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# Honest to God:

## An Advent (and ongoing) Opportunity

Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit  
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[www.churchholyspirit.org](http://www.churchholyspirit.org)



**Overview** Offering a structured opportunity for each congregant to reflect, name and identify the personal experiences of what happened across this time of upheaval and worldwide pandemic and through communal sharing, grow a common strength together for the walk of faith that lies before us.

## Goals

1. Develop for congregants a guided time of weekly reflection, response and reporting.
2. Curate and publish ongoing voluntary submissions in a summative document.
3. Gather as the Body of Christ in a concluding act of worship and oblation.

## Structure: *An expectation, not a mere request*

We invite you with full expectation of your participation in a healthy practice of reflection. This will help not only yourself but the whole community of the faithful. The intense experiences of the past few years and especially these long months of pandemic have impacted us in profound ways we do not always recognize. The internal pressure and wounds as well as unexpected gifts are not often obvious. We offer a specific spiritual discipline to bring to mind and heart these experiences, name them, report them, and find new and honest common ground with others.

## Reflection

Each week, we expect you will set aside some deliberate moment of reflection on what has happened to you. Usually this will mean a few to several minutes of silence and thoughtfulness. After this quiet time, when you are ready, create a “record” of your reflections. This record will vary from person to person. Some may wish to create a prayer, a poem, a word cloud, a narrative or some literary document using words. Some may draw, sketch, create photography, or fashion a piece of art in various forms, including music, etc. Children (of any age) may wish to crayon an impression. To prompt reflection, the following are suggested:

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How am I feeling right now . . .

This I missed . . .

What I found out about myself/others/God . . .

I wish, I hope . . .

#### Important Note:

Our reflections may prompt things we find uncomfortable, and, as equally, pleasant surprises. There is no right, nor wrong, nor expected response. They are likely to change week by week.

### **Reporting**

The document/art you create each week can be submitted to the priest using this email address: [CHSHonest2God@gmail.com](mailto:CHSHonest2God@gmail.com). Only the priest will view it. This is a discrete email address set aside solely for receiving these submissions. Please indicate if you approve of its publication in a summative document for the whole community and if you prefer it to be anonymous. You may also place physical submissions of writing or photographs in basins set near the Altar. Please take a digital photo of any art and submit that as well, also indicating preference on anonymity. A summative *digital* document is planned to be published on an developing and ongoing basis beginning at the conclusion of Advent.

### **Worship and Oblation**

On the Winter Solstice (12/21 @7 pm) we will gather on line and in person and offer Evensong with readings and reflections drawn from both Scripture and each community's own **Honest to God** publication. Oblation is a form of prayer whereby we offer ourselves before God and seek nothing but to experience God's presence in the moment. A social gathering follows.

### **Our Hopes**

Courage and honesty can be hallmarks of a community of faith. We find strength in sharing truth with a sense of purpose and respect. Our fears and anxieties are often enemies to the church community. Fear and anxiety are anaerobic (things that grow in the dark). When exposed to sunlight and fresh air, these things find their proper perspective. Fears also separate and divide us. Separateness is not a Godly outcome. Christ-like, whole and healthy communities share our lives in common. Hope is something we gain together.

**Honest to God** is directed specifically at joining us together, both as a congregation and between other churches (we've invited others to offer this to their congregations). By mutually engaging in the disciplines outlined above, we may find, again, a larger self-understanding for ourselves within a community and between them.