



## Working Graces

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# Session I: Leader Sheet WORKING GRACES

## Leader Preparation

Gather items to prepare your space. You may want to create a focal area or altar-table. Perhaps you will want to light a candle and/or add a candle for each week in Advent. The Advent colour is purple or blue. Check the “Grace and Peace” section for other suggestions for the focal area.

You will need a Bible for the reading. You may want to read the passage in different translations or ask a participant to read to hear it in a different voice.

Download Audio Recording #1 (Working Graces). Print the Script if you are sharing it with participants. Print Participant Sheet #1.

You will need a piece of purple or blue ribbon, yarn or embroidery thread for each participant.

## Grace and Peace

“Grace to you in the name of the Spirit of Christ who gathers us together online to explore, question, and discuss our faith and how that faith is lived out in our lives, in our churches, and in our world.”

Let us begin by being still.

(a moment, a minute, or more.)

*You may want to light one candle. If you have a focus area or altar-table, place a couple of samples of “work” supplies (scrubbing cloth, hammer and nails, tea towel, oven mitts, pencils, computer mouse, or whatever represents work in your group.)*

This is a time for checking in. There is no cross-talk or discussion. It is a time of sharing and listening. Start with yourself and then go around the circle. (Share names if all are not known by name.)

- What is the best gift you ever received?

Take some time as a group to discuss the norms or expectations that would make this group a good experience for you. Ask questions like these: What helps you get the most out of a group like this? What helps you feel comfortable in a group like this? What agreements help us make this time safe and the best it can be for all of us?

### Reading the Letter of Advent

Read I Corinthians 1:1-9

Ask participants what they *think*.

Read the Letter again, perhaps in another version and/or voice. See [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) for translations.)

Ask participants what they *feel*, a word or phrase that shimmers, stands out or resonates for them.

### Listening and Making Connections

Listen to Audio Recording #1 (Working Graces) and see Script #1.

*Offer questions to prompt discussion. Don't feel you need to use all and be free to write your own.*

1. What is the first thing you want to say about what you just heard?
2. *"We are not lacking in any spiritual gift while we wait."* In what ways are you being called to wait? What spiritual gifts can you imagine sustaining you? Your congregation?
3. Gloria names where she sees signs of beauty and trouble in our lives and in the life of our congregations. What are your challenges? What are your sources of energy, love and light? What if beauty and trouble are not opposites but a dynamic tension that we are called to hold and live within. How might trouble **and** beauty be shaping you into something new?
4. Janice believes the working graces are embodied in people. They are "stirring, scrubbing, shining and working in our congregations." Where have you caught a glimpse of this? What would help you bring new eyes for seeing more of these working graces in unexpected places and people?

### Working Graces: Spiritual Practice

#### Advent Intention

READ: Advent means arrival or coming. It is a time to get ready for the Mystery of Christmas. I like to think of Advent as a gentle hand on our heart holding us back, making us wait. Advent invites the practice of expectancy, offers space for wonder, and bids us pause and contemplate. Advent is a time for acting with purpose and intention.

Advent offers its own gifts while waiting for the Gift. In this series we are unwrapping Working Graces; Faith, Hope and Love. Today we will set an intention for Advent. Think about a hope you have for how you

will be in these days of Advent. Is there something special you want to make sure you do? Or don't do? Do you have a prayer you want to pray? Is there a practice you want to take on?

RITUAL: Hand out a blue or purple ribbon, embroidery thread or yarn. This will help us remember. You may want to tie it around your wrist or stick it on the fridge, or lay it by your computer, somewhere you see it each day. It is a reminder of your intention.

PRAYER: Beginning with the person on your left, invite each one to share their intention ***in words or in silence***. Whether words are used or silent prayer offered, each one ends with the word "Amen" spoken aloud so the next person knows it is their turn.

### **Closing: Contemporary Letter**

*This study is based on the Letters in the Advent Lectionary. We end our sessions with a short excerpt from a contemporary letter writer. It is offered for meditation and blessing.*

Our contemporary letter this week is from Maya Angelou and her book, *Letter to My Daughter*. Maya Angelou was an African-American writer and poet. Angelou didn't have a daughter but wrote the book for the thousands of women who saw her as a mother figure, and to share the wisdom gained throughout her long life.

Here is a quote:

"You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them. Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud. Do not complain. Make every effort to change things you do not like. If you cannot make a change, change the way you have been thinking. You might find a new solution."

— Maya Angelou, *Letter to My Daughter*

PS

You can hear Maya Angelou reading from the Introduction in this video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y2gTIDze4Q8>