
Holy Hacks: December 6, 2019

By the Rev. Julia Mitchener

And so it's begun—December, that month of delights but also delirium. There is always just one more thing to be done, if not twenty more. The pressure to try to be everything to everyone looms larger than at any other time of year. Children sense that we are overwhelmed and may respond with frenzied, strung out behaviors of their own.

Fortunately, there is an antidote to the “Christmas Crazies.” The season of Advent, while not widely observed outside the Church, can be a wonderful gift to anyone wanting to do even just one or two things differently during the holidays this year. Advent invites us to quietness, to savoring, to taking a breather, to saying no to a few commitments we don't really need to make. Think of it as a permission slip to opt out of some parts of the season that make you feel especially frantic.

There are lots of ways to observe this kind of Advent. I have a friend who, each December, sets her alarm fifteen minutes early so that she can tiptoe downstairs and drink her morning coffee while she enjoys the Christmas lights, does some deep breathing, or simply stares out the window at the beauty of the sun rising through the bare branches of the trees.

Other ideas include selecting a book of short devotions to read before bed each night (There are some good titles in the Cathedral Book Store); creating a special Advent playlist to listen to while on a walk or run; or participating in the cathedral's Advent Quiet Day led by the Rev. Lauren Holder tomorrow, December 7.

Speaking of Advent Quiet Days, whole families can indulge in one. Don't laugh—it's not as hard or as monastic as it may sound! Even though most of us may not feel able to set aside an entire day, we can probably manage an Advent Afternoon or at least an Advent Hour. Agree as a family that this will be a time when you'll all gather together at home and put down your technology. Play games; read seasonal stories; do some crafting or coloring (Find free downloadable resources at prayingincolor.com). Make hot chocolate and enjoy sitting and playing by the Christmas tree; have a family carol sing, letting everyone pick their favorites; bring out, or buy, a creche that's sturdy enough for your children to handle. Let them enjoy acting out the story of Jesus' birth with the nativity scene in the same way they might play with their dolls.

Have questions or ideas about observing Advent? Email me at julia.mitchener@cathedralATL.org.