



ABOUT THIS THEME

This theme emerged for us in our group study of this year's Revised Common Lectionary texts, particularly the gospel texts for each week. It helps us name our individual and collective longing for God's closeness and for a world made new.

THE *DRAW NEAR* THEME ENCOMPASSES -----

- ★ an affirmation that God has drawn near to us by taking on flesh and experiencing what it is to be human
- ★ a plea for God to draw closer to us and to the spaces in the world that are broken
- ★ a charge for us to draw near to God by leaning into wonder, justice, truth, and one another.

For each week in Advent, we're including the option for you to follow these sub-themes: ¹

Advent 1 | *Draw Near to Wonder*
(Luke 21:25-36)

Advent 2 | *Draw Near to Truth*
(Luke 3:1-6; Luke 1:67-79; Philippians 1:3-11)

Advent 3 | *Draw Near to Justice*
(Luke 3:7-18; Zephaniah 3:14-20)

Advent 4 | *Draw Near to One Another*
(Luke 1:39-45, 46-55; Psalm 80:1-7)

★ ABOUT THE LOGO -----

The words "Draw" and "Near" literally draw near to one another and represent the landscape of heaven and earth becoming one. Within the shapes of the letters, a midnight sky blurs into green earth connected by a horizon of starlight.

This merging of heaven and earth symbolizes the kingdom of God drawing near to us in Christ. The style of the font has a touch of whimsy and old character, reminding us of the manuscript of a fairy tale. Likewise, Advent is a warm and familiar story that we return to year after year.

OUR ADVENT BUNDLE INCLUDES: ²

- ★ ***Draw Near* printable devotional booklet** with daily art, written reflections, scripture, contemplative prompts, and coloring pages for you to distribute to members of your community.
- ★ ***Draw Near* Advent poetry prayers** for use in worship and personal reflection.
- ★ ***Draw Near* candle-lighting liturgy.**
- ★ ***Draw Near* branding bundle** with file variations of our "Draw Near" logo, social media templates for advertising the theme, and a branding guide for how to utilize these design elements in your print and online communications.
- ★ **Advent paper lace banner designs** with instructional materials to empower you to create beautiful art for your worship space.
- ★ **9 full-color Advent visuals** inspired by RCL Advent scriptures for use in worship, programming events, and church communications.
- ★ **8 Advent coloring posters** inspired by RCL Advent scriptures for use in worship, programming events, and church communications.
- ★ ***Draw Near* worship meditation film** with spoken word poetry and time lapse painting.

¹ We developed these sub-themes to flesh out the theme in concrete ways, but you could also just use the "Draw Near" theme as it is or create your own weekly sub-themes (especially if you do not follow the RCL)!

² Each of the resources will also be offered individually and will include a list of ideas for implementing them in your worship and community!



PROGRAMMING IDEAS

DRAW NEAR TO WONDER -----

- ★ Read [this interview with Dr. William Brown](#) (or better yet, read his book, *Sacred Sense: Discovering the Wonder of God's Word and World*) and shape an adult education class around approaching scripture with a sense of wonder.
- ★ Use our Visio Divina Bible Study curriculum and visual art to host a session on the contemplative practice of “divine seeing.”
- ★ With children and/or youth, read Luke 21:25-36 and discuss looking for signs of God's handiwork in the world around you. Show a clip from youtube to introduce the work of environmental artist, Andy Goldsworthy. Then go on a nature walk and invite the children/youth to use objects found in nature (sticks, leaves, stones) to create temporary nature art installations. Alternatively, for an adult education class, show one of Andy Goldsworthy's documentaries, *Rivers and Tides* or *Leaning into the Wind* and lead a discussion on the film, Luke 21:25-36, and the command to “stay awake” to the wonders of God's presence in or lives.
- ★ Host a “Starry Night” family event where you create [tin can candle holders](#), tell the story of the wise men, and teach about star constellations.

DRAW NEAR TO TRUTH -----

- ★ If your denomination upholds historic creeds and confessional statements, use one or a few to host a class on studying the history and language of the statements.
- ★ With adults and/or youth, lead a class on the topic of sin/confession. Invite members to craft individual and group confessional prayers that you can use in your worship.
- ★ Host a “Story Slam” where members share personal stories that tell the truth about their lives. You may use [Brene Brown's work](#) as a starting point and encourage members to prepare stories that are silly, sad, hopeful, and most importantly, true.
- ★ Invite children to write a “True Story” about something they have experienced or seen. Help them illustrate and bind their stories into books.

- ★ Host a viewing of a film on [creation care](#). Lead a discussion on Luke 3:1-6 and our role in “preparing the way” for God's kingdom to be known in the ways we care for our earth and those who inhabit it.

DRAW NEAR TO JUSTICE -----

- ★ Read the first three chapters (or the whole book) of *Toxic Charity* by Robert Lupton. Analyze your church's giving traditions and missions efforts in light of the book and Luke 3:7-18.
- ★ Invite a representative from your local government (Mayor, Town Manager, County Judge, Alderman) and host a question and answer session regarding the pressing issues of your community and how the church can partner with your local representatives to address these challenges.
- ★ Curate a diverse panel of educators from your own congregation or local community. Ask them a series of thoughtful questions about their work and challenges as educators, opening the floor for questions from the audience. Inquire about how your church can support the school systems in your local community.
- ★ Do a book study on *I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness* by Austin Channing Brown. Use it to guide discussions on how your congregation can work to dismantle racial oppression.
- ★ Host an alternative gift fair to support global artisans, or host a community garage sale to reduce, reuse, recycle and offer affordable gift options.

DRAW NEAR TO ONE ANOTHER -----

- ★ Host a church potluck or family dinner night and talk about the story of Mary and Elizabeth in Luke 1:39-45.
- ★ Organize a caroling group to sing to homebound members.
- ★ Bake cookies and make cards for members who are in the hospital.
- ★ Chalk your neighborhood sidewalks with artful messages of unity and peace.
- ★ Host an interfaith panel, inviting leaders of other local faith communities to share about their faith traditions and sacred rituals. End the event with a community meal to share in fellowship and hospitality.