



How to Use the JTM Abolition Advent Calendar for Adult Education/Faith Formation

Thank you so much for your interest in the Join the Movement toward Racial Justice Abolition Advent Calendar. We are so grateful for your engagement in this practice of preparation and imagination that is bringing us closer to a world where all of us are free.

In addition to engaging these reflections as a personal practice, you could also use them as a group. Below you'll find brief curriculums for how you might structure an adult education/faith formation discussion group using the Abolition Advent Calendar.

You could invite individuals to read the reflections throughout the week and then come together once a week during Advent to reflect on them. Or you could simply use the Sunday reflections (which are reflections on the gospel readings from the Revised Common Lectionary) and read them aloud together. Outlines for both options are below.

DISCUSSION GROUP OPTION #1 – READ AHEAD

Preparation:

Invite participants to [sign up](#) to receive Abolition Advent Calendar reflections via email or give them the links to access the reflections on the [Join the Movement website](#) or via social media ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#)). Ask folks to read and pray with each day's reflections. You can also encourage folks to journal about their responses and questions each day as well. Set aside 45-90 minutes each week for shared discussion.

Materials Needed:

Advent wreath or candle(s) [optional]; journals [optional]; paper and writing implements [optional]

Set Up:

Set up chairs in a circle or around a table with the Advent wreath/candles at the center. If you are using them, place paper and writing implements at each seat.

NB: This discussion group would also easily be adapted to Zoom or other online group forums.

Session Outline:

Times provided are for a 60 minute discussion group.

Simply extend or reduce discussion time if you are hoping for a shorter or longer session.

Centering Time (5 minutes)

To foster meaningful and courageous conversations, is helpful to intentionally create a sacred container for them. Beginning with grounding, symbolic action, and prayer can help create that container. "We have courageous conversations," Patrisse Cullors writes, "because our goal is to live inside of a healthy community that values the dignity of every single human being. We are able to value our lives more if we make time to intentionally engage ourselves and each other with honesty, directness and the courage it takes to speak our truths." From An Abolitionist's Handbook: 12 Steps to Changing Yourself and the World.

- Once folks have gathered, invite everyone to take some deep breaths and ground themselves in their intentions for this place and time.

- Light the candles on the Advent wreath coinciding with the week of Advent you are in or just light one central candle.
- Offer an Advent prayer or blessing. Here are some places to find beautiful resources for this time of centering:
 - [Black Liturgies Project](#) by Cole Arthur Riley
 - [The Advent Door](#) by Jan Richardson
 - [Advent Resources](#) from enfleshed

Check In (10 minutes – depending on how many people you have)

Offering a time for participants to check in helps build community and foster relationships which is part of the work of abolition. As Audre Lorde reminds us, “Without community, there is no liberation.”

- Invite participants to share their names and pronouns and respond briefly (in a sentence or two) to one of the following check-in prompts:
 - Where is one place/what is one moment in which you found hope (peace, joy, love in subsequent weeks) this week?
 - Where did you experience freedom (or its absence) this week?
 - What advent longing or advent dream emerged in your life this week?
 - What challenges and joys are you experiencing in your life?
 - [After week one] How did you do with practicing your intentions this week?

Discussion (40 minutes)

- Choose one of the following questions to discuss for a while. Then follow with another one or two. Expect to only have time to engage 1-2 (maybe 3) questions in a 60-minute session. Save the others for subsequent weeks!
- [Optional – To cater to different learning styles and personalities or foster a more contemplative atmosphere, invite participants to use their paper and writing implements to do a free write for about 2 minutes in response to the question. Then move into a verbal discussion.]
- [Optional – If your group is large or if you have a lot of internal processors/introverts, have folks turn to a neighbor to share their thoughts initially in pairs or trios, and then bring some of what they talked about to the larger group]

Discussion Questions

1. How has reading these texts through an abolition lens helped you experience scripture in a new way this Advent season?
2. Abolition is not only about dismantling life-denying systems and structures, but also about imagining new ways of being as individuals and societies. What new worlds are these texts and reflections pointing toward? How is this Advent inviting you to prepare for those new worlds?
3. What questions of curiosity have these reflections given rise to in you? What aspects of abolition do you want to learn more about?
4. One of the beautiful parts of abolition is that it is both large scale and systemic, but also small scale and personal. What call to abolition practice did you experience in this week's reflections that you want to live out in your daily life?
5. What are your abolitionist longings this Advent? What freedom are you waiting for?

Intention Setting (3 minutes)

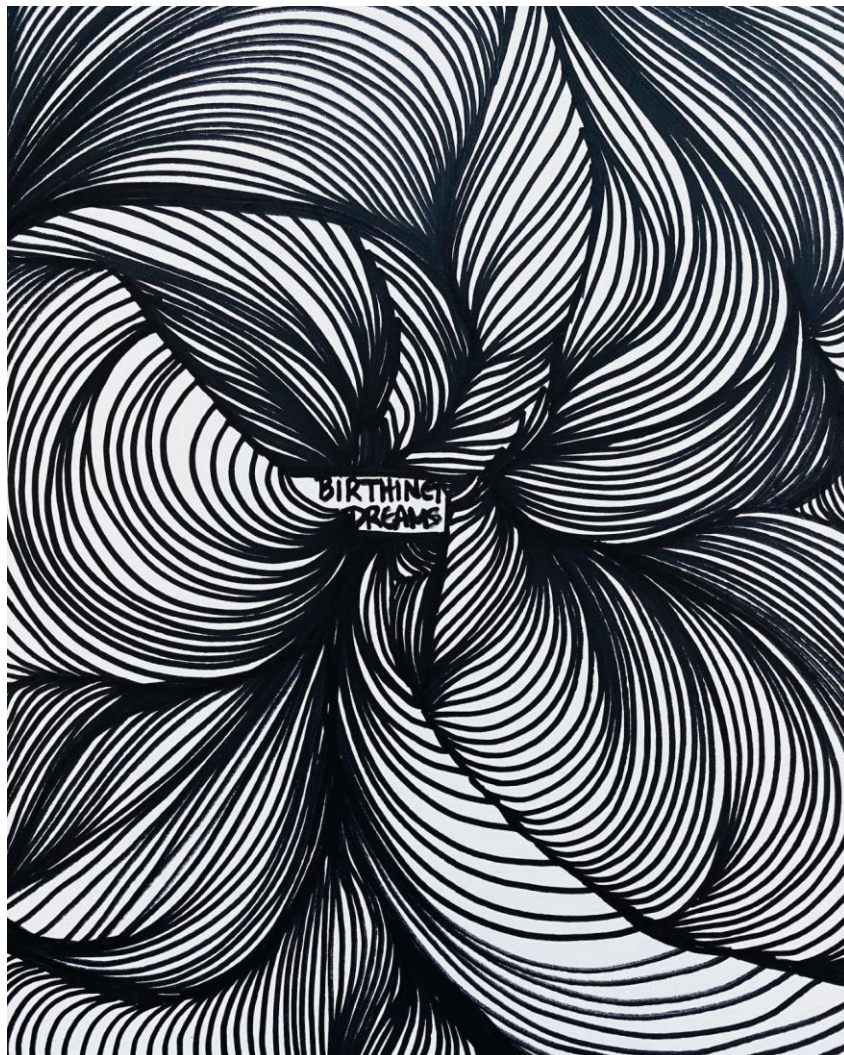
"We have and are creating a lineage linked together by a commitment to freedom, but more specifically, we are creating systems that are human centered, repair and healing centered. Systems that believe in the greatest potential of human beings, even when we mess up. [Abolition means] imagining and intentionally practicing something more beautiful and more just." – Prentice Hemphill

Practicing abolition means challenging and changing the ways we live and move through the world. And making those kinds of changes becomes more possible if we set intentions that we can be accountable to.

- Invite participants to use their journals, or paper and writing implements to respond to one of the following prompts:
 - What intentions are you setting for your abolitionist practice this week?
 - What intentions are you setting for embodying hope (peace, joy, love) this week?
 - How do you want to demonstrate your commitment to freedom this week?

Closing Blessing (2 minutes)

- Engage the group in one of the following sending practices:
 - Invite each person to share one word of how they are feeling or what they are taking with them from the discussion today.
 - Invite each person to share one word of gratitude for this time together.
 - While standing in a circle, invite participants to place their right hand on their own heart, and their left hand on the back of the person next to them (having asked their permission). Take some deep breaths together and invite folks to notice the connections between their beating hearts.
 - Choose one of the [embodiment exercises from Capacitar](#) to engage the group in. The Shower of Light is a particularly good one to end with.
 - Offer a blessing from [The Advent Door](#) by Jan Richardson



DISCUSSION GROUP OPTION #2 – SUNDAYS ONLY

Preparation:

Set aside 45-90 minutes each week for shared discussion. Print out copies of the Sunday materials from the Abolition Advent Calendar. Let participants know they can [sign up](#) to receive Abolition Advent Calendar reflections via email or give them the links to access the reflections on the [Join the Movement website](#) or via social media ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#)) if they are interested, but they need not have read anything ahead of time to participate.

Materials Needed:

Advent wreath or candle(s); journals or paper and writing implements [optional]; bibles [optional]

Set Up:

Set up chairs in a circle or around a table with the Advent wreath/candles at the center. If you are using them, place paper and writing implements at each seat, along with a copy of the Abolition Advent Calendar materials.

NB: This discussion group would also easily be adapted to Zoom or other online group forums.

Session Outline:

Times provided are for a 60 minute discussion group.

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Centering Time (5 minutes)

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- Once folks have gathered, invite everyone to take some deep breaths and ground themselves in their intentions for this place and time.
- Light the candles on the Advent wreath coinciding with the week of Advent you are in or just light one central candle.
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Scripture Reading and Quote and Art Reflection (5 minutes)

- Ask one participant to read the few verses from scripture that are included on the handout. (Or if you'd like, read the whole gospel lesson, inviting folks to follow along in their bibles.
- Ask another participant to read one of the Abolition quotes included in handout. If there is a second quote, have another participant read it.
- As they listen to the scripture and quotes, encourage participants to focus their visual attention on the Breathing Praying Meditation by Yohana Junker included with the Abolition Advent Calendar materials.
- Invite participants to either take a few moments in silence to dwell with these words and see what emerges for them or to do a free write or breathing praying line drawing of their response to the scripture, quote and art for a few minutes.

Reflection Reading (5 minutes)

- Read or invite someone to read the reflection provided in the Abolition Advent Calendar materials.
- Invite participants to soak in these words for a few moments.

Discussion (40 minutes)

- Choose one of the following questions to discuss for a while. Then follow with another one or two. Expect to only have time to engage 1-2 (maybe 3) questions in a 60-minute session. Save the others for subsequent weeks!
- [Optional – To cater to different learning styles and personalities or foster a more contemplative atmosphere, invite participants to use their paper and writing implements to do a free write for about 2 minutes in response to the question. Then move into a verbal discussion.]

- [Optional – If your group is large or if you have a lot of internal processors/introverts, have folks turn to a neighbor to share their thoughts initially in pairs or trios, and then bring some of what they talked about to the larger group]

Discussion Questions

1. How has reading this text through an abolition lens helped you experience scripture in a new way this Advent season?
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3. What questions of curiosity has this reflection given rise to in you? What aspects of abolition do you want to learn more about?
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Intention Setting (3 minutes)

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Practicing abolition means challenging and changing the ways we live and move through the world. And making those kinds of changes becomes more possible if we set intentions that we can be accountable to.

- Invite participants to use their journals, or paper and writing implements to respond to one of the following prompts:

- What intentions are you setting for your abolitionist practice this week?
- What intentions are you setting for embodying hope (peace, joy, love) this week?
- How do you want to demonstrate your commitment to freedom this week?

Closing Blessing (2 minutes)

- Close out your time together with the prayer provided in the Abolition Advent Calendar materials.

And/or

- Engage the group in one of the following sending practices:
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 - Invite each person to share one word of gratitude for this time together.
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For more information contact:

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Join the Movement toward Racial Justice today!

<https://jointhemovementucc.org/>