

Creative resources to tell the Christmas Story



FROM
GENERATION
TO GENERATION...

RESOURCES INCLUDED IN THE BUNDLE

- 1. DAILY DEVOTIONAL BOOKLET** (A printable devotional booklet with: scripture, commentary, poetry, visual art, hymns, and journaling prompts).
- 2. SERMON PLANNING GUIDE** (A guide offering biblical commentary as well as theme connections and links to further reading for our focal scriptures for Advent through Epiphany).
- 3. WORDS FOR WORSHIP** (Written liturgy inspired by the theme and our focal scriptures for Advent through Epiphany).
- 4. BANNER DESIGNS** (For bringing to life as large, paper lace banners in your worship space, or as art families can create at home to create sacred space in their dwelling place).
- 5. 13 NEW VISUALS WITH ARTIST STATEMENTS** (Illuminating our focal scriptures for Advent through Epiphany).
- 6. BRANDING BUNDLE** (Logo files and graphics to help you share the theme in your print and online communications).
- 7. POETRY PRAYERS** (7 poems inspired by our theme and weekly sub-themes).
- 8. A CREATIVE LITURGY FOR CHRISTMAS** (A creative full order of worship adaptable for Christmas Day or New Year's Day).
- 9. INTERGENERATIONAL ART CURRICULUM** (Intergenerational art projects for children, youth, and adults).
- 10. ADVENT CALENDAR** (An interactive calendar with daily prompts for children & their families).
- 11. STAR WORDS WITH LITURGY FOR EPIPHANY SUNDAY** (Star words inspired by our theme & scriptures with an accompanying liturgy to invite worshipers to return to their star word throughout the new year).

Free Supplementary Resources

- 1. HYMN & MUSIC IDEAS**—featuring original hymns inspired by our sub-themes, shared on our blog.
- 2. A CONTENT CALENDAR FOR SOCIAL MEDIA**—an add-on free to bundle patrons.
- 3. INSPIRATION FOR A LESSONS & CAROLS SERVICE** a blog post offering ideas for hosting a simple service centered around scripture and song. This could be used for either Christmas Day or New Year's Day.

HOW WE DEVELOPED THIS THEME

For the past 6 years, A Sanctified Art has created Advent resources inspired by the Revised Common Lectionary. While much of our larger ecumenical audience follows these common scriptures each year and there is beauty in these unifying texts, we started to crave what the lectionary doesn't offer: a clear, chronological storyline of the events leading up to and following Christ's birth. For the sake of biblical literacy and narrative cohesion, we felt it could be deeply meaningful to offer an Advent series that hones in on all the humans involved in the story. And so, sourcing from all of the Gospel writers, we hand-selected scriptures in an attempt to tell the full scope of the Christmas story. We paired these narrative Gospel texts with the Isaiah scriptures from Year A in the Lectionary. In this way, our focal scriptures look at the Christmas story through a micro and macro lens, focusing on both the human interactions and events recorded in the Gospels, as well as the cosmic prophecies in Isaiah.

ABOUT THE THEME

As we read through and studied the scriptures we selected, a line from Mary's song of protest and praise gave us pause:

*Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.*

*His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.*

(Luke 1: 48b-50)

Despite the challenges and vulnerability she faced, Mary could glimpse the scale and scope of the good news she was part of bringing forth. This good news transcends time and space—it was and is bigger than just her. Christ is coming for collective liberation: God's redemption is at work for years to come. Therefore, the promise is meant to be lived out and passed on from generation to generation.

We are invited to look at the characters in our scriptures and wonder: What did each character pass on or contribute? How did each character participate in God's liberation and love? Which characters try to thwart God's justice and what can we learn from them? What is our role now? What is our generation's task? What will we carry forth, and what should we leave behind?

The root word of "generation" is "gen" meaning "origin" or "birth." Our theme is also a call to action: what are we being called to generate or bring forth? What have your ancestors and those who have come before you passed on for you to continue? Who are the spiritual elders in your community who planted the seeds for the things that are now blooming? What seeds are you planting for the future?

From Generation to Generation... reminds us of the ways our lives, histories, actions, and stories are interconnected and woven together. In the midst of narratives, policies, and rhetoric designed to divide us, what does it look like to practice belonging to one another? The work of God is always unfolding—in and through us. This Advent season, how will we carry it forth?

FOCAL SCRIPTURES



FROM
GENERATION
TO GENERATION...
There's room for every story

The First Sunday of Advent | FROM GENERATION
TO GENERATION...

There's room for every story

Matthew 1:1-17 | Isaiah 2:1-5

Our series begins with Matthew's genealogy. In that long list of names, we remember the trauma and triumph of those who came before; each name holds a story and their story gives way to Christ's story. When you zoom in, you may not be able to see how each character propels the story forward, but when you zoom out, you can see how each story is woven together into a larger tapestry. The Isaiah passage illustrates a convergence of opposing groups and identities coming together. Instead of the way of the past—of war—they learn a new way by transforming their weapons into gardening tools. What are the old paths that we've followed, and where must we diverge into a new way?



FROM
GENERATION
TO GENERATION...
God meets us in our fear

The Second Sunday of Advent | FROM GENERATION
TO GENERATION...

God meets us in our fear

Luke 1:26-38 | Isaiah 11:1-10

When the angel Gabriel comes to Mary, she is perplexed and confused—and no doubt, afraid. And yet, the angel's news is: "Do not be afraid." Do not be afraid. We hear this refrain all throughout the Christmas story and remember it is the most common phrase in all the bible. From generation to generation, God shows up in the midst of our fear and uncertainty and confusion. From generation to generation, faithful people have said "yes" despite apprehension. From generation to generation, our ancestors in faith have accepted the invitation. The prophecy in Isaiah paints a vision of what we work toward when we say "yes": righteousness and equity reign, the wolf lives with the lamb, no harm or hurt shall destroy the earth, a child shall lead the way.



FROM
GENERATION
TO GENERATION...
We can choose a better way

The Third Sunday of Advent | FROM GENERATION
TO GENERATION...

We can choose a better way

Matthew 1:18-25 | Isaiah 35:1-10

As far as Joseph knows, his new wife has been unfaithful to him and broken their marriage contract. And yet, instead of punishment, he chooses not to publicly disgrace or humiliate her. This interruption in his life becomes a holy invitation when the angel comes to him in a dream and says, "Do not be afraid." When he awakes, Joseph once again has the courage to choose a better way. He chooses to stay with Mary, to become an adoptive parent. He chooses peace over violence, grace over condemnation. When have our ancestors also chosen a better way, and when have they not? Isaiah 35 is a vision of what happens when we choose a better way: the wilderness blooms, water breaks forth in the desert, eyes are opened, ears are unstopped, sorrow and sadness flee away. A highway shall appear and it will become a holy way.



FROM
GENERATION
TO GENERATION...
We see God in each other

The Fourth Sunday of Advent | FROM GENERATION
TO GENERATION...

We see God in each other

Luke 1:39-45; 56-58 | Luke 1:46-55

This week we return to Mary's experience. After receiving the news from the angel, she retreats to her cousin Elizabeth's house. When Mary arrives (perhaps unannounced), Elizabeth doesn't just welcome her—she is filled with the Holy Spirit and speaks a blessing upon Mary as her own child leaps and kicks within her womb. She sees how God is at work and names it out loud. In this moment of profound solidarity, Mary and Elizabeth see the divine in one another. From generation to generation, we can see how God is at work in our relationships. The way we see the divine in each other impacts how we live and move in the world. When we view every human being as a child of God, we generate a different world.

FOCAL SCRIPTURES (cont.)

Christmas Eve | FROM GENERATION
TO GENERATION...

We tell this story

Luke 2:1-20

We tell *this* story every year. We tell this story because it illustrates so clearly God's desire to be in relationship with us. We tell this story because we, too, are invited to come to the manger and witness the miracle of birth. We tell this story because it brings us hope and good news—hope especially for those deemed powerless, unworthy, or unwelcome. We tell this story because it is a story we need to hear again and again; if we didn't tell it, what would become of our faith? And so, on this night, we tell this story to pass along this good news and to continue to thread the generations together with hope.

Christmastide | FROM GENERATION
TO GENERATION...

*God dwells with us**

John 1:1-14 | Luke 2:15-21

"And the Word became flesh and lived among us..." (John 1:14a). Unlike the other gospels, John's gospel offers us a cosmic glimpse of Christ's birth. Christ's beginning was with God, therefore, Christ has been with us since life began. On this Christmas Sunday, we celebrate the many ways God dwells with us from generation to generation, since the beginning of time. Like Mary pondering the angels' message in her heart, we invite you to dwell in your worship, perhaps embracing stillness, contemplative practices, creativity, and prayer. In the fullness of this season, come dwell with God—in silence or in song, in prayer or in stillness.

* In the year we are releasing these resources (2022), Christmas Day falls on a Sunday, and New Years Day is the Sunday after. In our bundle, we are not including content or resources for New Years Day, but we encourage you to use our Christmastide sub-theme, scriptures, and resources for either or both of these Sundays. We will also provide recommendations from past resources that might be used for New Years Day.

Epiphany | FROM GENERATION
TO GENERATION...

We keep seeking

Matthew 2:1-12 | Matthew 2:13-23

The Magi were seekers. They sought wisdom, they sought the divine, they sought fortunes to tell the future. Their seeking leads them to Jesus, the newborn king of another culture and religion. And yet, their seeking is also what protects them from Herod's deception and harm. After the Magi go home by another way, Joseph is visited again by an angel in his dream. This time, the angel brings a warning, and like before, Joseph heeds the message. Fleeing from Herod's massacre, Joseph and Mary seek refuge in Egypt; they remain there, living as immigrants, until Herod dies. Like the Magi, may we seek the divine and be willing to journey closer to God. Like the Holy family, may we seek safety for all families who are under threat. This new year and every year to come, let us keep seeking—wisdom, justice, and a better world.

ABOUT OUR GUEST CONTRIBUTORS



Guest Writer

Dr. Christine J. Hong

is writing commentary that will be featured in our devotional and sermon planning guide.

Christine J. Hong (*she/her*) is Assistant Professor of Educational Ministry at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, GA. Her interests include anti-colonial and decolonial approaches to religious and interreligious education and life. Hong's interests also include Asian

American spiritualities, and the spiritual and theological formation of children and adolescents among BIPOC communities. Hong is a Teaching Elder in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and has spent time as both a religious educator and youth and young adult minister in New York and Southern California. She is the author of numerous articles, chapters in books, and two monographs, the first is, *Youth, Identity, and Gender in the Korean American Church*, published by Palgrave, and the second is, *Decolonial Futures: Intercultural and Interreligious Intelligence for Theological Education* forthcoming from Lexington Press. Dr. Hong has received a BA from Univ. of Washington, a ThM and MDiv from Princeton Theological Seminary, and a PhD from Claremont School of Theology. ctsnet.edu/faculty/hong-christine-j/



Guest Artist

Carmelle Beaugelin

is creating visual art that will be featured in our devotional and visual art collection.

Carmelle Beaugelin (*she/her*) describes herself as an “Afro-Latin, West-Indian, Haitian-American, Miami-an” artist currently residing in Princeton, NJ. Her daily work swims in the waters of human flourishing and spiritual formation at the intersection of Christian

Spirituality & Innovation. She strives to create work that engages some form of “God-talk.” Her art moves towards the exploration of *Visio Divina* (divine vision) via theological themes related to redemptive transformation, the concept of “home,” hyphenated ethnic identities of diasporic communities, and human flourishing as a continued expression of divine creativity (*Imago Dei*). Her larger vocation is to point to the dignity, self-awareness, and spiritual connectedness of creative expression in the lives of those who carry hyphenated identities, particularly those navigating within what it means to both black and foreign in America. She is the founder of BeauFolio Studio, an art house at the intersection of sacred art, human-centered design, & restorative equity for the creatively curious. carmellebeaugelin.com

About the logo & branding

“When we decided on the theme, *From Generation to Generation*, the imagery that kept surfacing was the connective tissue of people through the visual metaphor of a family tree. At first, I was focused on this metaphor's more literal imagery, like branches, leaves, and roots, but instead, I kept being drawn in to the people. When I started incorporating more representational imagery of people, I found that the result was translating more as a nuclear family or a more narrow idea of family, which we definitely wanted to avoid. I knew I wanted to emphasize the particularity of each person while imagining how their story fits into a larger narrative—one in line with the generative work of God. I drew simplified silhouettes of people in a radial fashion positioned around a center point. At once this imagery took on a depth of meaning: the lineage of Christ centered around His light, the nativity scene centered around the manger, and the larger movement of God through each and every created being—radiating and growing like a flower, etc. Ultimately, the image represents how we are all connected, our stories are woven together, and each of us has a purpose in the beauty of God's continued unfolding Creation.”

—Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman,
graphic designer

“As Lauren and I were collaborating on the theme branding, imagery of roots came to mind as we discussed generations, family trees, and how root systems can twist and turn like the stories in our scriptures. Instead of photographing tree roots in nature, I decided to paint tree roots with a gold resist on silk fabric, one of my favorite art mediums. However, when I went to stretch out my silk, it was wrinkled from being bunched into a storage bag. I marveled at how the wrinkles in the fabric looked like so many things: like an aerial view of a plant's roots, like a topographical map with hills and valleys, like a web etched with the wrinkles of time. And so, instead of drawing what I had planned, I let the wrinkles become the focal point of my camera lens. With gold, I traced the lines of the wrinkles, giving definition and beauty to their threads and intersections. Then I began to add deep blues and purples with my ink dyes, watching the color bleed into the golden web—like the deep night of winter greeting the Christmas season. The result feels like a tapestry of time, like a web of beauty and story traced through the generations.”

—Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity,
photographer

REFLECTIONS ON THE THEME

One of my all-time favorite things is to visit my grandparents and listen to their stories. My grandmother is an avid, amateur genealogist who lights up at the chance to weave together a tapestry of family stories and connections. She brings out old photographs and delicately strings each story together with the care and reverence she feels each person's story deserves. I hang out with my grandfather in his workshop, where layers of dust cover many gadgets, odds and ends. He marvels at the craftsmanship of old, worn tools and tells stories of the trades he made to acquire such treasures. He shows me step by step how he recycles old materials into intricately handcrafted knives, jewelry, and reimagined utensils. His life is a wonder, and I feel honored to be invited to hold his stories. The theme, "From Generation to Generation", as it relates to Advent and Christ's entry into the world, makes me want to visit this familiar narrative with the passion my grandmother approaches her family's history, and the attentive playfulness with which my grandfather scrolls through memories like snippets of old black and white film. Who are the people who make Jesus who he is? What are the pathways of the stories that lead to the miraculous arrival of God into the world? What stories are neglected and forgotten? What stories have we twisted to suit our own worldview and perspectives? These stories are fragile and sacred. We need to approach them with reverence and care and protect them as we hand them to future generations to hold and pass along.

—Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman, Director of Branding, Founding Creative Partner

I love stories of the past. They bring about a nuanced understanding for me while opening my mind to connection and dislocation, to a mirror of this current time and place. I felt a profound comfort in the perpetual welcome that my grandparents and great grandmother extended us each summer. How I wish to gather with the abundant nostalgia of my grandfather's pancake breakfasts on Christmas morning. I want to gather without the prevailing habit of leaving my politics at the door, stifled. I want to hear my loved ones speak truly with abundant love; why can we not speak? I want to engage in the complexity of the discussion. I see the pain of millions from the past when I look at my white skin in the mirror. I know that my ancestors owned slaves and had servants of color. I know that my ancestral theology was twisted to enable slavery, violent colonialism, and to promote those structures... And I look forward; I see the future generations. We have people of color in our future lineage. We work tirelessly to ensure a world that sees our children as humans, incredible, wonderful, whole people who can safely go for a run through a construction site or buy Skittles at the corner store.

—Hannah Garrity, Founding Creative Partner

I can vividly remember a conversation between my 13-year-old adolescent self and my mother on the way to church one wintry morning. I asked her, "Mom, what if I don't want to be a Christian?" (a protest undoubtedly influenced by my teenage desire to sleep in). My mother didn't take the bait. Instead, she told me how this story of God has changed her life. She told me how she couldn't imagine her world without the church. She told me how she so deeply believed in a better day, and how she felt called to help be a part of that. From the back seat of the car, I could tell that she was serious. Her joy, her hope, her conviction—they were so pure and so authentic that they left a lasting impression on me. It was a generation to generation moment. The Christmas story, of a love that came here, that walked among us, that was born in a humble manger to uncertain parents with shepherds nearby, is a story that we pass from generation to generation, because without fail, it continues to change us. It reframes the way we hope. It centers the way we love. It shapes the way we live. So this Advent, may we tell this story that has spread like wildfire from generation to generation. Let us remember the generations from Abraham to Jacob who waited for that promised day. And let our generation be so influenced in joy and love that future generations can't help but pay attention. This Advent, let us tell the story of good news—from generation to generation.

—Rev. Sarah Speed, Founding Creative Partner



While we were developing this theme, I learned about The Seventh Generation Principle, a philosophy of the Iroquois that emphasizes how seven generations after us will be affected by our current actions and decisions. This philosophy invites us to cultivate a sacred imagination for what will come, considering what will sustain and benefit the generations who come after us. To do this, we must see ourselves as belonging to a web of interconnection. Nothing is generated from complete isolation; our world is continually shaped and re-shaped by our collective actions. I'm meditating on this philosophy as I enter this Advent season, which will be my first Christmas as a mother. I'm remembering my mothers who have passed on—my maternal grandmother and my mother—and the parts of them that live on in me. I am thinking about the child currently kicking in my womb, and, like Mary, pondering, treasuring, and wrestling with the visions I have for her future. This Advent, may you remember that you belong—to a story etched into the wrinkles of time, to generations that have come before and will come after, to a love that won't let you go.

—Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity, Founder, Creative Director

With this theme, we decided to simply tell the story, start to finish, without the usual jumping back and forth in the timeline. But what is so beautiful about the Christmas narrative is that it isn't simple; it isn't just one person's story during a single year. It's the story of Mary and Joseph, shepherds and magi, Elizabeth and John, but it's also the story of Ruth and Jesse and David and Isaiah, all of these individual threads over centuries woven together into the story of God's unconventional inbreaking. And the Christmas story is our story, too. The tapestry God is weaving did not stop in Bethlehem. Our own threads, from generation to generation, weave into the narrative of God's incarnation in the world that proclaims the Advent promises of hope, peace, joy, and love.

—Rev. Anna Strickland, Operations Support & Content Creator