



embodied wonder

*12 days of encountering
Emmanuel through body
and breath*



A CHRISTMASTIDE
DEVOTIONAL CREATED BY



We seek God's shalom by
pursuing holistic transformation
of urban poor communities
alongside our neighbours



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*12 days of encountering
Emmanuel through body
and breath*



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**"A calm, settled body is
the foundation for
health, for healing,
for helping others,
and for changing the
world."**

**-RESMAA MENAKEM,
MY GRANDMOTHER'S HANDS**



introduction

"So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.... From his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another." - John 1:14-16 NLT

For centuries, people who follow Jesus have followed a rhythm of ceremonies that flow from a time of preparation to a time of celebration. By living out this yearly cycle, we remember and connect our story to the life of Jesus. December begins the season of Advent: the first season of reflection. We wait, yearn, hope, and try to carve out sacred space amid a polar opposite season of pre-Christmas commercial pandemonium.

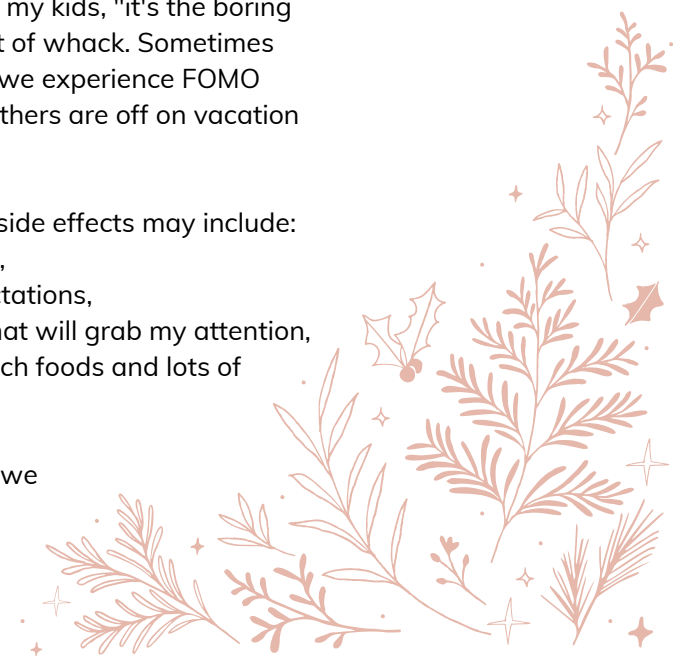
Finally, on Christmas morning, the season of Advent ends. We start the 12 days of Christmastide (not just a song!) between December 25th to January 6th. The Saviour and Redeemer of all people and creation has come! This season should be a rich celebration of the mind-bending idea that the forever dance of Creator-Jesus-Spirit took a break for Jesus to take on flesh and walk among us. God became one of us, with a frail and vulnerable body located in a specific time and place, learning and maturing as we do.

But for me, the experience of the Twelve Days of Christmas most often feels like "liminal space". It's a time between what was and what's coming next as we cross the threshold of a new calendar year (for those who primarily orient themselves to the Gregorian calendar.) According to my kids, "it's the boring part" of the year. Our routines and schedules are out of whack. Sometimes we are not where we usually call home. Sometimes we experience FOMO because we hold down the fort of monotony while others are off on vacation "living their best lives."

In our house, it's been days of "Santa detox" where side effects may include:

- wishing my new gadget was easier to figure out,
- disappointment from unrealistic or missed expectations,
- mindless scrolling through Netflix for anything that will grab my attention,
- sore stomachs with possible constipation from rich foods and lots of sweets.

It's never been twelve days of non-stop shock and awe over the Glory of God coming to earth.



This Christmas devotional was written to linger for twelve days on only one awe-inspiring concept: The Triune God of Love became Emmanuel "God-with-us" in a body. He wants to meet with us in our shared humanity. God moved into "the neighbourhood," and fully experienced our frailty to demonstrate life in a new Kingdom that is here and yet not entirely.

It's for those who long to reconnect to wonder this season.
For those who belong to "the weary world rejoicing" in O Holy Night:

For you, who slid across the finish line of Christmas Day with tired feet, backs and eyes
For you, who doesn't have long hours this holiday to enjoy solitude and silence
For you, who are still lingering in the longing and mourning space of Advent
For you who dares to believe the Christmas carol lyric "Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth" (again from "O Holy Night")

And it's also for you who are well-rested and want to linger:

for you, the "uber-prepared" who have carved out a luxurious space for year-end reflection
for you, the eager beaver ready to dive deeper and linger in an experience of intimacy with the Divine in your unique body

12 DAYS OF EMBODIED PRACTICES

Each day there is an invitation for you to reflect on the incomparable love of God in your experience of one part of your body. The incarnation is a defiant "YES" to the question of whether your body matters to God!

Depending on how you feel that day, you can choose between two opportunities:

1. A short, 10-minute practice "for the weary"
2. An additional extended exercise "for those who want to linger" - those who have oodles of time to enjoy the ride.

I pray these exercises might bring a new perspective of the glory of God, found in your own humanity fully alive. May this season be an intimate experience of John's description: receiving "from the fullness of his being" many gifts of kindness poured out" to you. (John 1:16 FNV)

**“The glory of God is
humanity fully alive.”**

-ST IRANEUS

getting situated

You probably should know about the body who wrote these pages before we spend time together pondering how our bodies connect us to a fully-human and fully-divine Jesus.

My name is Krista-Dawn Kimsey (she/her). I've lived for thirteen years in the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood as a guest on the unceded lands of Vancouver, B.C. I have become a new neighbour to the Pleasant Hill community on Treaty 6 territory in Saskatoon, SK. The daughter of Gayle and Don Jenner, I'm a descendant of Ukrainian-German Canadian prairie heritage and culture. I was born and raised until adulthood in Edmonton, on Treaty 6 territory. I'm deeply loved by my husband Joel, and I'm an often spontaneous parent with my two teenagers: Judah and Gabriella. I was honoured to carry both children in my womb through Advent seasons. I held my newborn daughter through the Christmas season. I've had the privilege of learning many different ways of living and being by travelling to many countries worldwide. I also lived for 18 years along the West Coast of the United States. I currently serve on the executive team of Servant Partners Canada as a co-executive director and co-founder. We are a Christian missional non-profit that inspires people to seek the Shalom of their city by working alongside their neighbours in marginalized communities.

These exercises and thoughts are written by a body situated in all those specific contexts and experiences. They were written while living on the land still stewarded by Coast Salish Nations. I am grateful to the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island, who have cared for these lands since time immemorial. I hold my hands up to their resistance, resilience, and strength in the face of ongoing dispossession and colonial violence.

Hector Hill, a Gitksan elder, has been teaching our staff in Servant Partners about the Medicine Wheel and living in balance with Jesus in our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual selves according to Indigenous wisdom and traditions.

He has generously written this blessing for us as we enter the mystery of God's loving presence through our own bodies:

Father God, in the name of your son Jesus Christ our Saviour, I ask you to heal all who walk this journey with you this Christmas season. Strengthen our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual selves for the road ahead.

I ask you, Father God, to provide for us all our food, clothing, shelter, education, finances and especially in the relationship we need with you. Have mercy on us and forgive us of all our sins.

Father God, give us peace and comfort in our hearts and minds; in Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.

BLESSING BY ELDER
HECTOR HILL

a note on encountering pain in your body or story

Our body collects memories as it journeys through life. Bringing attention to different parts of your body might bring a heightened awareness of pain in that area. Moving your body attentively may bring up connections to difficult past experiences. Something written in this devotional might “bump” you into a fight/flight or freeze state.

If you notice that you are moving into a space of highly charged discomfort because of what you are doing, stop. It’s okay to stop. It might even be brave to stop. Here are some supportive ways to help your body move toward a state of calm:

5-4-3-2-1 Practice

Come back to noticing your breath and look around the room. Notice what’s on your right and left. Notice what’s on the ground and what’s above you.

Name out loud: 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.

After this, notice if there are any shifts in how you feel. If you’d like to continue to shift into the present, try noticing your breath.

Lengthening your exhale

Count how long it takes to breathe in and then how long it takes to breathe out. If you can, try to breathe in for four counts and out for more counts, starting with 5. The next exhale, try 6 counts and see if you can do 8.

Noticing your present surroundings and lengthening your exhale breath are ways to help your body move toward relaxation. For more support, you could call a friend to talk about what came up for you or just imagine a supportive person or animal next to you as you rest.

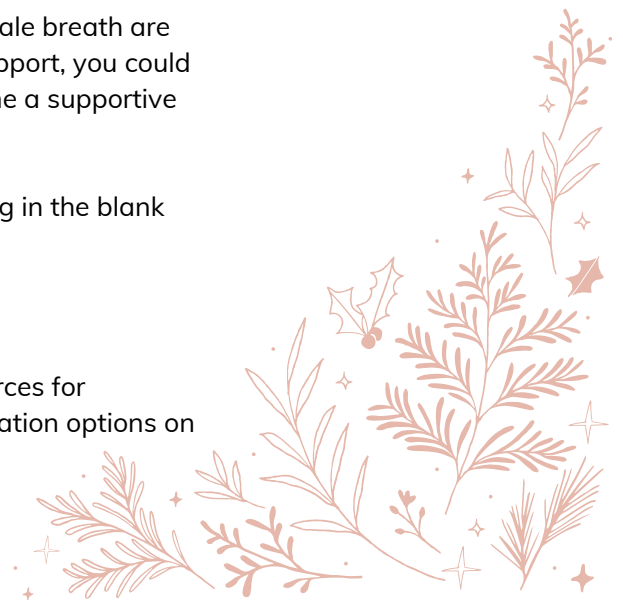
If it feels good to add a **breath prayer** to this practice, try filling in the blank with an attribute of God you can be grateful for.

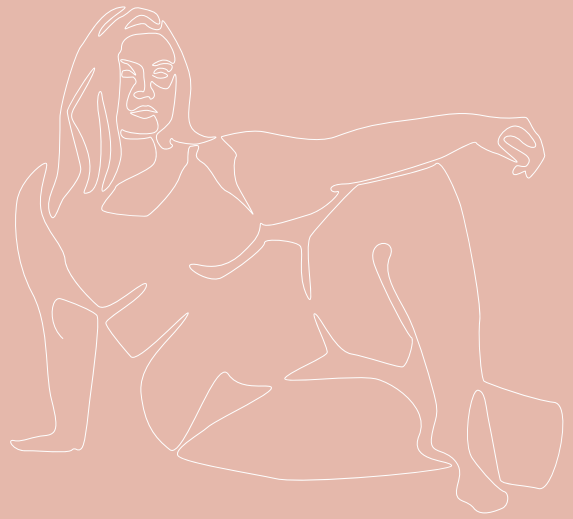
Inhale: Thank you, Jesus

Exhale: You _____ (e.g. are faithful).

If you experience chronic pain and are looking for more resources for meditation, there are a number of excellent free guided meditation options on the Insight Timer app that you could try.

See the resources page to learn more about these practices.





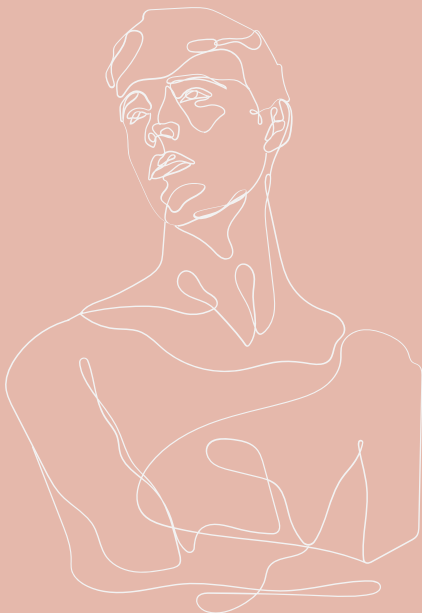
DECEMBER 25
FIRST DAY OF CHRISTMAS

our bodies

“Don’t be afraid. I’m here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide:

A Saviour has just been born in David’s town, a Saviour who is Messiah and Master. This is what you’re to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger.”

- LUKE 2:8-11,
THE MESSAGE



our bodies

You made it! You've reached the first day of Christmas. How does it find you?

This is the day we marvel at God's plan and love of vulnerability. Breaking the dance of the Trinity, Jesus comes to earth not in power but in tremendous frailty. He could have arrived on the scene as a wealthy and ingenious merchant, a leader in the economic markets of the land. He could have been born into the lineage of King Herod or Caesar and become a political ruler. He could have come to earth as a wise old prophet, reappearing as fantastical as Elijah left. Or even as a mystical orb floating in the sky, bellowing spiritual metaphors and zapping people into obedience.

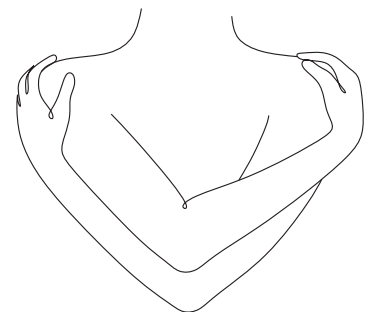
Instead, the Creator of the universe comes to earth the same we all do, in goop and muck, with wailing and tears. God was willing to wait while attached to the womb of a Middle Eastern teenager and draw nourishment from her body to grow. This brown-skinned baby was born within the scandal of unwed pregnancy, born in poverty and homelessness, and soon to be a refugee. His life and well-being were determined by an unjust, oppressive political occupation. Instead of coming in full body armour, he came in a size that could be dropped on his head if you're not careful. **What kind of a crazy Creator is willing to be so vulnerable to all the unpleasant, harsh elements of the human experience?**

Your Creator loves your vulnerability. The soft parts of you, the oozy parts, the flimsy parts. The parts you can't suck in, tuck away, or pretend that everything is okay when you know it's not. Those parts might take on a physical, emotional or spiritual form. The Creator does not only tolerate these vulnerable parts - Jesus' birth announces that your vulnerability is where he chooses to connect with you. He sees you as you are, and loves you and your body just as you are in this moment. I often startle myself because the woman I remember myself is not the woman staring back at me in the mirror. No creams, exercise videos or Instagram tips have gotten me back to that 28-year-old hottie!

And yet - this woman is the one that God wants to connect with this Christmas, not the past version. A lyric written by Jonathan and Melissa Helser expresses it beautifully: "The One who knows me best is the One who loves me most."

*"Incarnation
is the process
of becoming
seen. To be
seen is to
allow yourself
to be known.
To be known
is to risk
being loved...
or not."*

- SCOTT ERICKSON



FOR THE WEARY

body scan practice

Today we are going to participate in the sacred act of accepting our bodies as they are.

Sit in a comfortable position so that you can check in with every aspect of your body. How are you arriving on this first day of Christmas?

Notice whatever sensations are available to you, starting with the support of the chair, bed or couch underneath you. Notice how your feet feel if they are touching the ground. Notice your breath as it is; you don't need to manipulate it unless you sense that your body is asking for a different rhythm of breathing.

Starting at your feet, notice the temperature of your skin. Then, scan up through the muscles in your legs, thighs, hips, buttocks, stomach, chest, shoulders, hands, neck, jaw, face, eyes and forehead. You can move along at whatever pace feels comfortable for you.

If there is any tightness or pain, please take a moment to tenderly attend to it by giving it a squeeze or a rub. Stay there long enough to feel the warmth of your hand on that part of your body. Then, breathe into the sensation and see if it changes in any way.

Can you sense hope in your body today? Where and how does your body experience that hope? Is it a release or expansion? What specific hopes accompany these sensations? The chance to heal? To rest? To be free of burdens? To live a more expansive life?

You may wish to end today's practice by praying the Welcoming Prayer created by Mary Mrozowski.

You can try this body scan and welcoming prayer anytime you feel your vulnerable parts are overwhelmed. The more you practice, the faster you can sense stress in your body and remember to invite Jesus' presence to be with you.

*Welcome,
welcome,
welcome.*

*I welcome
everything that
comes to me at this
moment because I
know it is for my
healing. I welcome
all thoughts,
feelings, emotions,
persons, situations
and conditions.*

*I let go of my desire
for security and
survival.*

*I let go of my desire
for esteem and
affection.*

*I let go of my desire
for power and
control.*

*I let go of my desire
to change the
situation.*

*I open to the love
and presence of
God and the healing
action and grace
within.*

- WELCOMING PRAYER
BY MARY MROZOWSKI

FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO LINGER

If you enjoy listening to Christian pop music, stay in the moment with the song “I Am Your Beloved” quoted earlier. All music referenced to in this devotional can be found on this Spotify playlist: shorturl.at/nqyz1



shorturl.at/nqyz1

In the mood for a laugh? In the movie Talladega Nights, Ricky Bobby loved praying to Jesus as a baby.

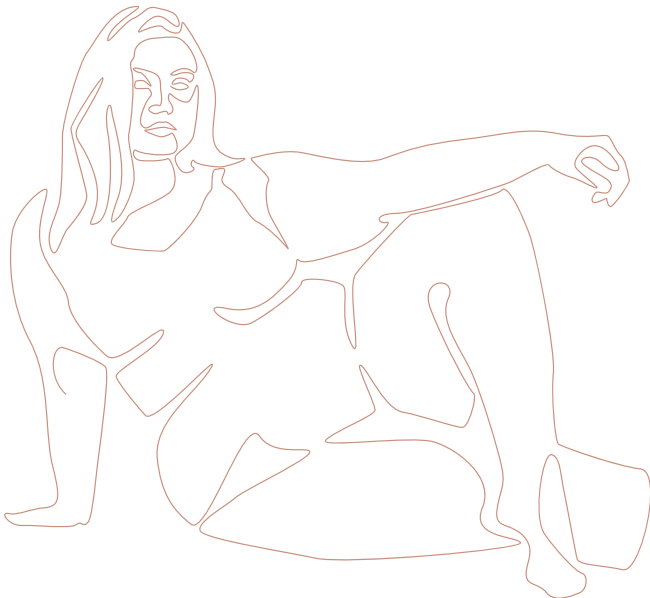
Warning: This prayer is highly irreverent, culturally critical and contains swear words. Please do not watch it if those things are off-putting or offensive to you.



youtu.be/eY5VNDvea1M

“For as the body is clad in the cloth, and the flesh in the skin, and the bones in the flesh, and the heart in the whole, so are we, soul and body, clad in the Goodness of God, and enclosed.”

-JULIAN OF NORWICH

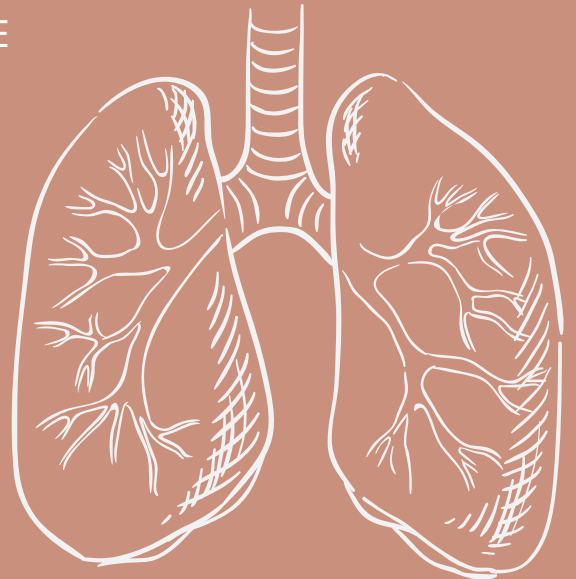


DECEMBER 26
SECOND DAY OF CHRISTMAS

breath

**“God formed Man out of dirt
from the ground and blew into
his nostrils the breath of life.
The Man came alive—a living
soul!”**

- GENESIS 2:7,
THE MESSAGE



breath

“He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn’t live in man-made temples, and human hands can’t serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need.” - Acts 17:24-25 NLT

The Hebrew word for breath is Ruach, which is the same word for wind and Spirit. The same wind that hovered over the earth and came as fire over people in Pentecost is the same breath in you. The same spirit that showed up at Jesus’ baptism as a dove and breathed life into Adam in the Garden is the same breath that instinctively moves in and out of you!

How do you feel about the idea that God who is willing to be that close to you, animating your every second? Picture the area all around you being filled with God’s presence as you breathe in and out.

FOR THE WEARY

breath prayer

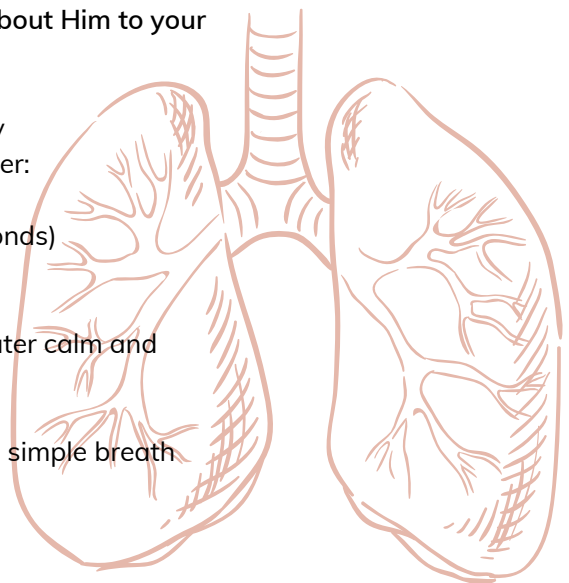
In her book “Seeds of Joy”, Dorothy Mathieson teaches a form of prayer that is easily adaptable to any situation and could be used in conjunction with any of the activities in this devotional. She recommends asking, “What do you appreciate or like about Jesus? What do you find relevant about Him to your situation now?”

For example, we could take the Acts scripture above and say “You breathe your life in me”. Then turn those words into prayer:

Thank you, Jesus (as you inhale deeply and hold for 2-3 seconds)
You breathe your life in me (as you exhale slowly)

Repeat this prayer for 10 minutes or until you come into greater calm and have a sense of Jesus’ presence with you as you breathe.

Feel free to turn any of the activities in the days ahead into a simple breath prayer using this form!



FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO LINGER

going deeper with our breath

If you are around others: hugging meditation

Ask someone you love to sit next to you and give you a different kind of hug. Hold each other for as long as it takes you to take 3 deep breaths. It's longer than you imagined - and way longer than a usual hug!

Notice how you feel in your own body, and how you feel towards the person you held. It's okay if you laugh or feel awkward. Thank them for attuning to you. You might want to try this repeatedly throughout Christmas to get more comfortable doing it!

If you are alone: breath flowers

Sitting up in a chair, use your finger to draw a small circle on your thigh as you notice your breath. With your next inhale, draw half of a flower petal and pause. Draw the other side of the flower petal with your exhale. Continue to draw a whole flower of petals with each inhale and exhale. Notice any shifts in your body as you breath in Jesus' presence creating these flowers.

Your body might want to feel like making a larger flower to stretch. If so, stand up and notice your breath as you draw an imaginary circle in the air in front of you. With your next inhale, draw the largest flower petal you can with your arms up to the ceiling. Pause.

Draw the other side of the flower petal coming down to your side for the exhale. Pause. Create as many petals as feel comfortable to you.

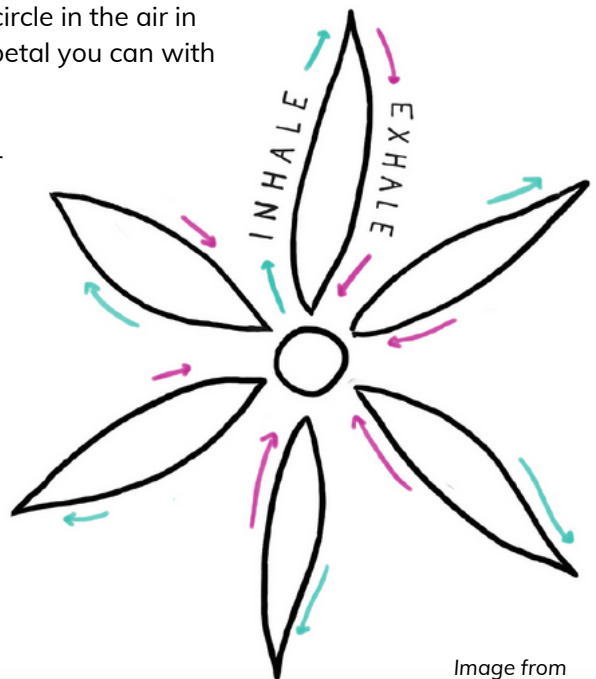
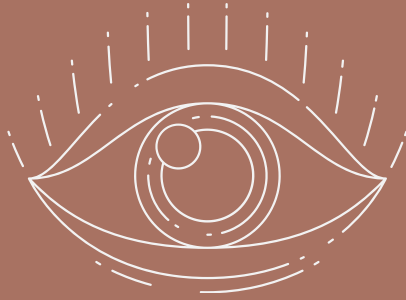


Image from
First Aid Arts Mini Toolkit

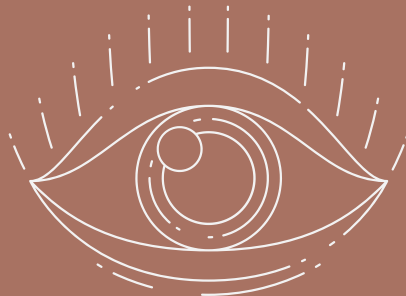


DECEMBER 27
THIRD DAY OF CHRISTMAS

eyes

**“I now see with my own eyes,
the one you have prepared for
all Nations, the one who will
heal our broken ways and set
us free.”**

- LUKE 2:30-31
FIRST NATIONS VERSION



eyes

God poured his life into the womb of a Middle Eastern woman, so that we would be able to see how both humanity and divinity can live in us.

As an adult, Jesus' life and ministry spoke to specific people whose flesh and bone was the brunt of oppression. He declared that the outcast Samaritan woman mattered, and the leper rejected by society mattered. God longs that we all know that our bodies are made in their image.

FOR THE WEARY

visio divina

Take a few moments to try out Visio Divina, a contemplative prayer practice of "divine seeing" with an image - similar to "Lectio Divina" or divine reading.

Assume a comfortable position and take a few minutes to sit with these images of Mary and Jesus contextualized to different cultures on the next pages. Other than the Palestinian artist, these nativity scenes are contextual images created in the countries where staff in Servant Partners serve worldwide.

Ponder: Is there one that draws you in further? What details, textures, and colours are your eyes attracted to? What thoughts or feelings come to the surface?

Engage: Allow yourself to settle on one image, and choose one aspect of the piece that sparks curiosity if you can.

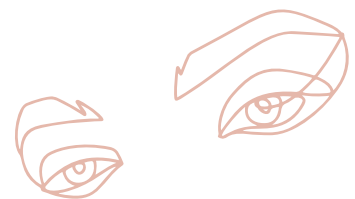
Reflect: What might this image be telling you about God? About yourself? Notice how that adds to your understanding of Jesus choosing to be born in a particular time, culture and location. Take a moment to marvel at how different the story might have been.

Let these ideas flow through without judgment or the need to settle on a correct interpretation.

Receive and respond: Ask Jesus to give you a word or a phrase that embodies the feeling or thought that seems most prominent. Receive it as a blessing and respond as you feel led in prayer.

"Oh Great Father," he prayed, "I now see with my own eyes, the one you have prepared for all Nations, the one who will heal our broken ways and set us free. He will make a clear path for all people to see and bring honour to the tribes of Wrestles with Creator (Israel)."

LUKE 2:29-31 FNV



THIRD DAY OF CHRISTMAS

SLIMAN MANSOUR,
"BETHLEHEM"
CIRCA 1985-1992
PALESTINE



KREG YINGST,
"THE NATIVITY"
USA



JACKSON BEARDY (OJI-CREE),
"THE NATIVITY", 1975.
CANADA

THIRD DAY OF CHRISTMAS



SAWAI CHINNAWONG
"NATIVITY"
2004
THAILAND

FEDERICO DOMINGUEZ
FROM THE "YANG YA UTAW SI MANGGQB"
(WHEN MANGGQB WAS BORN)
THE PHILIPPINES



THIRD DAY OF CHRISTMAS

SISTER CLAIRE
UNTITLED CHRISTMAS CARD
SOUTH ASIA



AZARIA MBATHA,
"THE BIRTH OF CHRIST"
1964
SOUTH AFRICA

NATIVITY MURAL AT BATAHOLA
NORTE COMMUNITY CENTER,
NICARAGUA



FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO LINGER

gaze at the horizon

Take a walk outside and look out at the horizon. Being able to see the sky and the horizon contributes to a sense of safety in our bodies.

Notice the colours in the sky. Notice the shades and nuances of colour on the horizon. Allow your other senses to come alive. What do you hear? Smell? Become aware of the holiness of your surroundings and Jesus presence with you.

the danger of a single story

Watch the Ted Talk "The Danger Of A Single Story" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.



shorturl.at/brNOY

Consider how this applies to Christian art that is dominated by and perpetuates Western artists portraying Jesus in Western cultures.

“Jesus, the Great Mystery revealed, has moved onto the reservation and he must come to the indigenous person as an indigenous person. Not only has Jesus come into the world, but he has come into the Native world.”

-CHERYL BEAR



DECEMBER 28
FOURTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS

skin

**"A voice is heard in Ramah,
weeping and great
mourning."**

- MATTHEW 2:18



skin

Today is the day when the global church reflects on the injustice and grief resulting from Jesus' birth: the "Massacre of the Holy Innocents."

This part of the Christmas story helps us remember this event not as a fairy tale but as a story grounded in the injustices we still experience today. Take a moment to read Matthew 2:13-18.

Herod's response to the birth of Jesus, a prophesied rival ruler of Israel, begins with fear, moves to jealousy and ends in rage. We continue to live in a world filled with people who are fearful, power-crazy, and insecure. Over history, we see how fearful people have chosen to enact cruel and oppressive tactics when given the ability to use power over others. These appear in individual actions and are also institutionalized in our systems when fearful people with power can make the rules to benefit them.

Herod follows a long line of humans threatened by the possibility of having something taken away from them, and in his case being overthrown. He is not the last to use violence to destroy his perceived rival. Oppression, violence and fear of the "other" are as old and widespread as human civilization.

All over the world, the colour of our skin has been a source of great pain when white or lighter-skinned people have been elevated above darker-skinned people. The colour of our skin is connected to stories of our ancestors and other human beings around the world before we say or do anything to add to that story. Tragically, the historical violence done to one another harms us all. However, those with darker skin colour have and continue to suffer uniquely and more cruelly.

The scars on our skin are our body's natural way of strengthening and healing wounds. They can be held as signatures of strength, resilience and hope.

Jesus experienced the panic of being in a family fleeing in fear of death due to his physical presence. This defenseless child needed rescue and protection and was given supernatural resources to move to safety. Jesus' body also carried many scars from his life and death.

The Creator of your skin grieves alongside you when you experience danger and harm due to others. Jesus longs for you to feel proud and beautiful in your skin. You are made in the image of God. Jesus came as a baby so that you might know rest, security and safety found in community and in relationship with creation and your Creator.

"So many people who claim to be Christians have denied the reality that Jesus is the brown-skinned God. I wonder if the world would be different if that truth was accepted and not white washed over."

- PHUC LUU

FOR THE WEARY

soothing your skin

If reading about violence and racialized injustice has brought up too much uncomfortable energy in your body, feel free to stand up and shake out your limbs before you continue. Give each arm and leg a good long shake - try counting down out loud from 8 with each limb - and notice if your body has shifted. Shake each of them 8 times, then 4 times, 2 times and then a whole body shake. Notice how your body feels afterwards. You also can flip back to the section on "A note on pain" and practice those exercises.

Find some oil or body lotion that feels good on your skin. It's even better if it has a scent you like, but it doesn't need to be fancy.

Choose a body part you would like to lovingly care for your skin. You may choose a body part that gets a lot of wear, like your hands or feet, or a body part that bears some scars. Whatever feels comfortable to you in your position. Please refrain from choosing an area that contains a scar from an unprocessed wound. This exercise is not meant for deep emotional healing. If you feel led, please reach out to a friend or someone with professional training in healing to help you move toward freedom in that area.

Focus your attention on that body part as you begin lovingly and mindfully rubbing it with lotion. If you are doing your hands or toes, remember the in-between spaces! Notice how it feels as the liquid touches your skin, spreads wider across it, and is finally absorbed.

If you are tenderly caring for an area with a scar, what might that scar say to affirm your ability to heal? What strength or resource does that scar remind you of? Is there a conversation that you need to have with this scar?

Notice your breath as you come to a close. Can you pair a breath prayer with your rhythm? Feel free to write your own, or choose one of these written by Cole Arthur Riley of Black Liturgies:

Inhale: *I am seen and loved*
Exhale: *God, I release the unlove.*

Inhale: *I bear the image of the one who comes*
Exhale: *Let my reflection be familiar to me.*



FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO LINGER

move to music

Listen, rock or sway to We Will Worship's song: **Etendeni Lami**, on video which shows the English translation of the Zulu lyrics from Psalm 91.



youtu.be/DnORDkjD0Bw

Listen, rock or sway to **Mothers and Shepherds**, written by Common Hymnal, a worship response to the "Massacre of the Innocents" passage.



shorturl.at/nqyz1

watch a video poem: "brown skinned God"

Reflect on the video poem, "Brown Skinned God" by American Theologian Phuc Luu and The Work of the People.



Warning: There are references to the violence done to Jesus and his death in this poem. Please choose wisely if this is something helpful for you to watch.

fb.watch/hoNAUNjw0N/



DECEMBER 29
FIFTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS

heartbeat

Love the Lord your God with all your
heart and with all your soul and with all
your strength and with all your mind'
and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

Luke 10:27 NIV

- LUKE 10:27 NIV



heartbeat

**‘Comfort, comfort my people,’ says your God.
‘Speak tenderly to [literally “to the heart of”] Jerusalem’”
- Isaiah 40:1 ESV**

Here’s a brief moment for the Science Nerds:

Did you know that scientists have been recently exploring something called the "theory of cellular memories"? The idea is that memories and personality traits are not only stored in the brain but may also be stored in organs such as the heart! In 2009, Harvard Medical School defined cellular memories in layman's terms as the process of your cells remembering to react in the same way over time to a specific "trigger."

For instance, a famous case of this is from a woman named Claire Sylvia. In the 70s, she received a heart and lung transplant from an 18-year-old boy who died in an accident. After her surgery, Sylvia had cravings she never had before, like beer and burgers! After some time, she contacted her donor's family and found out that he loved those same foods.

Wouldn't it be amazing if your heart cells could lock in the memory of God's love for you? The Greatest Commandment has two parts; we are to love God with our hearts and love others with the same tenderness we receive for ourselves. With today's medical science, there may be a physical component to loving the Lord with all our hearts and remembering God's tender love for us. When we build our capacity to be aware of our emotions and choose to soothe any fight, flight, freeze, or defensiveness in us, we move towards openness to love, truth and God. Our calm hearts can remember this place of loving peace, not a stressed, anxious heart.



FOR THE WEARY and THOSE CAN LINGER

praying with your heartbeat

If you still need to do so, get comfortable and into a posture of receptivity.

Take a couple of deep, cleansing breaths. Locate your heartbeat. You may have to try on your neck or wrist to start. Sometimes it helps to take a deep breath and hold it. Then, as the urge gets strong to breathe, you can begin to feel your heartbeat in your chest, and you can start to breathe as normal keeping awareness of your heartbeat.

Now shift towards paying attention to your breath. Take a breath in, and hear Jesus say to you, 'I love you, _____ (your name).' Then, as you breathe out, respond to Jesus' love by saying, 'I love you, Jesus.'

Try to stay with the rhythm of your breath, praying this breath prayer for 5 minutes. Then find your heartbeat once again and add it to your breath prayer. Try to match the words of the prayer to the beat of your heart.

Continue in this way, allowing yourself to become more aware and centred on Jesus' love for you and your love for him. Then, if you get distracted, simply return to this rhythm of prayer and intimacy with Jesus.

Give yourself 10 minutes if you can. You could set a timer, so you're not worried about the time.

If this is difficult, there's no need to judge yourself. Instead, with gentleness, return to your intention to be in Jesus' love for you. You may do this by returning to the breath prayer, saying a simple word like "love," focusing on one aspect of the prayer, or sitting in silence, resting in God's loving presence.





DECEMBER 30
SIXTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS

tastebuds

**"Taste and see that the Lord
is good; blessed is the one
who takes refuge in him."**

- PSALMS 34:8



tastebuds

What if eating was as profound an experience of God as prayer?

St. Ignatius certainly thought it was. Finding God in all things is at the core of Ignatian Spirituality and rooted in the mystery of the Incarnation.

Richard Rohr explains it this way, "*The Christ Mystery refuses to be vague or abstract; it must be concrete and specific. When we stay with our daily experiences and apparitions, we see that everything is a revelation of the divine—from rocks to rocket ships. The divine is disclosed everywhere for those who have eyes to see. Our only blindness is our own lack of fascination, amazement, humility, curiosity, awe, and willingness to be allured forward.*"

One of my all-time favourite movies is *Babette's Feast*. If you are able, watch this short trailer - it will give you a beautiful overview of the story written by Karen Blixen.

Here's a short synopsis: A religious community has been devoutly serving the poor under the leadership of a patriarch who has passed. Their spiritual practice is dutiful, but extremely self-denying and austere. Grace comes to them through a French cook who serves them for 14 years, unable to express her tremendous culinary skill. She asks to cook them one "real French dinner." The community is so afraid of the decadence that they decide beforehand to pretend they don't have tastebuds to get through the meal "righteously" and honour their spiritual leader.

Ultimately, pretending doesn't work. Grace has its way. The author writes, "This woman, this chef has the ability to transform a dinner into a kind of love affair, a love affair that makes no distinction between the bodily appetite and the spiritual appetite." It melts their hardened, dutiful hearts and inspires a guest to quote Psalm 85:10: "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

Taste buds are God's gift of grace and delight. We often repress emotions and physical sensations of pleasure for the sake of efficiency and striving for success. But taste buds are our constant reminder that the grace we need to cover our shame is just one swallow away. There's nothing we can do to earn the taste of a sweet, juicy ripe peach, and no moral or spiritual perfection makes the taste of coffee richer. What might responding to Rohr's invitation feel like in our eating? Could you bring fascination, amazement, humility, curiosity, awe, and a willingness to be allured by your next meal - especially when you feel unloveable?



youtu.be/H5w9skKcdnA



FOR THE WEARY

a tasty meditation

If you still need to eat, grab something on your plate that is tasty to you for this exercise. If you have eaten, find just one small item to eat prayerfully. Any fruit, vegetable or piece of chocolate will do just fine.

Sit with your food in front of you. How do you respond to the colours you see? What can you smell? What connections do you have with that scent?

Consider where the food was grown, harvested, processed, and transported. What was the journey your food took to land in front of you? Can you imagine the people who supported this journey? What new things could you thank God for from what's on your plate even before tasting it?

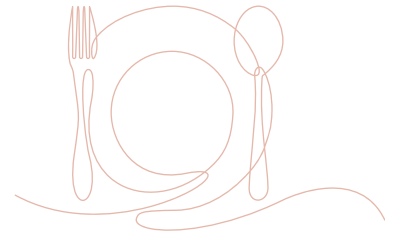
Place the food in your mouth and roll it around with your tongue before chewing. Notice what the food does in your mouth over all the different parts of your tongue. Chew slowly, paying attention as you savour it. What comes to mind as you purposefully try to enjoy this moment? How did your awareness of your senses impact your sense of enjoyment? What new things come to mind that you could be grateful to God for? How might this experience of God's goodness help you experience Psalm 38:4 today: "blessed is the one who takes refuge in him"?

Jesus taught his disciples that he came so that his joy and delight may be in them. He longed for it to be complete and overflowing. As you think about your meal, what situations, people, or lands could you overflow with prayers of blessing? Unfortunately, our food industry is full of unjust practices, mistreating the land and labourers to gain more profit. How might this love of God move you towards praying for and making intentional choices for greater justice, mercy and love for your neighbour? How could you extend the gift of grace you received by advocating for more grace and truth in the food industry?

FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO LINGER

Here are some ideas to deepen your experience of God's goodness with your tastebuds:

- Watch the whole movie of *Babette's Feast*. It's a marvel!
- Invite your next dinner companions to practice this exercise over the meal.
- Plan a menu that represents to you the scripture "Taste and see that the Lord is good." Then, make it for someone you think needs to know God is good.





DECEMBER 31
SEVENTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS

feet

**"...Because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us
from heaven
to shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the path of peace."**

- LUKE 1:78-79



feet

"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" - Isaiah 52:7

For many, feet carry them throughout the tasks of any given day, accumulating dirt, water, sand and whatever else they might step through. For others, their feet might rest on footplates and pick up whatever terrain their wheels kick up.

We are crossing the threshold of a calendar year at the end of this day. What sun, sand, dirt, grime, or water, have your feet touched this past year? What land(s) did your feet (or feet on wheels) take you to this year that you are grateful for? Where did your feet take you to places to love and serve others?

These are the feet of Mother Teresa towards the end of her life. Over time, her feet became deformed due to squeezing into donated shoes that were too small for her. She willingly chose this daily suffering while she served those who suffered far more. As a result of these choices, her body became physically altered in this way.

What is the story your feet want to tell you today? Is it a story of sacrifice, tenderness, and protection?

Take a moment to meditate on the fact that the Trinity loves you so much that Jesus's feet experienced the same vulnerabilities from the path of life as you: blisters on blisters, ingrown toenails, grime ground into the soles, hardened calluses and maybe even bunions!





FOR THE WEARY

stepping into a new year

Stand up and look for a temporary threshold line representing the new year - perhaps a doorway, or a line between tiles, or a path to cross.

Do you feel ready to cross the line and enter a new year? What is the prayer you have for the path ahead? Is there a movement you would like to do as you step over this imaginary threshold? Maybe it's just a tiny step, but perhaps it could be a dance, a leap, or a shuffle sliding your feet over the line. No one's looking, right? Is there a sound that you could make that expresses how you feel as you cross over the threshold?

Move how you feel your body wants to cross this imaginary threshold of a new year. If you want music to dance to, you could use the song “We Dance Before You” by Broken Walls on the Spotify playlist.



shorturl.at/nqyz1

FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO LINGER

Take an extra moment to rest with a breath prayer based on Isaiah 52:7 -

Inhale: My feet are beautiful

Exhale: You guide them toward peace.

Listen and sway or dance to the song Benedictus by Porter's Gate found in the playlist. They sing the line, “you will guide our feet into peace”, as declared by Zechariah.



JANUARY 1
EIGHTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS

noses

**“Shalom is what the
Kingdom of God smells
like.”**

- LISA SHARON HARPER

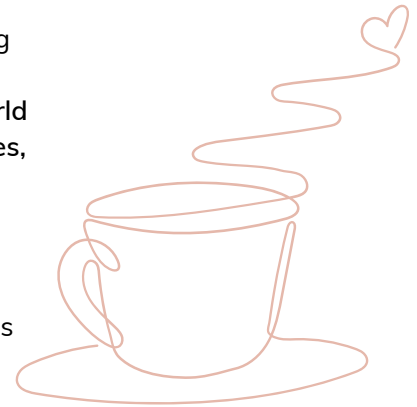


noses

“And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart.” - Ezekiel 36:26 (NLT)

What is the smell of a time or place where you knew you were loved? Is it a person's scent? A house? A specific meal? Have you ever smelled something in a place and felt like, for that moment, all was right in the world? The Hebrews have a word for that feeling: Shalom. It's God's dream for our world where all creation lives in the goodness of right relationships with ourselves, each other and the land. When nothing is broken, and no one is missing.

Smells bring up emotions related to a specific event and place. Scientists believe that scent and memory are closely linked because the brain's anatomy allows those smell-triggered signals to get to the part of our brains that regulate our emotions very quickly.



God's promise to us through the prophet Ezekiel is a poetic way of describing the process of becoming human. The more we lean into being fully human, the closer we come to the divine. A "tender, responsive heart" requires empathy, love, kindness, and connection with ourselves and others. Smells can help us remember important people and experience times when we experienced soft-hearted tenderness.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s last Christmas Day sermon before his assassination was about the importance of recognizing our human interconnectedness if we are going to have peace:

“It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. We are made to live together because of the interrelated structure of reality. Did you ever stop to think that you can't leave for your job in the morning without being dependent on most of the world? You get up in the morning and go to the bathroom and reach over for the sponge, and that's handed to you by a Pacific islander. You reach for a bar of soap, and that's given to you at the hands of a Frenchman. And then you go into the kitchen to drink your coffee for the morning, and that's poured into your cup by a South American. And maybe you want tea: that's poured into your cup by a Chinese. Or maybe you're desirous of having cocoa for breakfast, and that's poured into your cup by a West African. And then you reach over for your toast, and that's given to you at the hands of an English-speaking farmer, not to mention the baker. And before you finish eating breakfast in the morning, you've depended on more than half of the world.

EIGHTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS

This is the way our universe is structured, this is its interrelated quality. We aren't going to have peace on earth until we recognize this basic fact of the interrelated structure of all reality.

Man is a child of God, made in His image, and therefore must be respected as such. Until men see this everywhere, until nations see this everywhere, we will be fighting wars. One day somebody should remind us that, even though there may be political and ideological differences between us, the Vietnamese are our brothers, the Russians are our brothers, the Chinese are our brothers; and one day we've got to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. But in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile. In Christ there is neither male nor female. In Christ there is neither communist nor capitalist. In Christ, somehow, there is neither bound nor free. We are all one in Christ Jesus. And when we truly believe in the sacredness of human personality, we won't exploit people, we won't trample over people with the iron feet of oppression, we won't kill anybody."

How might we become people who form deep memories of our interconnectedness to one another?

FOR THE WEARY

softening our heart with scent

Find a scent where you are that makes you feel at peace like all is right in the world at this moment. Take time to relish it. Breathe deeply and let your body relax as you savour the experience and any memories that come to mind. Does this scent help you to have a soft heart towards yourself and others? Is there another scent or something else that comes to mind to try?

Now find another scent that smells like someone or something you want to remember you are connected to; your well-being is bound to their well-being. It could be related to their culture or food, or pastime they love. Take time to relish it. Breathe deeply and let your body relax as you savour the experience and any memories that come to mind.

What would you like to do in response to this experience of remembering them? How can you build on this inter-connectedness?

FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO LINGER

Find a scent you can enjoy while you read the entire sermon of Martin Luther King Jr. (<https://onbeing.org/blog/martin-luther-kings-last-christmas-sermon>)

You will be making a new memory connecting your experience reading the address with the scent you choose.





JANUARY 2
NINTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS

hands

「贈人玫瑰，手有餘香。」

**“A little fragrance always
clings to the hand that gives
the roses.”**

- CHINESE PROVERB

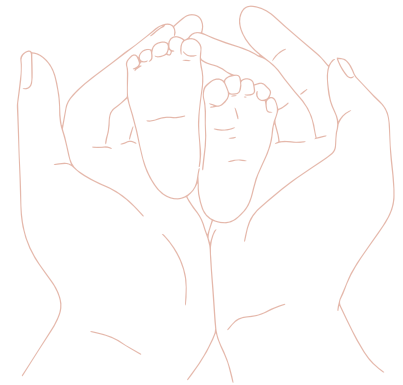


hands

“In Jerusalem at the time, there was a man, Simeon by name, a good man, a man who lived in the prayerful expectancy of help for Israel. And the Holy Spirit was on him. The Holy Spirit had shown him that he would see the Messiah of God before he died. Led by the Spirit, he entered the Temple.

As the parents of the child Jesus brought him in to carry out the rituals of the Law, Simeon took him into his arms and blessed God:

God, you can now release your servant; release me in peace as you promised. With my own eyes I've seen your salvation; it's now out in the open for everyone to see: A God-revealing light to the non-Jewish nations, and of glory for your people Israel.” - Luke 2:25-32 The Message



It's the new year - a time we often think of goals, resolutions, and plans for the future. Today we will consider your hopes for the new year through your hands. Spend a moment taking a long look at them, as they are today.

Spend a moment appreciating how God has used your hands this past year. How have they been shaped by the past year? Recognize how love has passed through your hands. What is the fragrance that clings to them from what they have given?

Today's story is an example of many hands at work. Mary and Joseph bring their baby to the temple. They bring two doves for the purification ritual, and someone's hands sacrifice them on the altar. Simeon holds the baby in his arms, holding the fulfillment of God's promise to him. It's a picture of giving and receiving items that hold so much more meaning than just their physical nature.

FOR THE WEARY

a tactile meditation

Gather a few textures around the place where you are today that you would like to bring into your next year. What do these textures feel like? What do they remind you of? As you think to your year ahead, in what scenarios will these textures be needed? What is the gift they offer to you?

What new things do you want to pick up in the year ahead? Take a few moments to ask God if there are things that God wants you to hold this year? Maybe there is a promise to hold on to while waiting like Simeon's word from the Lord?

Is there something or someone in your year ahead that you need to shake hands with?

End your time of reflection by holding your arms and hands in a posture that reflects how you are holding situations in the coming year. Are you giving it "the bird?" Are your fingers stretched wide to hold something enormous or are you holding something so small and tender that both hands need to cover it? Stay as long as you like with your hands in this position of prayer, adding words if you feel you want to.

"Christ has no body now on earth but yours,
no hands but yours, no feet but yours,
Yours are the eyes through which to look out Christ's
compassion to the world
Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good;
Yours are the hands with which he is to bless the world now."
— St. Teresa of Avila

FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO LINGER

grounding in nature

Go outside, take a walk and touch the natural elements as you pass. Grounding yourself to the natural world is good for your body. Feel the wind and temperature on your skin, stop to touch and bless the trees, bushes, grasses, ice or sand as you go along. How do these textures speak to you? How do they help you connect to your emotional, physical, mental and spiritual well-being?

Thank your Creator for the blessings of creation. If you see someone in need of a blessing, take the opportunity to ask if you can put your hands on their shoulder and pray for them.

*"I have been in
Sorrow's kitchen
and licked out all
the pots. Then I
have stood on the
peaky mountain
wrapped in
rainbows, with a
harp and sword in
my hands."*

- ZORA NEALE
HURSTON

*"You cannot shake
hands with a
clenched fist."*

- INDIRA GANDHI



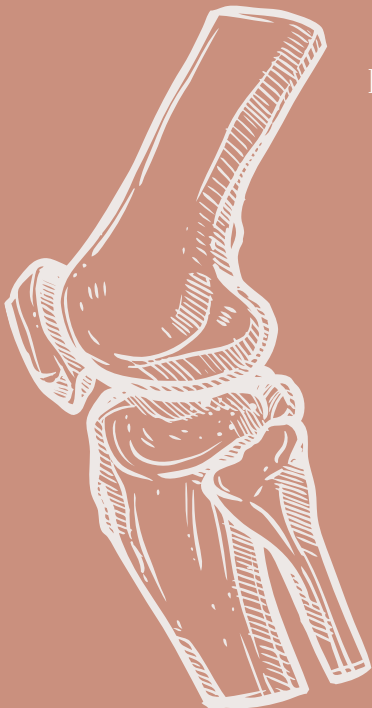
JANUARY 3
TENTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS



joints & muscles

"His breath filled all things
with a living, breathing light—
A light that thrives in the depths of
darkness,
blazes through murky bottoms.
It cannot and will not be quenched."

-JOHN 1: 4-5,
THE VOICE TRANSLATION



joints & muscles

How is your body feeling today? Are there aches or pains from your activity this week? Are there joints and ligaments that could use life and light?

Jesus experienced aches and pains too. His first 30 years were spent as an ordinary joe carpenter and labourer in an ordinary town, living with ordinary parents and siblings. He spent days bending over furniture, lifting heavy pieces of wood. He probably accidentally hit his fingers with the hammer and spent time picking out splinters. His stomach gurgled as he waited for dinner; he got headaches when dehydrated and likely had nights of lousy sleep due to noisy neighbours.

Jesus longs to meet you in the creaks and groans. When our ankles swell, and we groan as we get out of bed, God understands our human experience inside and out. We can ask for God to meet us with light and life in our bodies.

After being diagnosed with stage IV cancer, theologian and author Kate Bowler worked intentionally to love her body for its strengths and failures. By embracing the wisdom of the incarnation, she learned to attend to her body's messages and to respond with kindness. As part of her spiritual practice, she wrote letters to her body like this excerpt on the right:

"Dear, dear body, I get it. Or at least I am starting to. You do not have an unlimited supply. You run out, and I need to listen. Maybe I really should go to bed a little earlier or let you off the hook for craving those extra salty chips. I need to sense when you are struggling, and gently acknowledge that you are actually changing. That time and love and grief and life have worn themselves into my skin. Day by day. This is the beautiful, terrible evidence that we have lived."

- KATE BOWLER

FOR THE WEARY

tending to our stress

Here's a 10-minute grounding exercise to loosen the joints and pay attention to how your muscles feel. If you don't have mobility in certain joints or experience pain, respect your limits and consider modifying this practice to do what feels good to you in the moment.

Stress has a tendency to lock the joints. We often trick our minds into believing that our stress is not affecting us. Luckily, our bodies will tell us the truth when our minds have alternate agendas.

Please stand comfortably, shifting the weight between both legs. Take a few deep, cleansing breaths. Ask your Creator to speak to you as you listen to your joints and muscles. You are not trying to "make" your body parts feel anything in particular, instead, you are just noticing how they feel if you try to loosen them.

TENTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS

Starting with your right **toes**, lift them to the ceiling as you keep your heel down and flexed. Do that a few times before moving to your left toes with the same action. Pause, take a breath and notice before moving on to see if you can notice how your feet and calves feel now.

Stand on one foot, take hold of something if you need help with balance, and rotate each ankle in one direction 10 times and then the opposite direction 10 times. Pause to notice how that feels. What temperature are your feet? Has it changed from before?

Place both hands on your **knees** and make a big circle. Imagine yourself stirring a big pot of soup with your knees. Scrape the sides of the pot with even larger movements. Shake them out when you feel done, and take another breath to notice how your knees feel.

Onto the **hips** - did you ever hula hoop as a kid? I was terrible at it! But your skill won't matter now since it's an imaginary one. Make big circles in one direction and then the other before coming back to stillness. Pause to feel how your hips feel. Do you need more time there to feel free and relaxed, or are you ready to move on?

Squeeze your **butt and thighs** as tight as you can. Imagine making yourself one-dimensional, as flat as possible, like a sheet of paper. Release after a count of 8. Do it again to get a sense of how they feel relaxed.

Circle both **wrists** together 10 times. Imagine holding paintbrushes and painting as large a circle as you can on a canvas. Go in the other direction for another 10 rotations and see if that feels any different. Now imagine your hands are like flashing lights. Extend your fingers as wide as possible and then draw them together in a fist. Do that 20 times, moving the joints in your fingers to loosen them up. When you feel done, drop your hands to your side and take another breath. Your hands might start to feel warmer. What temperature would you describe them to be now?

Stretch out your **arms** as wide as you can, like wings. Next, turn your palms up and bend your elbows 20 times so that your hands touch your shoulders. Notice how that feels to extend and bend your elbows. Stay as long as it feels good.

Drop your arms and raise your **shoulders** to your ears when you're done. Slowly rotate your shoulders forward in 10 circles, then backward when ready for 10 more rotations. Notice any sounds your joints are making as they are making the rounds. End by holding your shoulders up as high as you can for a few seconds and then release. You might like to match that release with a loud sigh as well.



TENTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS

Gently stretch your neck down to your right shoulder. If you want to place your hand on your head for a more deep tug, you can. Rotate your neck down to your chest and hold. Then rotate over to your left shoulder. Slowly rotate down to your chest and over to the right making a U with your head. Look up at the ceiling and make a few complete circles. Come to stillness, balancing your head in the centre and notice what you feel.

End with your jaw. Say a deep "ah" with your jaw dropped, and then move to an "ooh" sound to bring your jaw in. Go back and forth and try making some circles with your jaw.

Take a few moments to breathe and notice how your body feels at this moment. Is there anything else your body needs to do to feel like light and life can come into your joints and muscles? Are there words to say or sing to Jesus in response to this time of listening to your joints?

FOR THE RESTED AND THE LINGERER

Add some more stretching of other body parts that you are familiar with. If you'd like to follow a gentle Christian Yoga session focused on John 15:5, we recommend this one (10 mins):

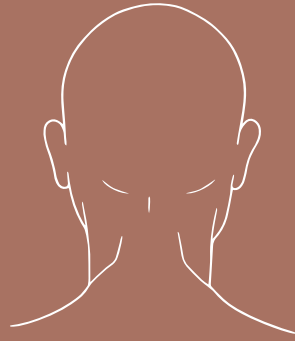


youtu.be/teGwheyyp0



Listen to Jonathan Maracle's song, Khenoronkhwa, "Jesus is Good Medicine," on the Spotify playlist in a comfortable resting posture.

Feel free to move to the drumbeat, patting, squeezing or massaging an area of your body that is sore to the beat.



JANUARY 4
ELEVENTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS

your load-bearing parts

**"I must accept the world as it is,
or break against the truth of it:
my life is made of paper walls.
And so is everyone else's."**

- KATE BOWLER



your load-bearing parts

"Come close to my side, you whose hearts are on the ground, you who are pushed down and worn out, and I will refresh you. Follow my teachings, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest from your troubled thoughts. Walk side by side with me and I will share in your heavy load and make it light."

- Matthew 11: 28-30 First Nations Version

Where do you carry "the weight of the world?" Your shoulders? Your lower back?

Throughout Junior High, I carried the anxiety of "fitting in" in my gut- almost daily stomach aches until I graduated. During college, I had sharp pains behind my shoulder blades. Lately, stress has shown up in eye spasms and shoulders that feel like iron rods. All these symptoms are my body saying that I'm carrying things I'm not meant to bear. Headaches, muscle spasms or aching feet can be our body's way of asking for mercy. Do you hear a message of compassion or condemnation when your body speaks this way?

The First Nations Version translation of Jesus' invitation in Matthew provides unique phrases to consider how we might invite Jesus to walk with us today. Which phrase is especially fitting for you? Is there some way of being with Jesus in this passage that is a comforting perspective? As you read it over again, is there an invitation from Jesus that comes to mind for today?



“All of us struggle against the constraints placed on our bodies, our commitments, our ambitions, and our resources, even as we're saddled with inflated expectations of invincibility. This is the strange cruelty of suffering in America, its insistence that everything is still possible.”

-KATE BOWLER

FOR THE WEARY

self-compassion meditation

This is a great exercise to do lying down or on something supportive. If you have a candle, you can light it to symbolize the presence of Jesus with you by your side. Take a few deep breaths to relax.

Starting from your feet, scan up your body as you did on Christmas Day and notice what body part or parts are feeling particularly constricted, sore or tired today. Choose one to listen to with empathy. What is the conversation that this body part would like to have with you at this moment? What is it carrying, or what has contributed to it feeling ground down or worn out? Name those things out loud to give over to Jesus.

What would it mean to give some compassionate love to that body part? It might not feel very comfortable, but your body doesn't get embarrassed. Just notice without judgment how it feels to respond to your pain with kindness. Research indicates that physical touch releases oxytocin, our body's "feel good" chemical. It provides security, soothes distressing emotions, and calms cardiovascular stress. Does it need a stretch, a rub or a squeeze?

Take 10 minutes to care for that part of your body as you feel is necessary. Invite Jesus to be your caregiver, listening for how Jesus wants to meet you now.

Try adding this breath prayer to your action:

Inhale: My _____ (body part) find its rest in you, Jesus.

Exhale: I release the load.

FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO LINGER

Add a movement and a sound to release tension. Choose another body part to focus on and spend some time doing an activity that will bring release and comfort to that area. It could be more vigorous activity, like a sweaty workout, run, or dancing.

We recommend this Christian Yoga session for hips if your hips require some love. Neuroscience is showing that the hips often act as containers for our emotions.



youtu.be/Awio6wRlswg



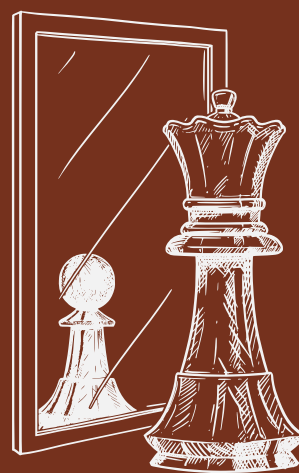


JANUARY 5
TWELFTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS

your unimpressive parts

**"You're imperfect, and
you're wired for struggle,
but you are worthy of love
and belonging."**

- BRENÉ BROWN



your unimpressive parts

“Who believes what we’ve heard and seen?

Who would have thought God’s saving power would look like this?

**The servant grew up before God—a scrawny seedling,
a scrubby plant in a parched field.**

**There was nothing attractive about him,
nothing to cause us to take a second look.**

**He was looked down on and passed over,
a man who suffered, who knew pain firsthand.”**

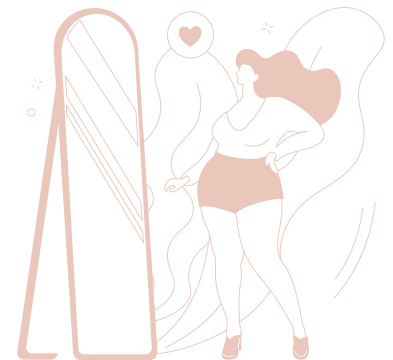
- Isaiah 53:1-3 The Message

The prophecy in Isaiah does not describe Jesus as the stunning knockout the movies cast him to be! He did not have Caviezel's piercing blue eyes. And if you're even older than The Passion of the Christ to know Jesus Christ Superstar, he probably didn't have Ted Neeley's chiselled cheekbones either. He is described as "nothing attractive, nothing to cause us to take a second look." Yet, the power of God was with him, and he redeemed all of humanity and creation through his loving presence on earth and faithful sacrifice on the cross.

Nowadays, it's hard to believe that an average, unimpressive-looking dude could be so impactful. Millions of messages and voices tell us all day long that we must choose "our brand" wisely and follow the trends to be relevant and gain followers. Camera filters, expensive products and procedures promise to accentuate the latest on-trend attribute. As a result, men and women, young and old, are shamed into working very hard to look attractive, so as to be seen as successful. It's almost impossible to believe that our worth is not tied to our appearance.

But this is not the way of the Kingdom of God! Jesus gives the insignificant, unimpressive, and unproductive outcasts dignity and honour. The leper matters to Jesus. The Samaritan woman on the outskirts of society holds the key to Jesus' identity.

God has forever made human flesh the privileged place of the divine encounter, not because it was gorgeous. Our bodies; with stubby toes, scaly elbows, acne and ears that aren't straight, are God's chosen temple to dwell. The body you have now is the only body you will ever have to experience God's dwelling within. And the good news is - an apron tummy or thick ankles won't disqualify you from participating in the presence of God!



FOR THE WEARY

a loving-kindness prayer for our unimpressive parts

Take a few deep breaths and move into a comfortable position sitting or lying down on something supportive. Breathe and rest for a moment. Then bring someone to mind whom you know has your best interests at heart, someone who really thinks you are great and loves you unconditionally. Take a few moments to imagine this person admiring you. Imagine them expressing their hopes for you to flourish in their smile and in their eyes. Drink that feeling in however it shows up. If you can't recall a person, you could imagine someone or your Creator God seeing you in this way.

Now choose a body part that you perceive to be unimpressive to you. It could be something you are dissatisfied with the way it looks, moves, or works. Take a few moments to give that part a loving gaze. Imagine your supportive person also looking at this particular part with unconditional acceptance. How could you express warmth, kindness and acceptance to this body part? What would you do for it? Is there anything you notice to feel grateful about part of your body?

Please choose one of these phrases from scripture to meditate on as you give it some loving attention. Notice what comes up without judgment as you speak these truths over this particular area of your body.

Hear Jesus speak this prayer for you for this body part
"May you be safe, protected and free from harm.
May you be content and happy.
May you be healthy and whole to whatever degree possible in this moment.
May you be at peace."

If it feels good to agree with this prayer, you can pray it back to Jesus:
"May I be safe, protected and free from harm.
May I be content and happy.
May I be healthy and whole to whatever degree possible in this moment.
May I be at peace."

Take one last moment to notice how your body feels in response to this reflection and prayer. If the part would like to move, follow its lead. What movement would make you smile?

*I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Psalm 139:4*

*I am made in God's image.
Genesis 1:27*

*God sees my heart, not only my appearance.
1 Samuel 16:7*

*I am God's masterpiece
Ephesians 2:10*

*This part of my body holds the spirit of God.
1 Corinthians 6:19*

*I am created for God's glory.
Isaiah 43:7*

*I am holy and blameless in God's eyes.
Ephesians 1:4*

*I am wholly accepted.
Romans 15:7*

*God does not favour others over me.
Acts 10:34-35*

*God's power is made perfect in my weakness.
2 Corinthians 12:9*

FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO LINGER

holding a smile

Practice smiling for 10 minutes. Choose another affirmation to imagine God speaking to you as you hold a smile. You might also want to think of music that will help you hold your smile. Today is your last day to listen to your favourite Christmas carol during this season!

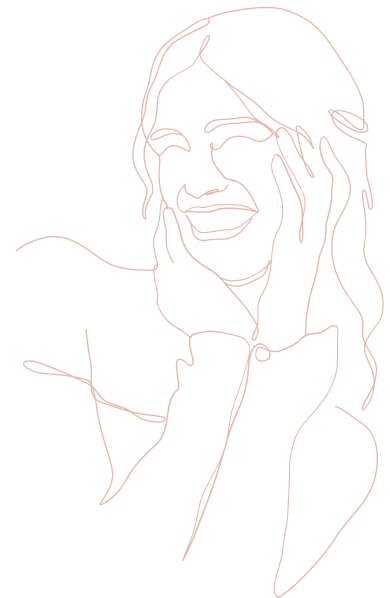
Research suggests smiling during brief periods of stress may help reduce the body's stress response, regardless of whether the person feels happy. Smiles that engage the muscles in the mouth, cheeks, and eyes are considered to be genuine smiles and give the benefit. Smiling also gives these benefits: boosts the immune system, releases endorphins and serotonin, reduces pain, and influences feelings of positivity.

If you need help holding a smile for 10 minutes, put a pencil or chopstick in your teeth. It keeps the smile muscles in place, which engages all the benefits.

Notice what comes to mind without judgment, and notice if anything has shifted in your outlook afterwards. Smiling is contagious, so practice responding to others throughout the day with a smile and see how it impacts them!

**“Smiling is very important.
If we are not able to smile,
then the world will not
have peace.”**

-THÍCH NHẤT HẠNH



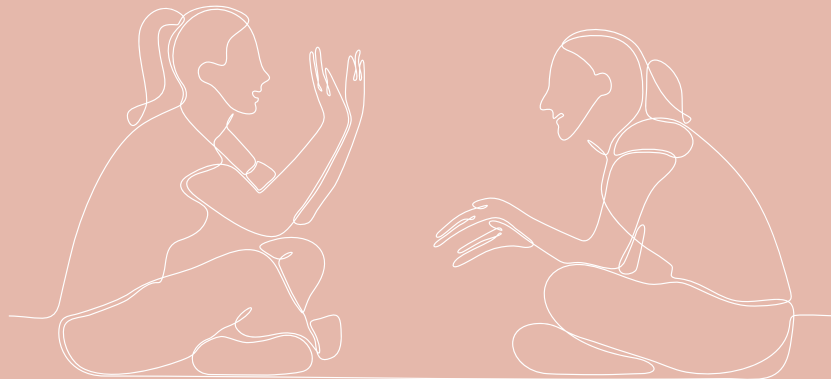


JANUARY 6
EPIPHANY

voice

**“Pay attention
Be astonished.
Tell about it.”**

- MARY OLIVER





EPIPHANY

voice

We have come to the close of Christmas and begin the season of Epiphany. Today, we remember the wise men from the East, led by their knowledge of the stars, worshipping God as a baby.

Epiphany is the season of enlightenment. We focus on the way Jesus declares, "I am the light of the world," in words and actions throughout his last three years. Those who have witnessed his life are sent out in response. Jesus sends his followers, "You are the light of the world!" This season, we reflect on how we can share what we have seen, heard and experienced of the goodness of God.

Once we have soaked in the wonder of Emmanuel "God with us", we can see the whole world as a burning bush filled with God's presence. We can choose humbly to depend on God for eyes to see how God is already where we are and ask for courage to celebrate what we see God doing. This posture of being sent as witnesses is very important because it reminds us that we do not bring the Gospel anywhere where it is not already. God's Kingdom is evident everywhere and we can bear witness to it. This is why we can choose to see and celebrate God's presence in hard places.

For those of us who work with Servant Partners and did not grow up on the margins of society but now live and serve there, this is our story. It is through being present and serving that we are mutually transformed alongside our neighbours. We have been converted by those whom we serve. It is through serving that we have been transformed. Incarnational mission is not a one-way street, a top-down or paternalistic approach. Rather, it is a two-way street in which all parties are mutually transformed.

"The Word sends us into the world to en flesh the Word—to make it visible to a world blinded by fear and violence. Jesus sends us into the world to be joy-filled, wounded healers who bear witness to the liberating Good News that is diffused throughout all creation."

- KRIS ROCKE AND
JOEL VAN DYCK



FOR THE WEARY, RESTED AND THE LINGERER

tell your story

Take a walk outside and around your neighbourhood. As you move your body, think back over what you have witnessed in your body these past 12 days. As you are walking, speak to Jesus about what has impacted you. What are you taking from this experience? Turn it into a short prayer that matches the rhythm of your steps.

Who might be hungry to know that God wants to meet with them through their physical bodies? Who would be curious to know about the experience you've had? What part of the story do you want to tell them? How could you show them love and tell them what you've learned?

Is there a song of worship that comes to mind as a response to these last twelve days with Jesus this season? Take some time to sing it somewhere that feels comfortable for you.

Receive this final prayer of blessing, adapted from Christine Sine's "Prayer to begin the Journey".

**Emmanuel, may I live within limits,
of my body, my mind, and my spirit,**

**Emmanuel, may I live within limits,
of my calling, my community, my capacity,**

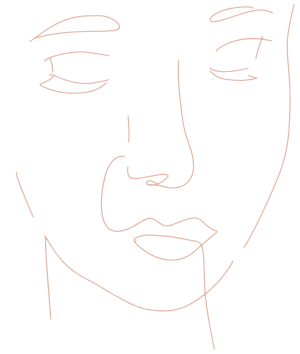
**Emmanuel, may I live within limits,
of who I am and who you want me to be.**

**May I learn to live in the place of trust,
and wrap my heart around your presence.**

**May I learn to still my mind and listen,
attentive to the quiet whispers of your voice**

**May I attune my ears to your words,
and savour the sacredness of each moment.**

**May your ways echo in the depths of my being,
so that all I am and all I do,
flows from an experience of your love.
Amen.**



Thank you for joining us on this embodied Christmas journey!

If you would like to explore further the themes in this devotional and Servant Partners' incarnational work among marginalized communities, here are some opportunities:

stay in touch for updates, stories & resources

 www.servantpartners.ca
  @servantpartnerscanada

explore our community transformation certificate (CTC)

Curious about pursuing mutual transformation alongside marginalized neighbours in your city or community?

Learn to engage an under-resourced community by listening to the strengths and groanings of your neighbours and co-create a seed project in response. Join us in a unique 2-day online learning environment and discern how to put into practice the skills learned in your own community!

servantpartners.ca/ctc

learn and collaborate with us

If you're looking for ways to seek the welfare of the city, build greater shalom in your community or share the experience of embodied spirituality in this devotional, we'd love to come alongside you!

Our staff team is made up of experienced practitioners, co-learners and ministry coaches and we are available to offer workshops, retreats, coaching and speaking engagements tailored to your group's needs.

Please connect with Krista-Dawn at krista-dawn.kimsey@servantpartners.ca to explore opportunities for facilitating learning experiences for your group or community!

We appreciate your feedback!

If you have a few minutes, please fill in this feedback form: shorturl.at/gipq5
This will help us with creating quality and relevant resources in the future. Thank you!

references

A note on encountering pain in your story or body

- To learn more about grounding through the 54321 practice:
www.choosingtherapy.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/2-2.png
- lengthening your exhale here:
[/www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/a-parasympathetic-breathing-exercise-to-calm-your-mind-body](http://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/a-parasympathetic-breathing-exercise-to-calm-your-mind-body)
- To learn more about writing breath prayers that match our experience of God's goodness, read *Seeds of Joy* by Dr. Dorothy Mathieson

Breath

- Hugging Meditation from the book *Momfulness*, Denise Roy
- First Aid Arts mini toolkit:
www.firstaidarts.org/minitoolkit

Eyes -

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- globalworship.tumblr.com/search/nativity/page/2
- thejesusquestion.org/2011/12/25/nativity-paintings-from-around-the-world/
- globalworship.tumblr.com/post/136225392585/christmas-story-art-from-india-sr-claire-set-1
- quote from Cheryl Bear: *Introduction to First Nations Ministry*, p58

Heartbeat

- Is the brain the only place that stores our memories? sites.bu.edu/ombs/2014/11/11/is-the-brain-the-only-place-that-stores-our-memories/

Skin

- Soothing your skin exercise adapted from chapter 11 in the book *My Grandmothers Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* by Resmaa Menakem

Tastebuds

- Richard Rohr quote: cac.org/daily-meditations/the-mystery-of-incarnation-2017-01-27/
- Karen Blixen quote:
www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/17505992-babettes-g-stebud

Joints + muscles

- Quotes from *Good Enough: 40ish Devotionals for a Life of Imperfection* by Kate Bowler and Jessica Richie
- For more on how stress affects your joints:
www.spectrumortho.com/blog/effects-of-stress-on-joints/

Your load-bearing parts

- Kate Bowler quote from *No Cure for Being Human: And Other Truths I Need to Hear*
- For more on emotional connections to our hips: thebackclinic.co.za/we-hold-trauma-in-our-hips/

Your unimpressive parts

- Loving-Kindness prayer adapted by material from Jon Kabat-Zinn & Eve Ekman
ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/loving_kindness_meditation &
<https://www.mindful.org/this-loving-kindness-meditation-is-a-radical-act-of-love/>
- More on the positive effects of smiling:
www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/isnt-what-i-expected/201208/try-some-smile-therapy

Epiphany: Voice

- Kris Rocke & Joel Van Dyke quote from *Street Psalms Incarnational Training Framework* p36, 44:
urbantraining.net/incarnational-training-framework/
- Prayer of Christine Sine from the book *Return to our Senses: Reimagining How We Pray*

contributors

Krista-Dawn Kimsey is the co-founder and co-Executive Director of Servant Partners Canada, a Christian missional non-profit that inspires people to seek the Shalom of their city by working alongside their neighbours in marginalized communities.

For 25 years, her vocational passion has been to facilitate creative and transformational learning experiences to disciple, coach leaders and pursue greater justice around the world.



Wendy Au Yeung 歐陽詠慈 (she/her) is a settler of Hong Kong-Chinese descent. Since 2015, she has been living and working with Servant Partners Canada in the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood as a guest on the unceded Coast Salish Territories of the xʷməθkʷə́yəm (Musqueam), sə́lilwə́taʔt (Tseil-Waututh), and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) nations.

She has found great joy, healing and shalom through journeying with newcomer families with refugee backgrounds, Chinese seniors and Muslim women through gathering, food and social enterprise (@happywomankitchen). She loves living at the intersection of hands-on justice, creativity and cross-cultural relationships.

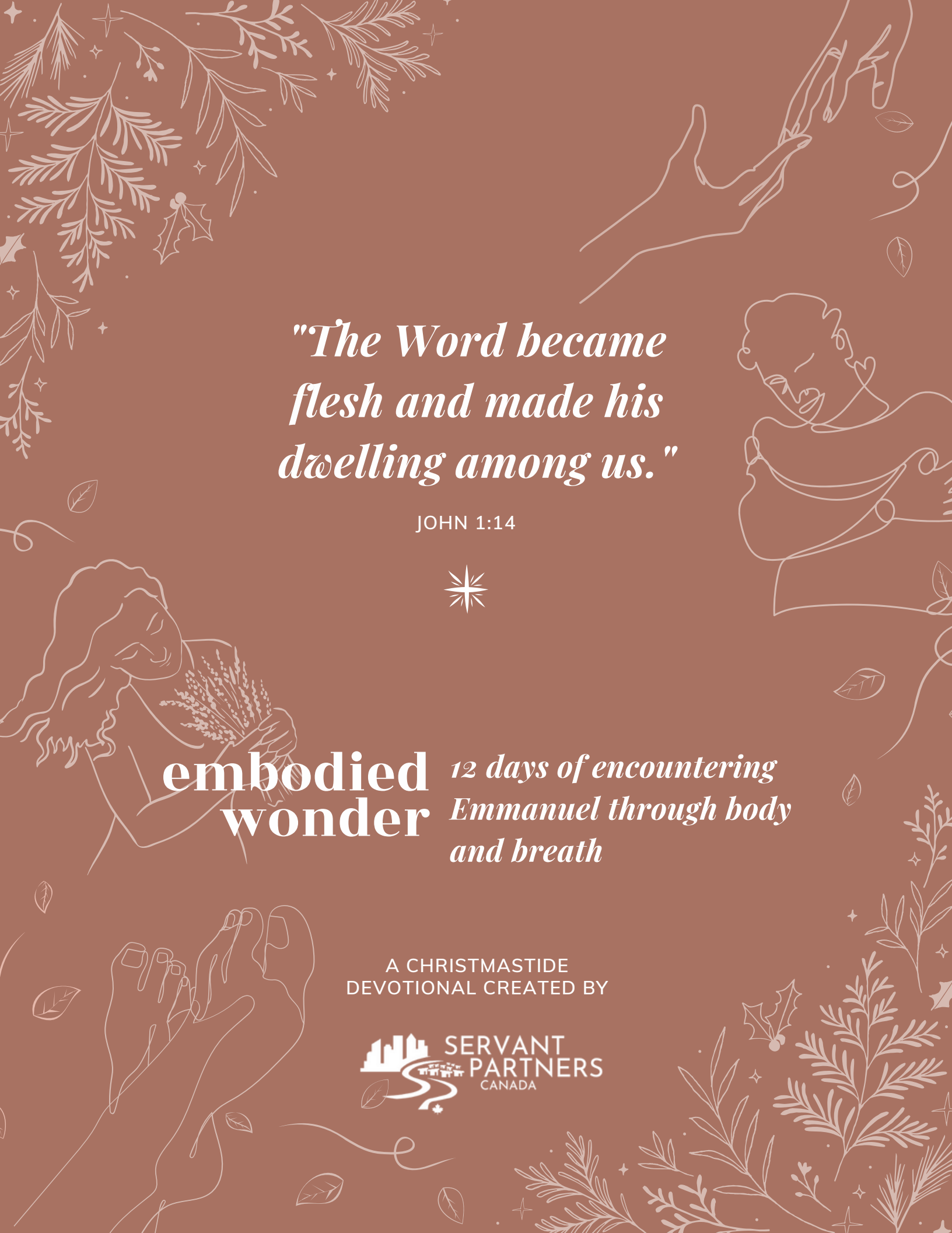




notes

notes





*"The Word became
flesh and made his
dwelling among us."*

JOHN 1:14



**embodied
wonder**

*12 days of encountering
Emmanuel through body
and breath*

A CHRISTMASTIDE
DEVOTIONAL CREATED BY

