

# Living Advent Calendar

Coffee Chat and Change the World – and Merry Christmas 2021!!

Based on an idea from Patt Schwab's *Obscure Holiday eBooks* and on something that happened in a small community in Judea more than two thousand years ago. There was a star, you see ...

## DEC 1 – Daily gifts

Every day between Dec 1 and the 12th we put a gift in a small gift box for each family member. A poem, a drawing, a ticket or a request from each person or pet in the family to each person or pet in the family. We use a little dollar store party box for each person to put a daily home-made gift in it from Dec 1 to Dec 12 for each.



... Sandra Solon

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## December 2 – Advent Journey

If you'll have a Creche under the tree for Christmas your family might enjoy following the journey of what we called "The Christmas People." Start now by thinking of where the Christmas people are at this point on their journey. We always put the Wise Men in a back bedroom because they have the farthest to come. The shepherds always went on a top shelf because they were in the hills. Mary and Joseph and the donkey were usually in the dining room. It gave a chance to talk about the Christmas people. What they were doing and how they must have felt. Every day they were moved a bit closer to the empty creche under the tree. On Christmas Eve there was a grand procession with Dad playing the organ and everyone carrying one of the characters and usually the youngest child gets to put the Infant Jesus in the manger on Christmas Eve. . .

Dorothy Wilhelm

## This Advent Activity

Calendar is a work in progress so don't think of it as finished. Almost certainly as you read it, you'll think Of much better ideas. If you do, please send them to [Dorothy@itsnevertoolate.com/](mailto:Dorothy@itsnevertoolate.com/)

We'll send fresh ideas out as they come. If we use your idea, you will be the happy recipient of my book, *Catch the Christmas Spirit and Keep it All Year Long!!*



### **December 1 – Daily Gifts continued from page 1**

Every day between Dec 1 and the 12th we put a gift in a small gift box for each family member. A poem, a drawing, a ticket or a request from each person or pet in the family to each person or pet in the family.

From Dec 13-24 everyone gets to pick a gift out of their own box every day and use it as it applies. It's a simple and thoughtful way to keep the kids of all ages busy!

Some of my favorite gifts were poems, drawings, stories. that my kids made.  
I got a jewelry gift certificate from my husband once but it wasn't for enough money lol. The whole point is to have the kids busy, my children are super creative so they loved the opportunity to share

... *From Sandra Solon*

### **December 2 – Merry Christmas, World!**

With a friend or family member walk a neighborhood or public area and pick up trash, leaving the world a better place!

... *Debbie Hudson*

### **December 3 – Plant a Dish Garden.**

Find a large baking dish with at least 2 inch sides, fill with potting soil and plant any fast growing plants, grass, weeds are fine. We just want them to come up right away and be fully grown by Christmas. Then as the plants grow add small Christmas figures. Move them around. If you have kids, they'll enjoy drawing characters in the Christmas story on stiff cardboard and move them to different places in the garden and acting out their own Christmas stories.

### **December 4 – Help Someone Else**

Make a large batch of mac and cheese. Cool it to let it solidify a bit. Cut it into big squares. Wrap in foil and reheat in the oven. Take a box of your foil squares (with plastic forks) to a homeless area. They will love the piping hot treat. (You may choose some other inexpensive crowd pleaser, but make sure it's easy to reheat and serve.) *Lynnette and Kessa Claire-Woldt*

### **December 5 – Ornament from tree stump**

When you buy your fresh Christmas tree, cut a one inch circle off of the stump, or ask the person at the tree lot to do it for you. Anyway you can decorate that circle with the year and some memento and it turns into a decoration you can add to year after year. . . . Bump Magazine

### **December 6 – St. Nicholas Day**

Bake and Decorate St. Nicholas cookies. Take them to the neighborhood children.

Or our resident Chef Anessa McClendon suggests **Christmas Coal Candy**. No, really  
<https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/food-network-kitchen/christmas-coal-candy-3887315>

### December 7 – Why not remember this Christmas with a book?

Christmas book? Dea Irby's family makes individual books for each family member. Make notes, write who gave what gifts. Things to remember. Funny incidents. Dea's family makes bound books but a small notebook, would work as well. Imagine, over the years, the Christmas books would be the first thing to come out with the decorations and treasures to look forward to

... Dea Irby

### December 8 – Is there a Christmas picture you love?

Turn it into a Christmas card. This picture showing Mary and St. Elizabeth meeting has been Father Fred's favorite for years. Voila! Instant tradition. The beauty of these stories is that they can be enjoyed on so many levels



—Cousins meeting with the same joyous news to share, or a larger message for all mankind. . . Fr. Fred Mayovsky, S.J.

### December 9 – If you're alone in this Christmas

and you feel as if you don't have many friends, Try writing a few friends and ask for their photos. Then decorate a small tree with those pictures and you'll feel rich indeed.

And you could try cheering yourself up with crock pot caramel hot apple cider, recommended by our Personal Chef Anessa McClendon.

<https://flouronmyface.com/crock-pot-caramel-hot-apple-cider/>

### December 10 – St Lucy's Festival of lights

Put mirrors in the fireplace and on the dining room table. Place lighted candles on them and the room will seem filled with lights. In Sweden it was the custom for the eldest daughter to dress in a white robe with a crown of lighted candles and bring her parents coffee cake. Our daughter did this one year, and then she found out none of her friends had to do it, so she never played St Lucy again

... Patt Schwab and Dorothy

### December 11 – If there's a new baby or grandbaby in your family

Be sure to start their collection of special ornaments. Add one a year. They'll love to see their ornaments every year, and when they start their own home, their ornament set goes with them.

### December 12 -Sandra Solon – gift cards for tree.

1. A "blank card" gift. Put a blank card in the tree for each family member. Everyone randomly picks a card and writes a "gift" or "play date" for the other person or a "this is why I love..." note in the card. For example. A card could read "take mom bowling" or "take dad to a game" or "free baby sitting" or "I love my sister because..." etc.

... Sandra Solon

### December 13 - listen to Nutcracker or other favorite Christmas music

and draw pictures to illustrate or make Christmas cards to hand out to neighbors or friends  
... Dea Irby

*While you're making the cards you might want to fix these slow cooker cranberry meatballs from Our Personal Chef Anessa McClendon*

<https://carlsbadcravings.com/sweet-spicy-cranberry-meatballs-slow-cooker/>

### December 14 – One Day-call five people

to tell them you were thinking of them and wanted to thank them for what they have meant to you. Another day, record and send a video message through text on the phone.. Joella Oldfield buys going out of stock greeting cards, to send cards each day to four or five different people, and lets them know she's thinking of them.

*Dea Irby, Father Fred, and Joella Oldfield*

### December 15 – Of course you'll want to donate to the food bank,

but how about seeing if they could use the whole family, preparing donations or serving a meal. Christmas is best when you give.

### December 16 – Patt Schwab reminded of us of Seinfeld's "Festivus for the Rest of Us"

Definitely not a religious holiday but the activities in this calendar can certainly be revised for Festivus, if you are not a traditionalist.

You can't go wrong with this Puerto Rican Rice Pudding Recipe recommended by Personal Chef Anessa McClendon

<https://www.thespruceeats.com/puerto-rican-rice-pudding-recipe-2137868>

### December 17 – Pack a Christmas Eve Box

– A nice holiday tradition that can grow with your child or grandchild. Put together holiday pajamas Christmas books, maybe cookie dough to make cookies for Santa and a carrot or two for the reindeer. . . . *From Bump Magazine*

Lots of fun to look forward to - and did you know that if you dip a pair of boots (just the soles) in baby powder or cornstarch and walk from the fireplace to the cookies and back to the stockings and the fireplace, it will look like Santa really was there.

*But if it happens that you're going to be alone, how about packing your own Christmas Eve Box with cozy sleepwear, snacks, something chocolate, maybe a Christmas story, and it is the perfect time to write notes to special people you'd like to get in touch within the year ahead. And for the perfect Christmas Eve snacks, try these Cranberry Brie bites that Chef Anessa previewed for us at our last Coffee Chat. <https://www.thecountrycook.net/cranberry-brie-bites/>*



### **December 18 –You don't have to bake**

I met someone who said that when she was a child, her mother always pointed to a rosy December sunset and said that was a sign that Santa and the elves were baking their Christmas Cookies. Good for them. And good for you if baking is fun to do. But maybe you just don't have time or maybe you don't like to cook. As my old mother would have said, "We won't pin a worry on it." In that case, take the simple way. Buy some nice Christmas cookies and just before guests arrive fling cinnamon on a hot stove burner. Wonderful! It will smell like something's baking and you'll have time for the things you really want to do.

### **December 19 – Put a family evening aside to make gift wrap**

Gift wrap has gotten as important as the gift and in some cases more expensive. So have fun and save a fortune. Anything goes. Shelf paper decorated with Christmas stickers is something the kids will love to do. Paste play money on paper for a look anyone will like. Diapers are great to wrap baby gifts. Older kids will love to put glitter on everything. When the gifts are under the tree, they'll love to point out the one they made.

### **December 20 - Help someone else**

Make a large batch of mac and cheese. Cool it to let it solidify a bit. Cut it into big squares. Wrap in foil and reheat in the oven. Take a box of your foil squares (with plastic forks) to a homeless area. They will love the piping hot treat. (You may choose some other inexpensive crowd pleaser, but make sure it's easy to reheat and serve.)

*Lynnette and Kessa Claire-Woldt) and Dea Irby*

### **December 21 – Surprise someone with a special ornament or wreath**

made from fabric of a special garment of theirs or baby clothes. You could do a pillow too but imagine the fun of a sentimental wreath.

### **December 22- Kris Moose – Include the Birds with this wacky bird feeder.**

Paste frosting googly eyes and a red M&M nose on the wide end of a pine cone. Make antlers with small twigs. Fill the pine cone with peanut butter. If the peanut butter is very thick add suet or even a little shortening. If it's very thick it could stick the little birdy beak together. The kids will enjoy hanging them outside and watching the birds enjoy them. It was always a favorite with mine.

### **December 23 - Buy a box of wrapped candy canes**

and carry them with you everywhere. Ask parents if you may offer them to their children--and enjoy the smiles.

Or wrap a bill - whatever you can spare and wrap them around a candy cane and share them with someone who may not have much. You'll love their reaction. You might do the same thing with warm socks and a \$10 or \$20 bill tucked inside.

*Lynnette and Kessa Claire-Woldt) and Patt Schwab remembering her friend, Peg*

## December 24 – Create a traditional meal for Christmas Eve.

My mother always made Codfish Soup. It was supremely dreadful. The Recipe came from Italy with my Grandmother. It requires, not surprisingly, codfish, but in the winter we could only get a slab of dried codfish which had to be soaked overnight. I still shudder at the thought but I've never forgotten. . . . Dorothy Wilhelm

A better tradition might start with this great holiday ham dinner discovered by our Chef Anessa

<https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/food-network-kitchen/sheet-pan-holiday-ham-dinner-9349382>



## December 25 – I always believed that we had the best Christmas in the world.

The head of the house – Sir – lit the advent wreath and our family said the traditional prayers. Then Sir played the organ as the children – and their spouses and best beloveds – put the figures from the nativity story in their proper place. Wonderful. It was perfect. It couldn't be more perfect, I thought. But the very next summer Sir was gone, suddenly taken by a fast moving cancer, and we had to face the fact that our traditional Christmas would never come again.

We had to build a brand new Christmas. It took several years. We tried different things. Dinner at a nice restaurant. Visiting friends, One year we even watched Raiders of the Lost Ark. Didn't work for me. You just have to keep trying. Sometimes you have to start over, but in the end, it can be just as sweet, and Christmas keeps coming! . . . Dorothy

If this Advent Calendar has given you ideas, let me know. With the wonder of technology we can keep adding ideas right until Christmas.

Send your ideas to Dorothy Wilhelm [Dorothy@itsnevertoolate.com](mailto:Dorothy@itsnevertoolate.com)