

Reverse Advent: A Spiritual Practice of Giving

In December, young people and their families have an opportunity to connect a story of the season with service to a local food cupboard or shelter. While Friends do not always “celebrate Advent,” the story told in this way over the weeks leading to Christmas is a useful tool. You can focus on different parts of the nativity story each week and connect people’s needs during their journeys to Bethlehem to the needs in our communities today.

How to participate at home:

1. Gather 4 plain brown paper bags (one for each week of Advent)
2. Create four signs with pictures or words that illustrate the focus each week, and attach one to each bag.



Week One: Mary and Joseph on the road to Bethlehem

Week Two: The shepherds in the fields at night watching their sheep

Week Three: The Magi on the way during the long journey to Bethlehem

Week Four: The baby named Jesus is born

3. Collect items at home throughout the week, and bring them to meeting (or your local food cupboard) on Sunday. Suggested contributions listed below, and ways to connect the materials goods you gather to larger conversations about supporting people in our local communities who experience food insecurity and poverty.

Week 1 - What food would Mary and Joseph need for their journey to Bethlehem?

Place non-perishable FOOD ITEMS in bag #1 for those living with food insecurity. **As a family:** Talk about the role of food in your own life. *Hold in the Light the families in our community who are living with food insecurity.*

Week 2 - What do people need for warmth, like the shepherds watching their sheep?

Place WARM CLOTHES (hats, gloves, scarves, socks) in bag #2. **As a family:** Talk about the clothes you wear to stay warm in the winter. *Hold in the Light people who do not have shelter in our community.*

Week 3 - What kinds of things do you pack for a very long trip?

Place BASIC TOILETRIES (toothpaste, toothbrush, deodorant, soap, shampoo, comb, nail clippers/file) in bag #3. **As a family:** Talk about the things you need each day to care for yourself. *Hold in the Light those who often have to choose between food and basic care items for survival.*

Week 4 - What is needed to care for a baby?

Place BABY ITEMS (bottles, diapers, wipes, children’s board or picture books, etc.) in bag #4 for infants and toddlers. **As a family:** Talk about the many ways babies depend on their caregivers for basic needs. *Hold in the Light parents and children who live in poverty.*