put out into the world.*

*At the end of the campaign (it is running through October), Ashley plans to put together a slide show to tell the story of their kindness campaign.*

**Advent Resources/Ideas (November 2020)**

**Advent advice from Traci Smith:** YOU DO NOT NEED TO DO EVERYTHING!!!!! Let go of some things. Perhaps replace old things with a new tradition.

**Advent Conspiracy** is a great way to encourage simplifying Advent/Christmas: <https://adventconspiracy.org>

**Advent Boxes:** *Ideas for what could be included in a box sent to each household in the congregation- this is a list compiled of what a variety of churches have done. Pick and choose what would work in your setting.*

* Candles
* Blue or purple cloth
* Green circle (for wreath)
* Advent readings for each week
* A copy of ***Faithful Families For Advent and Christmas*** by Traci Smith: <https://chalicepress.com/products/faithful-families-for-advent-and-christmas-100-ways-to-make-the-season-sacred>
* Printed resources from Illustrated Ministry: <https://store.illustratedministry.com/>
* CD of church choirs or musical groups performing (if available)
* Hot chocolate and candy
* Felt
* Wreath
* 2x6 lumber
* Tea lights
* Tall candle
* Confetti
* Advent devotion
* Include crayons that are the multi-skin tone for coloring pictures of the characters in the story of Jesus’ birth

**Traveling Advent Wreath:** Have an Advent wreath that travels to different families’ homes each week. They can videotape their family lighting the Advent Wreath and it can be played during the worship service. Or, if using Zoom, they can do it in real time.

**Generosity/Mission Focus:** What would the Holy Family need on their journey? Have a different need that is focused on each week, along with a list of items to donate. Have people drop off those items in a secure location each week. Items can be donated to a local food pantry or other social service organization.

**Bitmoji Virtual Classroom Ideas:**

Create a **Giving Room** in place of a Giving Tree. Items in room are clickable. Click on item you will donate and sign up on the form that pops up. (Yes, you will need to create that form. 😊) one idea is to use Sign Up Genius.

**Host a Drive-thru Nativity**

**Host a Prayer Walk:**

* Create prayer stations on laminated sheets of paper or cardstock. Attach to stakes and stick in ground along the path of the Prayer Walk
* Building Faith suggests a Candle Walk: <https://buildfaith.org/?s=candle+walk>

And the book to go with it: <https://books.google.com/books/about/Candle_Walk.html?id=MevSugEACAAJ&source=kp_book_description>

**Christmas/Epiphany idea:** Send stars to each person in the church. Ask them to write their name on the star and send it back to the church. The stars can then be assembled on a banner that can be hung as a backdrop for worship recordings.

***Christmas Love Letters From God: Bible Stories*** by Glenys Nellist (written for children ages 4 to 8)

<https://books.google.com/books/about/Christmas_Love_Letters_from_God.html?id=RDYdDQAAQBAJ&source=kp_book_description>

**Free Christmas Download for Families from Children’s Ministry.com:** <https://childrensministry.com/christmas-family-download/>

**Blue Christmas (Longest Night) Ideas:**

A great gift to give participants is an intergenerational book called ***My Favorite Color is Blue...Sometimes***by Roger Hutchison. <https://paracletepress.com/products/my-favorite-color-is-blue-sometimes>

<https://www.convergencemp.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=blue+christmas>

<https://www.ucc.org/search_results?q=blue+Christmas>

The Many will be offering some sort of special event/service online for The Longest Night. They will be getting more info out soon. <https://www.themanyarehere.com>

**Misc:**

***Daily Devotions*** is an online offering from the staff of Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago: <https://fourthchurch.org/devotions/index-archive.html>

**Video project to allow youth voices to be heard:**

One idea for involving kids/youth in the life of the congregation is to create a video project where the kids are asked to share what is important to them. Parents are invited to talk with their kids about a particular topic and record them giving advice to the future president (or any other leader…perhaps the leaders of the church?). This allows the voices of our younger generation to be heard. It is also a great way for the adults in the church to get to know the kids and what matters to them.

**Creating a Congregational Quilt:** Ask parishioners to trace their hands on colorful fabric. These can be cut out and sewn onto quilt squares. The quilt squares can then be assembled into a beautiful quilt that represents the many hands in the congregation. (This was done as a parting gift for a much-loved pastor during the pandemic.)

**Zoom Drama Tips: Using Technology for Biblical Storytelling:** <https://buildfaith.org/zoom-drama-tips/>

**Picture the Bible** offers a variety of faith formation curriculum resources that can be used for virtual or at-home Sunday School and Confirmation: <https://firstchurchrf.org/picture-the-bible/>

**Body Prayers** are a great way to actively connect during a Zoom.

Quote shared by Rev. Brooks Berndt during ***Reset For Renewal:*** “Justice is love shown in public.” Source of quote is Cornel West, American philosopher: “Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public.”

**Compilation of Spiritual Formation Resources for Churches During COVID** (created by Kim Armstrong): <https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:35f80490-4140-49a7-8028-088ba012763d>

***The Unofficial Handbook of the United Church of Christ*** by Quinn Caldwell has been suggested as a good resource to use with confirmation-age youth to help them learn about the UCC:

<https://www.thepilgrimpress.com/products/the-unofficial-handbook-of-the-united-church-of-christ-caldwell-preston>

**Ideas tools to spark deep conversations:**

* **Holy Listening Stones** <https://www.leanne-hadley.com/holy-listening>

<http://haumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/HolyListening-Stones.pdf>

* Images to use with groups:

solarium cards <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/share-the-gospel/outreach-strategies/soularium.html>

<https://www.instagram.com/pehedges/>

<https://www.pinterest.com/paulehedges/_saved/>

**The pandemic has presented the opportunity for us to highlight the importance of faith formation in the home. These are some ideas to encourage/focus on:**

* Creating sacred space in the home
* For Advent, encourage families to light Advent candles in the home. We can provide liturgies for them to use.
* Invent/discover new at-home traditions-families can share what they have been doing

One way congregations can work together is to partner with each other to offer faith formation. This reduces the strain on individual congregations and also reduces the number of volunteers needed in each congregation.

* First Congregational in Ithaca, NY partnering with Plymouth UCC in Syracuse to offer virtual Sunday school
* The Michigan Conference offered a collaboration for World Communion Sunday
* Create a collection of Children’s Sermons from a variety of congregations….Library of videos could be put together.

For more **Children Sermon resources**, check out Dollar Stores Kids Sermons website:

<https://dskidsermons.com/>

* They are lectionary-based…both RCL and Narrative for each Sunday.

**Ideas & Resources for online youth lessons/activities:**

* Our middle/high school church school teachers had the kids do a reader's theater type recording of the scripture reading for last Sunday’s worship….it went very well!
* For confirmation classes…focus on topics of interest and how they relate to faith
	+ **Racism-** see book suggestions below
	+ **Mental Health** -- conversations and resource sharing for youth
		- Link to worship service focused on **Suicide Prevention**: <https://youtu.be/LOxurDWkYLM>
	+ **Politics and faith**
		- Cameron Trimble - ***Talking Religion and Politics*** - <https://mailchi.mp/91fbbd258b53/wcyrz8ckz9-10845730>

**Re-envisioning Advent Workshops and other Advent/Christmas activities that would have been in person:**

* Group has some good "Christmas Experience" packages that you could adapt to being virtual. Centers and hands-on activities are the strong suit here. You could have a family lead each craft on Zoom while the rest follow along at home.
* do a virtual workshop to build an Advent wreaths together.
* Send out supplies to everyone beforehand.
* **Practical Resources for Churches** has webinars that will help at [www.prcli.org](http://www.prcli.org): For example… Christmas Eve 2020; Christmas Pageants 2020; and Small Church Christmas Eve
* This coloring book is an affordable gift for the children in your family or congregation. It is from the creators of the Picture The Bible curriculum. <https://www.thepilgrimpress.com/collections/advent-resources/products/emmanuel-gods-gift-to-the-world-coloring-book>

# **November Focus: Gratitude**

As we head into the month of Thanksgiving, we return to a very important spiritual practice. Gratitude is the practice of giving thanks. We can give thanks in so many different ways.

* **Paper Chain -** Each day make a link with something you’re thankful for written on the link. See if it can stretch all around a room.
* **Gratitude Tree -** Write your gratitude on leaf shaped ornaments and hang them on a tree outside. (Put a branch in a vase for an easy tree!)
* **Alphabet Gratitude -** List one thing you are grateful for that starts with the letter “A” and then continue with the letter “B” until you’ve reached the end of the alphabet.
* **More than Words -** Draw a picture of something that makes you feel grateful.

**Memory Verse**: This is the day that the LORD has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. (Psalm 118:24)

**Faith Practice Spotlight: Gratitude Cafe** - This practice comes from the book Faithful Families, Creating Sacred Moments at Home. Each person gets a warm beverage (tea, hot chocolate, and coffee) and takes turns talking about what they’re thankful for. The warm drink makes you slow down and savor, and adds to the practice of gratitude.

**Links on Gratitude:**

* [30 Days Thankful](https://email.mg1.substack.com/c/eJwtUMuOwyAM_Jpy24hASdIDh73sb0Q83MZbAimYVvn7JdtKfsj22COPMwS3lHe9pUKsFsgzeq2GSY3iwrzmo3CjZVjmawZYDQbNtmoDOkOY4gEWcpRntmg7KQlWeqe4HIQcrBlEC9MVrhc1mYEdFLOpHiE60CmGfd4Mehb0QrSVk_w-iZ9mT7TZRHJLzW5xaV1r_NCVrpUNUShlaFlyb_byhdHjE301gaEWXPD-8J4rybu-S-483H8f9_g4nfl667tSbSHj7scxlnVYTKY2ernqXJfy7Xhw_vDSPkM0NoDXlCswegv1_wrtG-gIrxKACPK72QTppeL9dOlZI_KpaRbbrnFYVqTlD3tOgAc)
* [Snuggle Time Fall Blessings](https://email.mg1.substack.com/c/eJwlULluhDAQ_RrcgXxgvFu4SBRtujRJj4w9AWeNzfoQIl8fk5XejDRv7qdVhjnEQ24hZVQSxNEayYcLF_SKjMSCajEhm8bvCLAq6yTayuSsVtkGfxZTJliPFsk476-UEqYnQzUMQA1jk6C94pxqI9C5YlTFWPAaZPDuGDdlDXJyyXlLDXtp6K1i3_dOreo3-E6HtRKfvsyzg_bLrtC-OkjJ-jm17w78kdoPcM6mXOvMVh1mBItBcELPaexm9GKdadgbaejwRIo1vLQEWUkxxeQ0gjnDHemC7of7z-PuH02P15l0qUwpK30_b0FRukXFXFO7Llp3Ic6nHGPNrcXbfIzg1eTAyBwLoPyU9f_xfGwgPezJQc4Qn2SVjzCOyeVKUF1kQlXY116lbVptXv4Ak9mJaw)
* [Paper Leaves](https://email.mg1.substack.com/c/eJwlUEluwzAMfI11s6El3g46pAiCnNuiPRpaGFuNLDmSDMN9feUGIAmQQ3LIUSLB6MPOFx8TWiOEwWheN13d0h5pjluqWolMHO4BYBbGcrSs0holkvHuaKasZSc0cSYbSpQkrai7phd33ZOadl2tiYQOkx4dFINYtQGngHtn92ERRiPLp5SWWLBzQa_Ztm2rxCx-vauUn3PhIwXjxlieUxJqAl2-Gym9i-U3aJ2R8ias9RuAy816yeENt5-X2_WrpcdKdtVqMlYX7EIK2rwshpx2JUWGU0wxOZzgmuGKVF6dmsfP8-GexQnPI6niKmPmfhwHocDtJELK0KZWpSofxkOTIWPz6kzaB3BCWtA8hRVQemn7_33aF-AOtmghJQivYtaQsBqTricoE2mfZXZ5VigTZ5OmP8y6i7g) (for your gratitude trees!) You could also just tape them to the walls.

**Kindness Campaign**- created by Ashely Rice, Plymouth UCC, Grand Rapids, MI

*(This was used with the K-6th grade children in Ashley’s church. She was inspired by a story t during our Thursday morning Zoom gathering.)*

Micah:6 :6-8

[6] What God Requires “With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?

[7] Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

[8] He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you **but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God**

Holy Bible (NRSV) The New Revised Standard Version Do something

 <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.book.bible.nrsv>

**Week  1**

**Do something** **kind** and take a picture or write about it and send it to me via email or text xxx-xxx-xxxx. These acts will be shared with the church during one of the church services, on the website or via FaceBook.

**Week 2**

**Say something kind** to someone. record or write about what kind words you said to someone and send it in to me via email or text xxx-xxx-xxxx.. These words will be shared with the church during one of the church services, on the website or via FaceBook.

**Week 3**

**Spread kindness** -Pick up chalk project bags and draw a picture or write a statement that shows kindness take a picture/ write about it turn it in to me via email or text xxx-xxx-xxxx. **More details to come on how and when to pick up your child's project bags.**

Please note if you don't want your child's pictures or writings shared on a certain platform please make that known when sending in your entry.

**Here is a video to watch** <https://youtu.be/3FTiWQ9Ihnw>

and **questions to prompt conversation as you document this kindness**, these come from Douglastalks.com Please note that the video does reference to being a Christian. I do understand that not everyone who attends Plymouth may not identify as Christian.

* Is there anyone in your life that you have a hard time being kind to?
* Is there anyone that’s easy to be kind to?
* Why are some people easier to be kind to than others?
* Why does God want us to be kind to everyone?
* Who can help us to be kind?

Fruit of the Spirit

Galatians:5:22-25

[22] The Fruit of the Spirit By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness,

[23] gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.

[24] And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

[25] If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

Holy Bible (NRSV) The New Revised Standard Version

 <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.book.bible.nrsv>

*Ashley did put together project bags with supplies for the children to use. If you want details on what was in the bags, let me know and I will put you in contact with Ashley.*

*Ashley also created a chart for the children to keep track of the kindness they put out into the world.*

*At the end of the campaign (it is running through October), Ashley plans to put together a slide show to tell the story of their kindness campaign.*