

A Special Invitation to the 12 Days of Christmas



The 12 days of Christmas was the early churches attempt to help people recognize and set apart time to ponder the birth of Jesus. Most holidays last one day... Christmas is 12 days and Easter is 50 days! The more days, the more important the holiday!

However, because we have New Years Eve and our Advent has in some ways become "four weeks of celebrating," instead of "four weeks of preparing," the 12 days of Christmas have gotten lost.

I believe that the 12 days of Christmas are very important for us because:

1. Advent is a time to prepare, not celebrate. With all the secular and sacred prep time, we have little time to reflect, ponder and pray in the days leading up to Christmas. As much as we all try to find quiet time, it nearly never happens!
2. Christmas is important. God became flesh and dwells with us... that takes pondering and reflection to even begin to wrap our heads around. I mean... that is great love!
3. It marks the time between Christmas until Epiphany. On Epiphany we remember the gifts given to Jesus and ask ourselves what gifts we bring to him!

Rev. Dr. Leanne Hadley

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The challenge in the church is how to start using the 12 days of Christmas when it is time where families skip church (they are tired) or travel, or where the excitement of the new year begins the day after Christmas.

Here is one idea I plan to try at my church this year.

- Prior to Christmas each child (not family...each child) will receive a special card in the mail. I plan to make it “magical” looking (see my inspiration below).
- The envelope will say: DO NOT OPEN UNTIL CHRISTMAS!
- On Christmas day the children will each open their envelope and inside will be a special Christmas greeting and then they will be invited to spend the 12 Days of Christmas pondering what gift they would like to bring to the manger on Epiphany Sunday.
- They will be invited to bring: a poem they write, a picture they draw, a special feather or stone they find outside... anything they would give to Jesus.
- On Epiphany Sunday we will hear the story of the wise men, gather around the manger and each child will place their gift for Jesus in the manger.
- Then we will spend time pondering what “spirit” gift we plan to give Jesus of ourselves in the coming year: kindness, compassion, peaceful hearts and one at a time, as the children share their spirit gifts, they will be blessed.