

SO THE **WORD** BECAME HUMAN
AND MADE HIS **HOME** AMONG US.
JOHN 1:14 NLT



OAKWOOD
we women

WELCOME AND PRAYERS OF BLESSING

Dear Hostess,

Thank you for opening your home this Christmas to celebrate the good news that Christ came to make His home among us! We trust you will be blessed through this event. May you trade your hosting worries and stresses for His peace and presence! May you find a good “Martha-Mary” balance as you prepare for your event. God has equipped each of you with special traits, gifts, resources, and opportunities for His glory and special purposes. Thank you for stepping up and stepping out to share your gifts with others. May you seek to honor the King first and foremost in all you do. Below you will find a few prayers of blessing that you may choose to use for your encouragement as hostess. The final blessing can be used to pray over your guests as they depart.

A prayer of blessing for the hostess to pray as you prepare.

Dear Lord,

We praise you that Your “divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life.” (2 Peter 1:3) We have exactly what we need to host this event, because we have YOU! We praise you that you are our Emmanuel—You are with us in all of our planning, preparing, and hosting. We praise You that You promise us Your peace when we pray out our worries. Lord, we confess that sometimes we waste our energy pouring ourselves into earthly things more than heavenly things. In our preparations, help us be a bit more like Mary. May we not miss out on your presence and what You might have to teach us as we serve our guests. Help us to avoid the Martha trap of being worried about “many things” when we know only One thing is needed—a surrendered heart that sits at Your feet and listens to You. May we seek to honor You in all we do. Keep us healthy so we may serve You well. We ask that You bless each hostess with joy, peace, and gratitude for the opportunity to share what You have given her with other women in her home.

In the Name of our Emmanuel, God with us, Amen

A prayer of blessing on your home before your guests arrive.

Dear Lord,

I invite You into my home. May your Spirit have His way this evening. I commit my home to Your purposes. May my home be a sanctuary, set apart for You. Afterall, this is Your home that You have given me for Your glory! Bless my kitchen as I prepare food for my guests that they may be filled with good things. Bless my living room with comfort and with the joy of sweet fellowship. Bless the technology we intend to use that it may serve the purpose for which it was intended. Grant guests safety as they travel. Remove any potential barriers to last minute cancellations. And bless the unexpected circumstances—You specialize in using those for Your good purposes! May we all delight in You. I look forward to seeing what You will do with this gathering. Thank You for this opportunity. May Your Name be blessed and may we all walk away with hearts that are encouraged, hopeful, and prepared to honor You in our own homes this Christmas.

Amen

A prayer of blessing over your guests as they depart.

Dear Lord,

We thank You and praise You for our time together today. We have truly come to appreciate opportunities to gather in fellowship and realize what a gift it is to be together! Bless us as we depart. May You protect Your Word that has been planted in each of our hearts. May it grow and bear fruit that will honor You and bless others. May You grant us time and opportunity over the next few weeks of the Advent season to reflect on what it means for each of us individually to make room for You in our hearts and in our homes. For those of us who long to return home to You, grant us the courage and humility to do so. For those of us who acknowledge that we only invite You in as an occasional guest, help us to take steps to intentionally welcome You into our lives as a permanent resident. And for those of us who feel safe and secure at home with You, may You open our eyes to ways that we can help lead others toward You.

Amen



MENU OF HOSTING OPTIONS

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*Resources can be printed in the church office. Contact [Carrie Ziebell, Ministry Assistant](#), to request this service.

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You're Invited! Let's celebrate that Jesus entered our world so that we would find our true home in Him. Set aside the stress of the holidays and instead focus on the message of Christmas: Jesus came to be God with us!

HOSTED BY: _____

DATE: _____

TIME: _____

LOCATION/
ZOOM LINK: _____

NOTE: _____

RSVP: _____

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HOSTING A VIRTUAL GATHERING

A virtual experience can be just as warm and welcoming as an in-home gathering. If you would like to host an online experience, please contact [Carrie Ziebell, Ministry Assistant](#), to set up a Zoom link for your group.

Here are a few fun ideas to make your online line gathering special.

1. Like an in-home gathering, be sure to send an invitation. Download and print or fill in your party details online (see *Bring Christmas Home Invitation* on page 3). When complete email or mail it to friends and family.
2. Icebreakers (see page 11) can be used to help get the conversations going. For help with Zoom meetings, please contact [Sarah Hayden, Women's Director](#).
3. Games (see page 11) can also be played as a group online. You may want to print or download the game sheets ahead of time and forward or mail them to your guests. You could also choose to use virtual gaming platforms like [video conference games](#), [Zoom games](#) or [Webex games](#), etc.
4. Crafts can be done together via Zoom. Record a video tutorial to show during the gathering, or simply work through the steps of the project together. Collect and distribute supplies for your guests, or ask them to collect their own. Then connect and create together! See pages 9-10 for fun ideas.
5. Use the provided videos and/or devotional (see pages 11-14) to start conversation. These can be read ahead of time or watched/read together.

6. An easy way to incorporate beverages into your gathering is to send your guests single-serving packets of hot cocoa or apple cider, or fun holiday-flavored K cups or tea bags. Your guests could then heat and enjoy together!
7. You could also gift your guests with a ready-to-bake treat. Give something as simple as this:



or more involved like this:



Look for more ideas on our [Bring Christmas Home Pinterest](#) and [Facebook](#) pages.



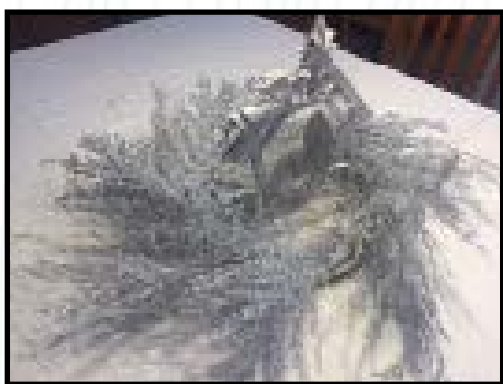
DIY CHRISTMAS DECORATING

Hosting a memorable *Bring Christmas Home* event can be easy and inexpensive. Here are some ideas to get you started.

Disposable table settings can appear elegant and save a lot of cleanup! Alone or layered on a plate charger as shown here, they can still give an elegant look to a table setting.



Easy centerpieces can be assembled with a wreath—lay it flat on the table and in the center add a coordinating candle, vase or nativity!



If you have a clear vase or mason jar, then centerpieces can be made from seasonal ingredients and tea lights. Check out these fun ideas at tastemade.com.



If you'd like to send your guests home with a small gift, consider using a floral arrangement on your table and sending each guest home with a fresh flower, or a few!



Look for more ideas on our [Bring Christmas Home Pinterest](https://www.pinterest.com/bringchristmashome/) and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/bringchristmashome/) pages.



RECIPES

When hosting an in-home gathering one of the first decisions you will make is whether or not to serve food and beverages. Hostesses can choose between dinner, brunch ideas, small plates or appetizers, just-desserts, or a tea and coffee klatch. You can choose to provide everything or ask your guests to bring a dish-to-pass.

Here are some easy recipe suggestions for you.

BRUNCH: Mini Quiche: serves 6



INGREDIENTS:

- 1 lb. sausage cooked/drained, or ham or bacon
- 8 eggs beaten
- 1/4 c. milk
- 1/2-1 c. shredded cheese
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. pepper
- 1 Tbsp. butter
- 1/2 c. red pepper*
- 1 c. mushrooms*

* or substitute your favorite veggies

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Whisk eggs, milk, cheese, salt and pepper.
3. Saute' butter, onion and mushrooms.
4. Combine all ingredients.
5. Foil line or use non-stick cooking spray to coat cupcake pan.
6. Bake for 22 minutes or until set.

APPETIZER: Cranberry Salsa Over Cream Cheese and Crackers: serves 6



Find the recipe from *A Thrifty Mom* here: <https://pin.it/2pvDxpx>

DINNER SIDE DISH: One-Skillet Green Beans with Bacon and Garlic



Find the recipe from *Our Salty Kitchen* here: <https://pin.it/22CspVh>

Look for more ideas on our [Bring Christmas Home Pinterest](#) and [Facebook](#) pages.



CRAFT IDEAS

Conversation seems to flow when our hands are busy. Doing a craft as a group can be a great way for women to get talking. Crafts are also nice take-home reminders of the message theme. For those groups looking to get crafty, here are a couple of "Home" ornament ideas.

Wooden House Ornament

Turn the event logo into an ornament! Order this wooden house ornament at [The Wooden Hare Etsy Shop](#). Then download and print the *Bring Christmas Home craft sheet* (see page 9) to use as stencils or to glue or [modge podge](#) to the ornament. You can even use fine-tip markers to write a verse on the back. You are only limited by your imagination.



House-shaped Clay Ornament

You could also make an ornament using clay! Learn how using the link below.

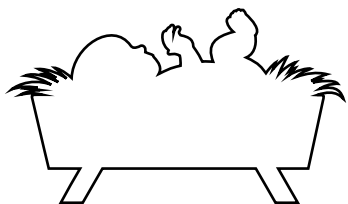
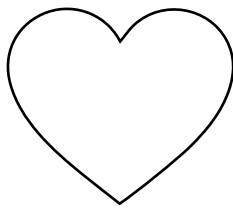
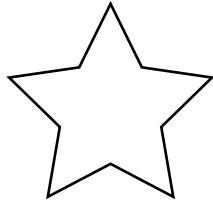


<https://www.hgtv.com/design/make-and-celebrate/handmade/how-to-make-a-house-shaped-clay-ornament>

Look for more ideas on our [Bring Christmas Home Pinterest](#) and [Facebook](#) pages.



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ICEBREAKERS

Use these questions during craft time, during mealtime, or as guests arrive.

1. In light of our theme *Bring Christmas Home*, how many different homes or places you have lived? Who has lived in the most states? Has anyone lived in the same place their whole life?
2. We all have things we wish we could improve about our current home but let's share something we like or enjoy about our house. (A particular room, our yard, our neighborhood, etc). Why do you like it?
3. Have you ever had to move? What did it take to make your new house feel like your "home?"
4. As a child, what do you remember about preparing your home for Christmas? Were there any specific decorations that you remember as being special to you?
5. During this year, what have you enjoyed about being home more than usual? What has been difficult or challenging for you?
6. Over the years, how have you been able to incorporate Christ into your Christmas traditions? Share ideas with each other about how you can bring Jesus into your home this year with your family and your traditions.

GAMES

Games are a fun way to connect with your group and create a light-hearted feeling at any gathering.

Try these games in person or while online:

- [Christmas Carol Opposites](#): Can you guess the titles of these popular Christmas songs?



- [Christmas Songs Emoji Pictionary Quiz](#)



- [Christmas Charades](#)



- [What's on ur phone? Christmas Version](#)



NATIVITY - THE SKIT GUYS

A short video for women to ready their hearts for what God would speak in this time.

Share this video with your guests to help them prepare to hear and receive the Word. We'd recommend showing this first!



<https://youtu.be/YOPsA4c0G2c>

MESSAGE FROM SARAH HAYDEN, WOMEN'S DIRECTOR

Sarah will share more about the theme of *Bring Christmas Home* and give ways for women to apply biblical truth to this Christmas season and beyond.



<https://youtu.be/bqpd7fd4IIM>

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think of when you think of the word "home"? Has it changed this year?
2. Of the three scripture verses mentioned, which one is most meaningful to you and why?
3. After watching the video message from Sarah, how can we think of Jesus as our home?
4. In the video, Sarah challenged us to consider putting our faith and trust in God as our shelter and refuge (Psalm 91:1-2) so that our expectations for our earthly homes are good and right, instead of looking to earthly "substitutes." What would be some examples of "earthly substitutes" we can be tempted to make as "false refuge?" How do we rely more on God for our refuge than these earthly things?
5. Another suggestion Sarah made for us was to practice "homemaking" with others. She described this as inviting others into our lives instead of just focusing on the outward things. What might this look like? What are some ways we can be intentional in this endeavor?



CHRIST AT HOME FOR CHRISTMAS DEVOTIONAL

John 1:14 “So the word became human and made His home among us.” (NLT)

We hear this verse every year at Christmastime. It is familiar. These are the same words we hear annually at church, on Christmas cards, in Christmas carols, etc. This is what Christmas is about—the guiding star, the vulnerable virgin Mary expecting a child, the young carpenter taking his betrothed to his hometown for the census, the helpless yet holy Christ child born into the world in a dirty stable, the lowly shepherds hearing the news, the heavenly host of angels announcing His arrival. The invisible God taking form as a human baby, subject to human limitations. It’s a story of nostalgia, it’s a story that evokes imagination, it’s a story passed down through the ages. And yet in the year 2020, this story can feel irrelevant, intangible, distant, and simply put: historical. The story of Christmas can, over the years, be reduced to a “tradition,” a Christmas pageant, a play, or a picture book we read to children.

When you think of the story of Christmas, what comes to mind? Do you recall an experience where the story of Christmas was made impactful or more “real” to you?

John 1 says that “the Word” (Jesus) was with God in the beginning. In Genesis, God’s spirit “hovered” over the waters as He spoke the world into existence (Gen 1:2). Genesis 3:8 narrates that God walked with Adam in the garden. Scripture tells us that God dwelt among His creation. Then sin entered the world through the deception of the serpent and the great chasm between God and man became the new reality. But

God still longed to live among His people! He spoke to Moses through the burning bush (Ex 3:1-10). He guided the people out of exile through the wilderness by coming down from heaven in the form of a pillar of fire and a cloud (Ex 13:21). He instructed the people to build a sanctuary where He would dwell and meet with them.

Exodus 25:8-9 “Have the people build me a holy sanctuary so I can live among them. You must build the tabernacle and its furnishings exactly according to the pattern I will show you.” (NLT)

The people offered up the finest of materials for the construction of the tabernacle: gold, silver, bronze, fine linen, acacia wood, onyx stones, gems, etc. Exodus 25-30 lists instructions and specifications in great detail about how the tabernacle was to be constructed. There are strict laws on who can enter the inner sanctuary (only priests) and the purification rituals that were required prior to entering (Lev 16:1-34).

Before Christ, where did God “dwell?” Was it permanent? Was it accessible? How did the people experience the Lord’s presence? Who was allowed to be in His presence?

At just the right time, God incarnate in the person of Jesus stepped out of eternity and into time at a specific place in history, dwelt in a physical body, walked our earth, grew up in a family, learned a trade, made some friends, studied scripture, followed Jewish law, and participated in ministry. He truly dwelled among us. Then after His death, He returned to His heavenly dwelling with the Father, but gave us His spirit to take permanent residence in our hearts if we



so choose Him! But what does it mean for us right here and right now at this time in history that Christ, by His spirit, still “dwells among us?” John 14:15–20

John 14:23 “...Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.” (NIV)

What makes a house a home? What do you look for in a “dwelling place?” Safety, comfort, stability, longevity, good schools, accessibility to work, nice neighbors, good investment for the future, something that suits your style, big enough for your family but not too much maintenance or work, location, location, location... I don't think God thought of these things when He was seeking a dwelling place for His Son! Why would the King of Heaven want to step down into a cold, dirty, lowly, unsafe, unwelcoming, dwelling with neighbors who would not welcome him? (John 1:11) Neighbors that would reject Him, betray Him, and eventually put Him to death? Not for comfort, convenience, prestige, or accessibility! But for a future investment!

The “future investment” is the salvation of His children! (John 3:16) His ultimate dwelling would be in the willing hearts of men and women! One of the Bible definitions of “dwelling” refers to a “humble and lowly” existence. We as needy, selfish, sinful, and imperfect humans, are the temple to a perfect, holy God? We are most certainly humble and lowly! Wow. That Christ would CHOOSE to take up permanent residence in our humble and lowly earthly tent is overwhelming and hard to fathom, that He would choose us to be the temple of His Spirit seems ridiculous, and yet that is exactly why Jesus came!

1 Corinthians 3:16 “Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?” (NIV)

How will you take care of your “temple” during this holiday season so as to honor the One who resides within you? (proper sleep, reduce stress by limiting commitments, eating healthy, getting outside, staying active, and being gentle with yourself when you need a break)

May we care for and honor the temple God has given us in which His Spirit dwells. May we seek to celebrate Christ's humble dwelling in our hearts. May we honor Him by removing our heart clutter and making room for Christ this season! May we seek to be a “proper host” for the King—in our earthly homes, and in our hearts.

Revelation 3:20 “Look! I stand at the door and knock! If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.” (NLT)

These days it's not often you will get a knock at your door! And if you do, there's often a worry that it is an unwelcome salesperson or maybe it's the kid next door who always wants to sell you something you don't really want to buy. But when the knock on your door is from someone who simply wants to be with you, wants to spend time with you, and wants to share life with you, that is a welcomed knock! We will stop what we are doing and open the door. The Lord Jesus is always knocking, waiting patiently for us to open the door of our hearts, welcome Him in (mess and all!) and into our daily lives (mundane or eventful!).



Sometimes the Lord's knocking may be repeated "lessons" He is trying to teach you. Maybe it is through the words of a friend. Maybe it is the longing in your heart for His presence. Maybe it's through pain or overwhelming circumstances that finally wake you up to His knocking. This Advent season, how will you respond to His knocking? Ignore it? Drown it out with busyness? Avoid it? Put Him off until it's "convenient?" Or recognize it and respond with an open heart to meet with Him?

Sit quietly before the Lord. As you reflect on your life, are there instances or circumstances where Jesus was knocking on your door? How is He trying to get your attention lately?

Picture Jesus standing on your front doorstep quietly, yet persistently knocking. Be honest with yourself. What would your initial thoughts be? How would you feel? What would you do?





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AND MADE HIS **HOME** AMONG US.
HE WAS FULL OF UNFAILING
LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS.

JOHN 1:14

THOSE WHO LIVE IN THE SHELTER
OF THE MOST HIGH WILL FIND REST IN THE SHADOW
OF THE ALMIGHTY. THIS I DECLARE
ABOUT THE LORD:

HE ALONE IS MY **REFUGE**.
MY PLACE OF SAFETY;
HE IS MY GOD, AND I **TRUST** HIM.

PSALM 91: 1-2



I HEARD A LOUD SHOUT FROM
THE THRONE, SAYING,

"LOOK, GOD'S **HOME** IS NOW
AMONG HIS PEOPLE!

HE WILL LIVE WITH THEM, AND THEY WILL BE HIS PEOPLE.
GOD HIMSELF WILL BE WITH THEM."

REVELATION 21:3



HEARTLOVE PLACE SERVICE PROJECT

Ask women to bring items to donate for Oakwood's Advent Conspiracy December Project!

[Advent Conspiracy](#) was founded on the radical idea that we can celebrate Christmas humbly and generously. Advent is the story of a wondrous moment when God entered our world to make things right. It is the greatest story ever told and it changes everything—including how we celebrate Christmas.

The key principles of this movement are:

- **WORSHIP FULLY:** Christmas begins and ends with Jesus
- **SPEND LESS:** Free up resources to support what matters
- **GIVE MORE:** Give more intentionally and relationally
- **LOVE ALL:** Radically love others like Jesus did

This year, Oakwood is supporting its Community Partners by gathering a generous volume of donations to bless one organization each month. The featured organization in December is HeartLove Place!

[HeartLove Place](#) is a nonprofit serving Milwaukee's Harambee Neighborhood. Founded on the principals of Christian values, HLP provides programs and services that empower, develop, and motivate families and strengthen our community.

HeartLove Place connects communities through Christ to empower individuals, motivate families, and build stronger neighborhoods. HeartLove Place is a nonprofit that was established in 1989, through the ministry of dedicated individuals who recognized the huge challenges facing Milwaukee's low-income

population. Fractured families, unemployment, struggling schools, increasing crime, and teen pregnancy plagued our urban families and youth. To overcome these challenges, the leadership of HeartLove Place relied upon Christian principles and teaching to uplift individuals and communities within the Greater Milwaukee area.



<https://youtu.be/H51HYH2mFFM>

Please consider one of these initiatives as a group service project:

1. **BABY CLOSET:** providing basic needs for newborns and babies (collect diapers size infant to pull-ups, wipes, etc.)
2. **LOVE OFFERING:** a monthly bag of essential grocery items which people pick up at their YMCA site, serving about 50 families a month (collect nutritious canned and boxed items, like canned soup, whole grain cereal, and healthy snacks for kids)
3. **COATS FOR KIDS:** partnering with WalMart, kids will be able to pick out a coat of their choice with coupons provided by donations (Coats range from \$30-50. Hostess could take a small offering, with no expectation to provide the total cost of a coat individually. They would like gloves and mittens as well.)

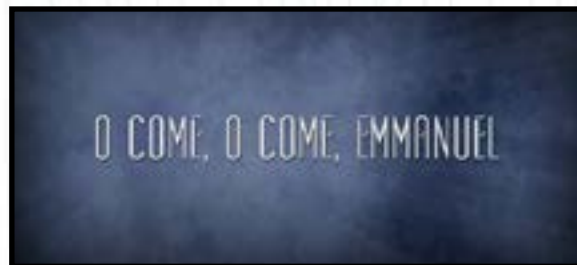
Hostesses, please deliver items to Oakwood Church at our Advent Conspiracy collection area, located in the upper level lobby, by December 27. Monetary donations can be brought to the office during the week. Let [Sarah Hayden, Women's Ministry](#), know if you have any questions or if you prefer to arrange a touchless delivery!



WORSHIP EXPERIENCE

We picked these songs to match the theme of *Bring Christmas Home*. (They also have the lyrics on screen and are in a good key to sing for women!) You may choose just to listen or invite guests to sing along, depending on what's comfortable. These are familiar to many, and your guests may find it enjoyable to sing along! Choose to use one, two or all!

O Come, O Come Emmanuel – Sovereign Grace



https://youtu.be/2JpvW9FU_Rg

What Child Is This – Sovereign Grace



<https://youtu.be/wO8qluGa-tM>

Silent Night – Hillsong



<https://youtu.be/UNpiQwgStNA>





Telling stories is part of Christmas. The Gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) uniquely tell the original Christmas story, which has been passed down for generations. Join us each Sunday as we explore *The Heritage of the Gospel*—one that God Himself invites us into! Then, on Christmas Eve, we'll reflect on Jesus' birth and the hope it brings now and to future generations.

WORSHIP WITH US!

SUNDAYS
NOV. 29-DEC. 20
On-Site & YouTube
9:30 am

CHRISTMAS EVE
DEC. 24
On-Site Services
3 & 5 pm
Reserve seats online

YouTube Specials:
3 & 7 pm



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SUNDAYS
NOV. 29-DEC. 20
On-Site & YouTube
9:30 am

CHRISTMAS EVE
DEC. 24
On-Site Services
3 & 5 pm
Reserve seats online

YouTube Specials:
3 & 7 pm



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Thank you to the 2020 Women's Christmas Planning Team
for your work to equip women to celebrate Christmas well this year!
Dionne Wilhelm, Christy Gelting, Margaret Fiedler