

Keep Watch, Take Heart



An Advent devotional for all ages with daily invitations to prepare your hearts for the joy of Christmas.

CHRISTMAS: OUR HEARTS REJOICE



Our hearts rejoice as we hear of the promise of the Christmas Gospel. Below is a link to a guided scripture meditation that is based upon the familiar words of Luke 2. As you listen to this meditation and reflect upon the Christmas story, may the joy of this day fill your heart.



A Note from Pastor Nate

The season of Advent is a time of preparation, practice, and peace. These Advent devotionals have been designed to invite you to live the themes of the season for each day of Advent.

Each week carries its own unique theme: Prepare your heart (week 1), Lift Up Your Heart (week 2), Share Your Heart (week 3), and Open Your Heart (week 4). The start of each week includes a QR code for a link to a recording of a guided meditation based on the theme. The next 5 days are unique invitations that encourage you to mindfully consider the weekly theme in an intentional way. By taking part in these different practices we prepare our hearts to receive the promises of Jesus Christ anew on Christmas Day.

I am indebted to my friend and colleague Rev Matthew Nickoloff of the South Wedge Mission in Rochester, NY. He and his community had the original idea for this type of Advent Devotional and they put together most of the devotions contained in this collection. If you enjoyed these images, consider supporting SWM (southwedgecommission.org/donate). May this Advent season be a holy time for you and yours. I pray that these devotionals can help you watch for God in new ways in your life and that your heart would be filled with joy as we journey towards Christmas Day.

Peace and Grace,
Pastor Nate

ADVENT WEEK 1: PREPARE YOUR HEART



During the first week of Advent, we take time to prepare our hearts for the joy of Christmas. The QR code below is a link to a guided scripture meditation. As you listen to this meditation we invite you to, relax, rest, and allow this time of guided scripture study to bring you deeper into an understanding of the peace, hope, and joy of this season and our weekly theme of “preparing your hearts”.

This meditation is based on John 21.



OPEN YOUR HEART

Christmas is all about God coming to be with us. It's about the ways that God personally connects with each of us. Today, search for a picture of Jesus that resonates with you. Sit and meditate on that image.



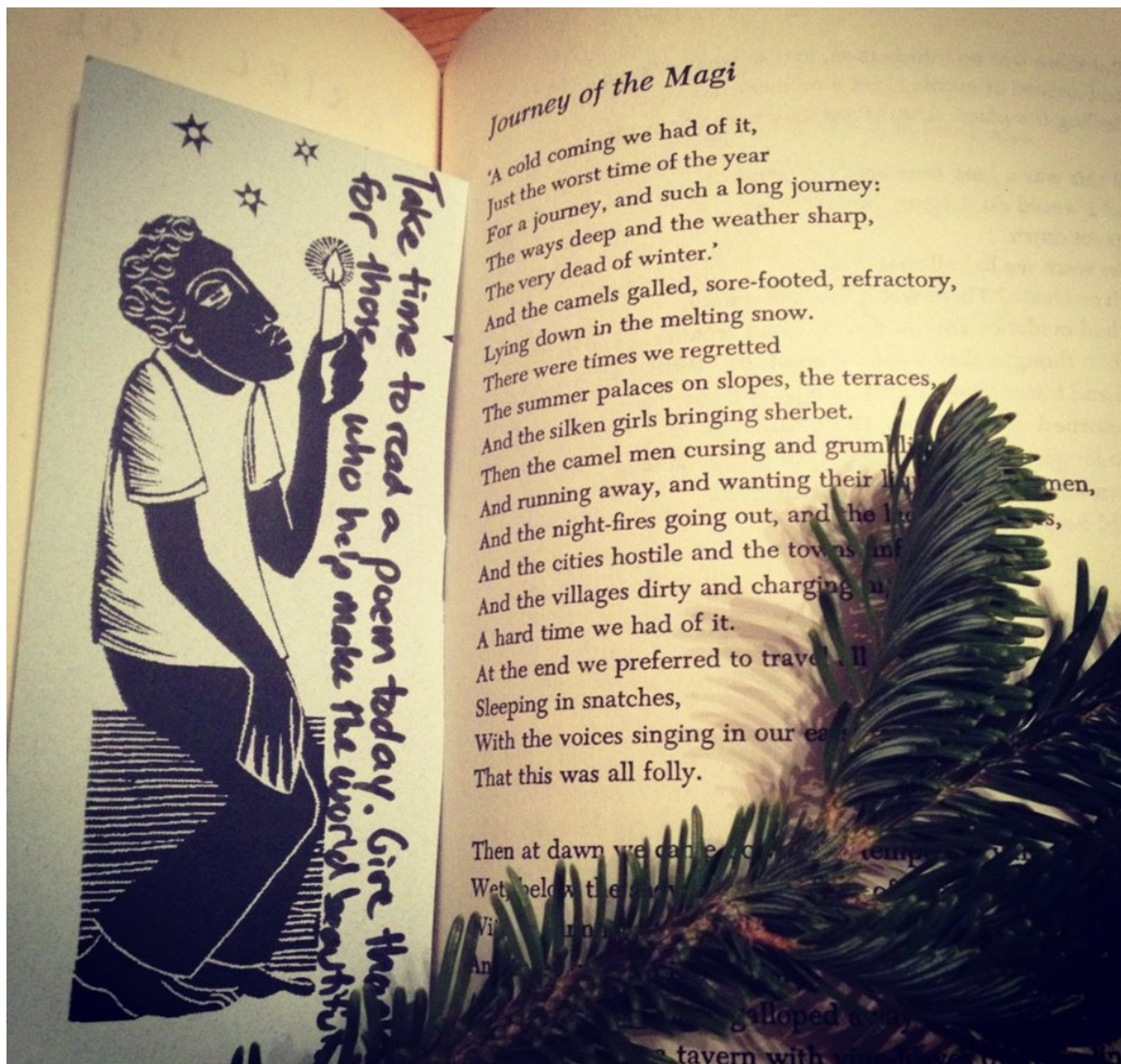
OPEN YOUR HEART

In our world of schedules, accomplishments, and to do lists, it is important to just slow down once in a while. Today, take half an hour and have a walking prayer. Keep your eyes open. Don't plan a course. Walk. Pray.



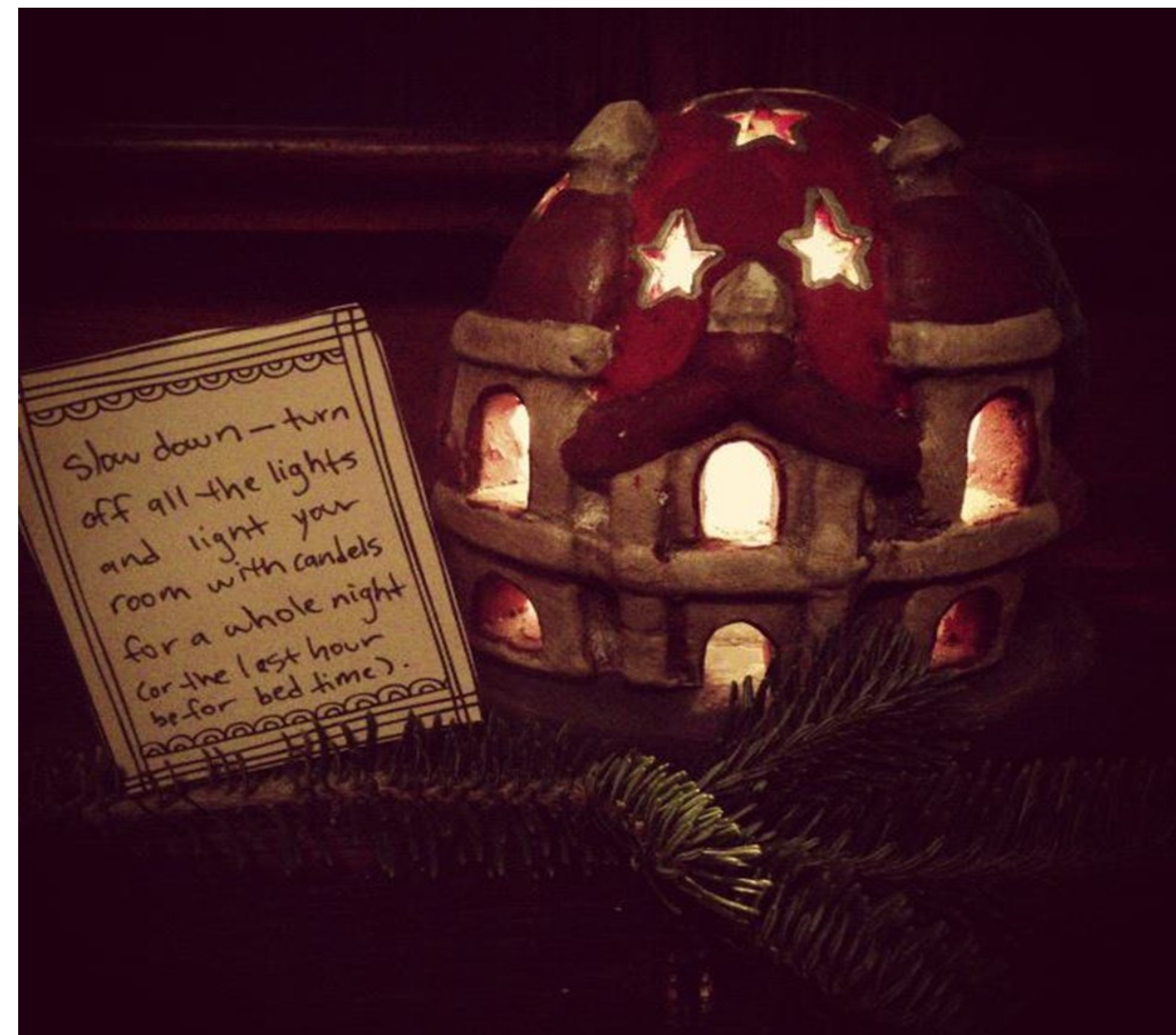
PREPARE YOUR HEART

Our world is filled with words and noise, and often times our faith becomes very word-focused. Yet, there are many, many stories of people connecting with God in silence. Today, delight in silence. Be still for at least ten minutes.



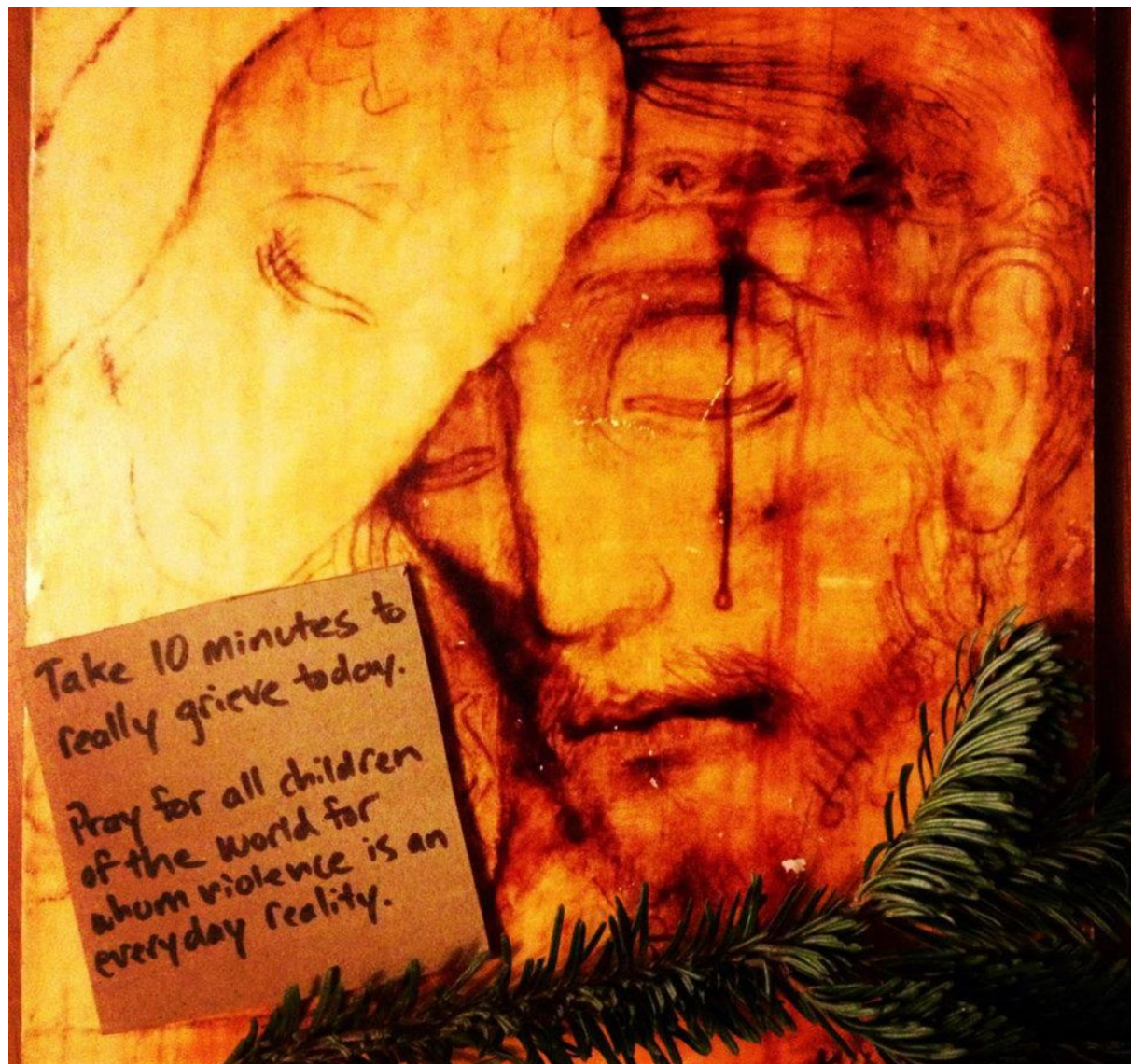
PREPARE YOUR HEART

The mystery and majesty of God is something beyond our ability to fully articulate and understand. Yet, poetry, music, and art can often help us glimpse the beauty of God in new and unique ways. Today, take time to read a poem. Give thanks for those who help make the world beautiful.



OPEN YOUR HEART

Activist Dorothy Day charged people to take up the "duty of delight". In the midst of everything else in our lives, we often miss the opportunity to delight in the simple blessings of each day. Today, slow down - turn off all the lights and light your room with candles for a whole night (or the last hour before bed time).



OPEN YOUR HEART

It is ok to be sad, to feel hurt, and to mourn. The scriptures continually describe God as a God who cares about all of our emotions.

Today, take ten minutes to really grieve today.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Our world is a gift from God. The beauty of creation reminds of God's goodness. Caring for God's creation is itself an act of worship.

Today, take time to go for a walk today. Pick up any litter you may find. Give thanks for the beauty of a good creation.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

The simple pleasures of life can be quickly overlooked. But if we take the time to intentionally notice these gifts, even the smallest moment can be a time of connection with God.

Today, take time to really sip and savor a cup of coffee or tea today.
Give thanks for everyday joys.



OPEN YOUR HEART

Our reliance on spending and the convenience by which we do that is often something we overlook. Today, leave your credit card at home one day.

ADVENT 4: OPEN YOUR HEART



For the fourth week of Advent we reflect on the theme “Open Your Heart”. With Christmas drawing close, how can we open our hearts to the promises of season? Below is a QR code that links to a guided scripture meditation. As you listen to this meditation, we invite you to allow this study of scripture to open your heart to a deeper understanding of the peace, hope, and joy of Christmas.

This meditation is based on Isaiah 25:6-9.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Take time to read the Nativity Gospel (Luke 2:1-20) today. Aloud if possible. Do you find yourself in the story?

Give thanks for Advent, for a time to live into God's reality. Give thanks that God is not rules, but a story.

ADVENT 2: LIFT UP YOUR HEART



During the second week of Advent, we reflect on the ways that we can lift our hearts to God. Below is a QR code that links to a guided scripture meditation. As you listen to this meditation we hope that your heart will be lifted up by the themes and words of scripture.

This meditation is based on Jeremiah 31:7-9.



SHARE YOUR HEART

Relationships are one of the most sacred gifts that God has given to us. Today, take time to look at photos of loved ones. Contemplate them for a while. Give thanks for them, and if possible, reconnect later.



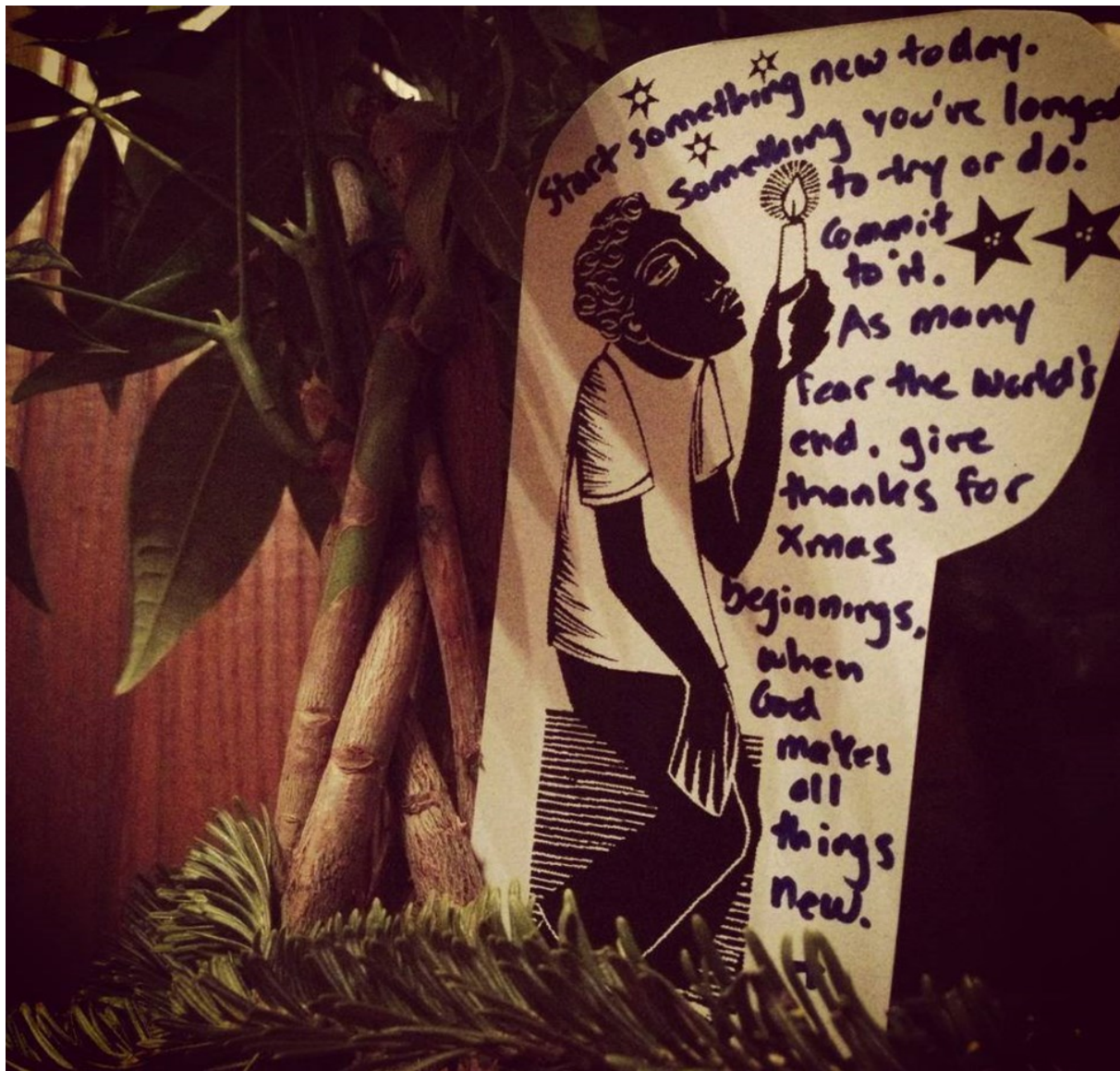
SHARE YOUR HEART

If you aren't worried about where your next meal will come from, the concept of hunger can seem very foreign. Yet, it is estimated that nearly 40 million people struggle with hunger in the US. Today, skip a meal or a usual treat today. Take that time to pray for the hungry. If possible, share what you would have had with someone asking for food or help.



LIFT UP YOUR HEART

Music has long been a way of worship and a means of connecting people with God. Today, close your eyes and really listen to a recording of your favorite Christmas Carol.



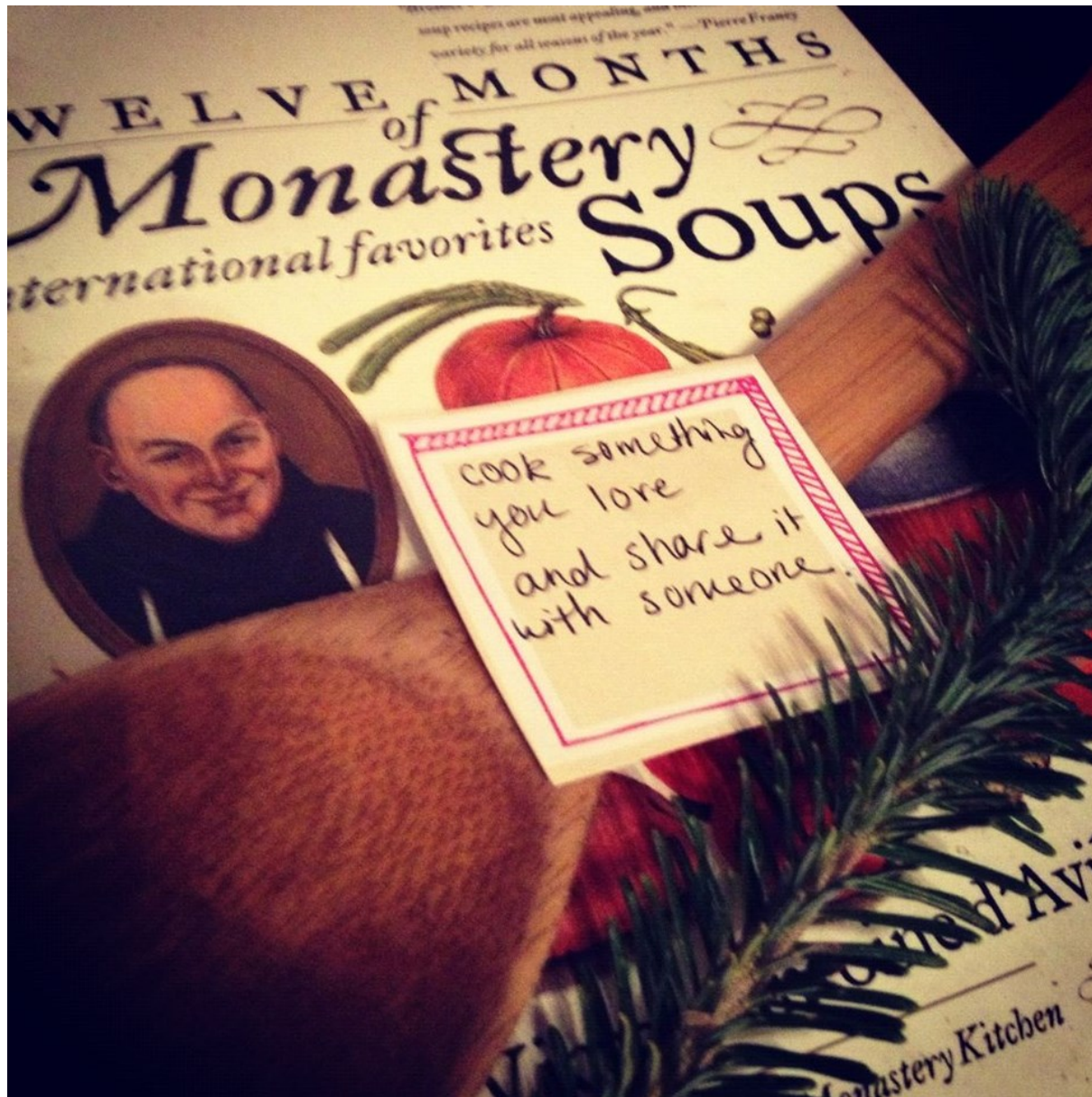
LIFT UP OUR HEART

The scriptures speak about a God that makes all things new. Start something new today. Something you've longed to try or do. Commit to it. As many fear the world's end, give thanks for Christmas beginnings - when God makes all things new.



SHARE YOUR HEART

Sometimes even the simplest acts can make a huge difference in another person's life. Mother Theresa once said, "There are no great things, just small things done with great love." Today, give a Christmas card to a neighbor you don't know.



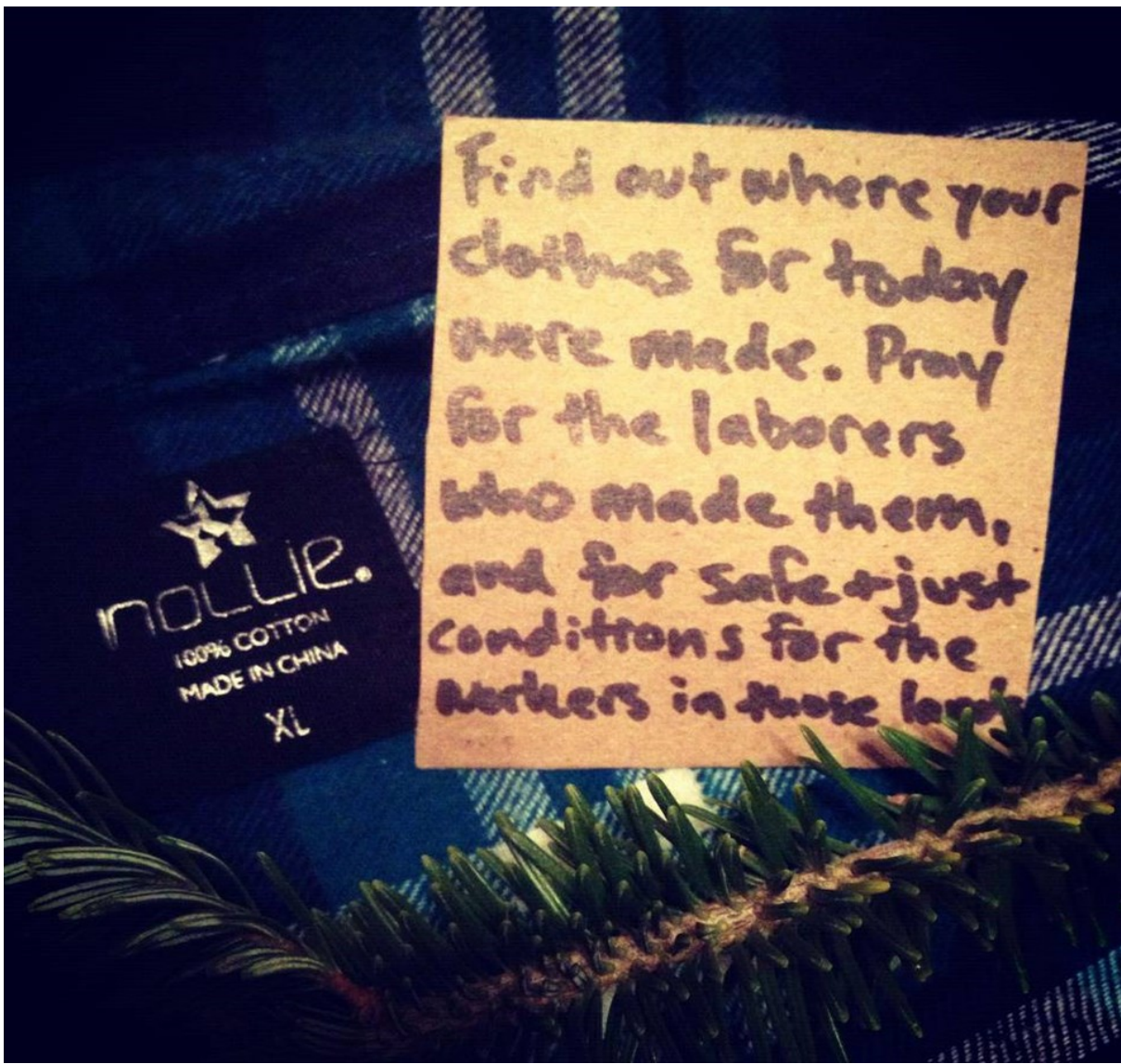
SHARE YOUR HEART

Food has always been a way for community to be formed.
Today, cook something you love and share it with someone.



LIFT UP YOUR HEART

Connecting with the situation of another person is often the first
step towards compassion.
Today, take a walk around the block. Don't wear a coat. Pray for
those who are cold and naked.



LIFT UP YOUR HEART

Often times we don't even realize the interconnectedness of our world.

Today, find out where your clothes for today were made. Pray for the laborers who made them, and for safe and just conditions for the workers in those lands.



SHARE YOUR HEART

Relationships are one of the most sacred gifts that God has given to us. While relationships can be a source of great joy, they also can be annoying, painful, and difficult to maintain.

Today, write a letter to someone you don't talk to in person much; delight that they are still there.

ADVENT 3: SHARE YOUR HEART



During the third week of Advent, our theme is Share Your Heart. The QR code below is a link to a guided scripture meditation. This week’s devotions will invite you to share your heart with God in unique ways. This meditation is based on James 5:13-20



LIFT UP YOUR HEART

Music has often connected people with the Almighty in a way that is beyond mere words. Turn on your favorite music sing-along.