



First Met  
United Church



WORSHIP  
DESIGN STUDIO  
WDS

*reflecting the sacred*

A Companion Journal for Advent



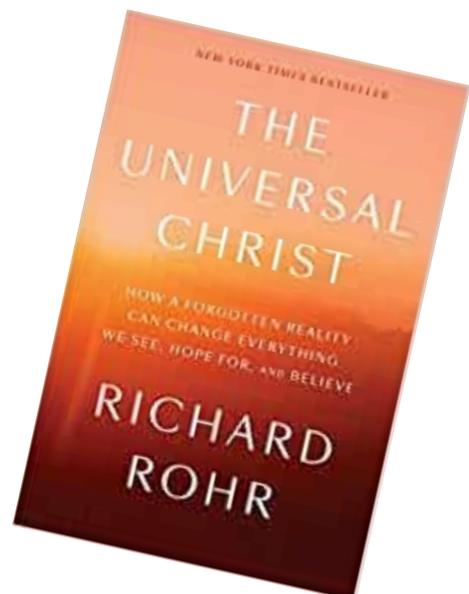
## Introduction

The Christmas season is a time when the juxtaposition of the sacred and secular feels sometimes blatantly opposed, and sometimes quite blurred. The word “sacred” points to something dedicated as “holy” and “set apart.” This year, you are invited to a spiritual journey of seeing ALL things pregnant with the Holy. What could our experience of the Advent and Christmas season be like if we lived it imagining that everything is reflecting the sacred?

I don’t know about you, but it seems like just yesterday we were planning Advent and Christmas 2021. The story comes again, and we must ask ourselves how to approach this seminal narrative of our faith anew, considering the situation of our world, our communities, our lives, and our relationships. So much happens in a year and yet, we all hoped we would be further along in the healing of so many things and it feels like we have not come very far.

As people of faith, it is important that we grapple with our incarnational faith and what it calls us to be and do. Advent and Christmas is as good a time as any to talk about incarnation. Richard Rohr’s book, *The Universal Christ*, and its companion book of reflections, *Every Thing is Sacred*, invites us to imagine that indeed, every thing, every one, every encounter, is pregnant with the sacred. Not in a “where is God in this?” notion, but in a much more radical “Christ is here and permeating and radiating from everywhere” kind of way.

Rohr calls this the “Christ Mystery” or “Christ Mirror” and, as the Gospel of John says, it was there “from the beginning.” Rohr’s question to us is this: “What if Christ is another name for everything-in its fullness?” Fullness. Pregnant. Always birthing in and through all of us.





## Week One: Sacred Time (Hope)

*We begin our Advent journey by emphasizing the gift of being awake to the 'now'... the gift of sacred time with God, with each other, and with those in need of hope.*

“I have never been separate from God, nor can I be, except in my mind.” (p. 44, *The Universal Christ*)

The busy-ness of the holiday season can overrun the sense of the sacred. The irony is that setting apart time for connection with the sacred gets pushed aside in order to create the trappings of what is supposed to be the season of celebrating the incarnation of the Holy! We will begin our Advent journey toward Christmas by emphasizing the gift of being awake to the “now”... the gift of sacred time with God, with each other, and with those in need of hope.

*How can I stay present with others this week  
and shine as a beacon of hope?*

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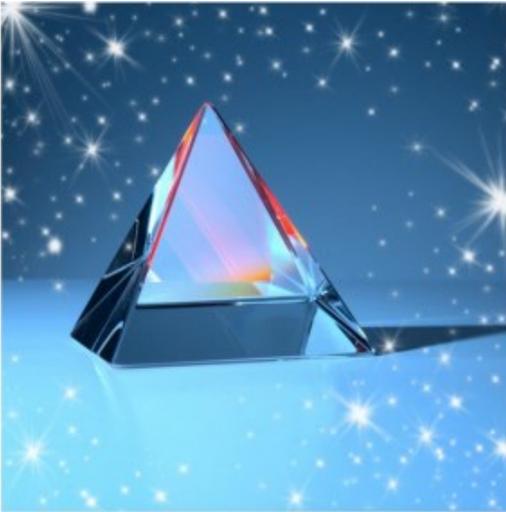
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## Week Two: Sacred Knowing (Peace)

*Let us seek and quiet to hear  
the voice that brings peace by  
gently saying “do not be  
afraid.”*

“We do not need to be afraid of the depths and breadths of our own lives... We are given permission to become intimate with our own experiences, learn from them and allow ourselves to descend to the depths of things, even our mistakes...” (p. 111, *The Universal Christ*)

Many of us look for signs to help us know what to do, or we wish we could have our own personal angel visit us to let us know the “right” next steps. Uncertainty is a fact of life-this seems ever more true. This week we will remember that there is a Christ within us constantly birthing wisdom and a deep knowing if we will but listen with a contemplative heart. L

*When I drop into the depths of my heart and listen for  
God, what do I know in my bones as God’s calling over  
my life?*

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## Week Three: Sacred Space (Joy)

*The pregnancy of Mary is connected to the promise of justice and joy in the Advent story.*

“My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour. For the Holy One has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.”  
(Luke 1: 46b-55)

The pregnancy of Mary is connected to the promise of justice and joy in the readings this week. Mary’s womb becomes a sacred space for the gestation of grace that moves into, and is transforming, the world. We will ponder the spaces we inhabit at home, work, and community, asking whether they are feeding, nurturing, and reflecting the freedom and joy that is so desperately needed.

*How do the spaces I inhabit— at home, work, and in community—reflect God’s justice and joy? What am I being called to create in order to further goodness in the world?*

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## Week Four: Sacred People (Love)

*When we look, through the lens of the sacred, we prepare our senses to recognize the holy in all people.*

“You must come to know (the Word becoming flesh) in the very cells of your body—and see it in the cells of all bodies, which each carry the same divine DNA of their Creator.” (p xiii, *Every Thing is Sacred*)

When we look through the lens of the sacred, we prepare our senses to recognize the holy in all people—to come to know them in a “steadfast and encouraging” way. Our world is crying out for harmony and being able to see the Christ reflected in each other makes a path for this to be accomplished. We are inspired this week to see our own walk upon this earth as part of the call to be sacred people who usher in the presence of love.

*Where I see the sacred in other people this week, even people who I find difficult to love...*

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## Christmas Eve: Sacred Being

*Our very being reflects the sacred. The incarnation of God in human flesh is proof.*

“Have you ever noticed that the expression “the light of the world” is used to describe the Christ (John 8:12) but that Jesus also applies the same phrase to us? (Matthew 5:14. ‘You are the light of the world.’) ‘ (p. 31, *The Universal Christ*)

It is not difficult to imagine this night as “reflecting the sacred.” We gather and sing and light candles and dare to believe that love truly enters the world time and again and anything is possible. What may be more difficult to understand, however, is that this love is ours, not because we’ve been “good” (as if God is Santa Claus), but simply because we are beloved-the firstborn of God.

*I am beloved as a child of God, no matter what. How do my life and actions reflect my identity as God’s child?*

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## Christmas Day: Surprisingly Sacred

*Can we dare to believe that we can know a surprising calm even in the midst of anxiety because of the in-breaking of this Prince of Peace upon our lives each and every day?*

“Jesus came to undo our notions of scarcity and tip us over into a worldview of absolute abundance—or what he would call the “Reign of God”. (p. 184-5 *The Universal Christ*)

In the early church, Sunday was known as the “day of light.” And so it is special when Christmas falls on a Sunday, as it does in 2022. As light dawns on this morning, as the children scramble to the tree to see what has appeared, we remember that the sacred comes in the form of surprise sometimes, just as it did when light and life was known anew in the form of a baby in a humble stable.

*How I’ve been surprised by the sacred on this day and throughout the Advent season...*

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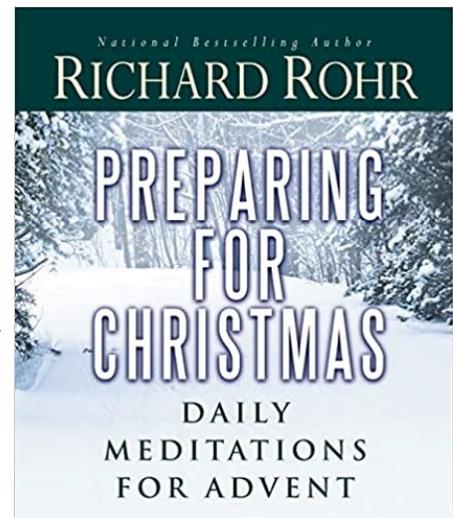
## More Resources

### Books:

Richard Rohr, *The Universal Christ*, Convergent Books, New York, 2021 is Rohr's theology steeped in an incarnational worldview. This book is for you folks who want to chew on Rohr's theology in its "purest" form. It is very much a relatable read but without the related-to-everyday-life stories of the next book. (Available as a book, e-book and audiobook at the Greater Victoria Public Library.)

Patrick Boland Richard Rohr, *Everything is Sacred: 40 Practices and Reflections on the Universal Christ*, takes Rohr's theology and puts it in 40 reflections that include highly-relatable stories and reflection questions that adults will resonate with. The *Every Thing is Sacred* book is not so tied to the season. This allows people to use it as they can during what can sometimes be a busy holiday time, and then continue on with it beyond Advent/Christmas at their own pace. (Available as a book, e-book and audiobook at the Greater Victoria Public Library.)

Richard Rohr, *Preparing for Christmas: Daily Reflections for Advent*. Franciscan Media, 2012. *Preparing for Christmas* is a more scheduled daily reading with the season, so there is some pressure to "keep up."



### Online Resources:

Richard Rohr reading the Divine Mirror meditation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KbcXms6WR0k>. This meditation is included in *The Universal Christ*.

Nadia Bolz Weber: <https://progressivechristianity.org/resources/a-painter-a-thief-mary-magdalen-and-the-divine-mirror/>

Centre for Action and Contemplation: <https://cac.org/> offers podcasts, daily meditations, and spiritual grounding for a movement of contemplative activists, prophetic leaders, and spiritual seekers .

## Prayers from the Centre for Action and Contemplation:

*God, Lord of all creation, lover of life and of everything, please help us to love in our very small way what You love infinitely and everywhere. We thank You that we can offer just this one prayer and that will be more than enough, because in reality every thing and every one is connected, and nothing stands alone. To pray for one part is really to pray for the whole, and so we do. Help us each day to stand for love, for healing, for the good, for the diverse unity of the Body of Christ and all creation, because we know this is what You desire: as Jesus prayed, that all may be one. We offer our prayer together with all the holy names of God, we offer our prayer together with Christ, our Lord, Amen. <https://cac.org/daily-meditations/love-2022-05-12/>)*

*Loving God, you fill all things with a fullness and hope that we can never comprehend. Thank you for leading us into a time where more of reality is being unveiled for us all to see. We pray that you will take away our natural temptation for cynicism, denial, fear and despair. Help us have the courage to awaken to greater truth, greater humility, and greater care for one another. May we place our hope in what matters and what lasts, trusting in your eternal presence and love. Listen to our hearts' longings for the healing of our suffering world. Please add your own intentions . . . Knowing, good God, you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these prayers in all the holy names of God. Amen. (<https://cac.org/daily-meditations/2021-daily-meditations/>)*



This guide is adapted from the following resources in the Worship Design Studio Advent series, *Reflecting the Sacred*:

- Guided Journal
- Individual and Small Group Suggestions
- Scriptures and Synopses

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