



RAY OF HOPE
CHRISTIAN CHURCH
TRANSFORMING YOUR WORLD

Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Hale, Senior Pastor

Greetings, beloved congregation!

As we approach the Advent season, a time of profound reflection and spiritual awakening, we are presented with a unique opportunity to embark on a journey that promises to transform the way we experience this sacred time. In the hustle and bustle of our digital age, it's all too easy to get lost in screens, notifications, and endless distractions. But what if, for these precious weeks leading up to Christmas, we dared to step into a realm of deeper presence and connection?

Introducing the "**Embracing Abide With Us: A Digital Detox Advent Challenge!**" This is not just a fast from screens, but an invitation to a profound spiritual encounter. It's a call to abide with one another, to abide with God, and to rediscover the beauty of true, authentic connection. This will be based in our book for this season, *An Advent Devotional: Abide With Us edited by Paul Koch*.

Imagine the impact of this intentional pause from the noise of the digital world. Picture moments of clarity, of heartfelt conversations, and of profound encounters with the Divine. This Advent, we're not just observing, we're actively participating in the miracle of Emmanuel, God with us.

So, are you ready to embark on this transformative journey? Are you prepared to let go of the constant buzz and embrace the stillness? Together, we'll usher in the Advent season with open hearts, open minds, and a renewed sense of purpose.

Let's be a community that chooses presence over pixels, connection over scrolling, and profound encounters over fleeting distractions. Are you in?

Let the "**Embracing Abide With Us: A Digital Detox Advent Challenge!**"

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EMBRACING ABIDE WITH US

INSTRUCTIONS

This Advent let's embark on a unique journey – a fast from excessive screen time. This challenge invites us to be present, fostering deeper connections and spiritual growth. By limiting digital distractions, we create space for meaningful interactions and a closer connection with God.

Join us in this intentional step towards a more fulfilling Advent. Let's embrace the promise of Emmanuel, God with us.

WEEKLY CHECK-INS

Visit our Advent Information Table in the vestibule of the church to explore your weekly challenge activities and share your reflections and experiences on the display board. Feel free to share your stories and testimonials of positive outcomes from this challenge with others. Your stories can inspire and encourage others. Additionally, selected testimonials will be featured on our social media platforms, showcasing how this special fast can truly enhance the Advent experience for all.

WEEK 1: "ABIDE WITH US THROUGH HOPE"

CHALLENGE:

Unplug for an hour daily, engaging in hopeful activities like prayer, reading uplifting books, practicing gratitude, or jotting down hopes and dreams.

Participate in the Hope Holiday Store on **Saturday, December 9th**, by volunteering your time or contributing gifts. This initiative brings hope and joy to families in need during the holiday season. Click the link to volunteer -

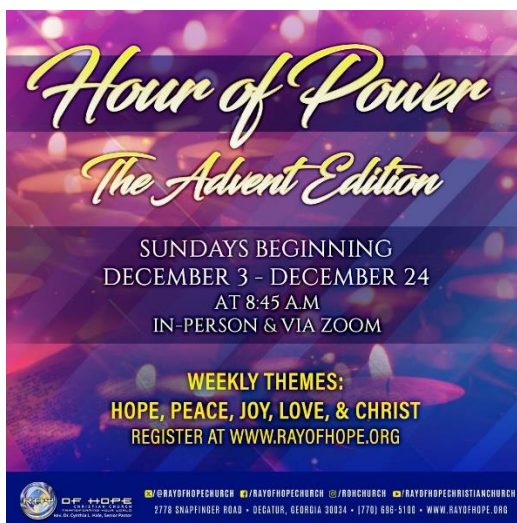
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/805094CA8AB2BA3FF2-rohhope>

PRAYER:

Embrace a prayerful digital detox—engage in prayer, meditation, and reflection on divine intervention. Join the **Virtual Advent Prayer Service on Tuesday, December 5th at 7:00 p.m.**, focusing on divine intervention and renewed hope.



Also, attend our **Advent Hour of Power** sessions, a time of reflection, prayer, and spiritual preparation for the coming of Christ. These sessions on **Sundays, December 3rd, 10th, 17th, and 24th at 8:45 a.m.**, provide moments of tranquility and contemplation amid the busyness of the holiday season. These sessions are in-person or online.



TESTIMONY:

Share how the break from digital distractions allowed you to focus on hope, strengthening your connection with God.

WEEK 2: "ABIDE WITH US THROUGH PEACE"

CHALLENGE:

Create a tech-free zone for a day. Immerse yourself in peace by being present with loved ones, enjoying nature, or mindful activities.

PRAYER:

Dedicate daily prayer for those grieving during this season. Turn off notifications and engage in healing activities like journaling and reading. Invite those you prayed for to the **Blue Christmas service on Tuesday, December 12th at 7:00 p.m.**



TESTIMONY:

Reflect on the tranquility experienced during the tech-free day and how it deepened your sense of peace.

WEEK 3: "ABIDE WITH US THROUGH JOY"

CHALLENGE:

Implement a digital sunset, turning off screens an hour before bedtime. Use this time for prayer, reflection, or engaging in joyful activities.

PRAYER:

Start each day with a prayer for clarity about decisions and direction. Join the **Virtual Prayer Service on Tuesday, December 19th at 7:00 p.m.**, focusing on clarity and joy.



TESTIMONY:

Discuss how the digital sunset positively impacted your sleep and contributed to a more joyful and restful state of mind.

WEEK 4: "ABIDE WITH US THROUGH LOVE"

CHALLENGE:

Replace one hour of daily social media, TV, or computer time with intentional acts of love—write notes, make calls, or perform random acts of kindness.

PRAYER:

Center yourself, invite God's presence, and pray for an open heart and heightened empathy to understand the needs of others.

TESTIMONY:

Share how redirecting time and energy toward expressions of love strengthened relationships and brought you closer to God's love. Tell us about one intentional act of love and its outcome.

CONCLUSION: "EMBRACING ABIDE WITH US IN PRAYER"

CHALLENGE:

Reflect on the impact of combined prayer services and digital detox throughout Advent. Conclude with a prayerful acknowledgment of hope, healing, peace, and joy experienced during this intentional time of abiding with God.

FINAL TESTIMONY:

Share your overall experience, emphasizing the transformative elements of prayerful reflection and intentional digital detox during Advent. Your insights on how this practice deepened your connection with God and others are valuable and can inspire others to embark on a similar journey. Spread the word and encourage others to join in this meaningful and enriching experience.

RESOURCES

Recommended Books:

1. "The Advent of God's Word: Listening for the Power of the Divine Whisper - A Daily Advent Devotional" by Rev. Dr. Brenda K. Buckwell, OSB Contributed by Luke A. Powery
2. "The Greatest Gift: Unwrapping the Full Love Story of Christmas" by Ann Voskam
3. "Watch for the Light: Readings for Advent and Christmas" edited by Dietrich Bonhoeffer and others Contributed by Howard Thurman
4. "Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life" by Marjorie J. Thompson
5. "Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen"

For Children:

6. "Mary Had a Baby: An Advent Bible Study Based on African American Spirituals" by Marilyn E. Thornton
7. "God's Dream" by Archbishop Desmond Tutu (not specifically about Advent)
8. "The Christmas Coat: Memories of My Sioux Childhood" by Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve

Devotional:

- "An Advent Devotional: Abide With Us" edited by Paul Koch (available on Kindle)

Other Suggestions:

- Participate in a local charity or community service project.
- Attend a live performance, such as a concert, play, or dance performance.
- Explore a nearby museum or art gallery for inspiration and reflection.
- Take part in a cooking or baking class to create delicious treats for loved ones.
- Organize a small group gathering for shared discussions, prayer, and reflection on Advent themes.