

## Advent 2025 Reflections/Action Steps (Week Three)

### *Building Bridges of Hope: An Advent Journey*

This Advent, we're invited into the transformative practice of bridge-building through four intentional weeks: **Listening to Yourself** grounds us in honest self-awareness. **Listening to God** attunes us to the sacred presence that guides us. **Listening to Understand** stretches us toward genuine empathy for others, even those we disagree with. **Building Bridges** calls us into courageous action—invitation, vulnerability, and reconciliation.

Each week builds on the last, moving from inner work to divine connection to outward engagement. As we prepare for Emmanuel—God's ultimate bridge to humanity—we learn to become bridge-builders ourselves, creating pathways of hope in a world that desperately needs connection.

### **Week 3: Listening to Understand (Dec 14 - Dec 20)**

Now the journey moves outward. Grounded in self-awareness and sustained by spiritual practice, we are ready to practice the difficult and transformative work of truly listening to others. This week challenges our natural tendencies to defend, correct, or immediately respond. Instead, we practice the radical act of listening to understand—not to win, fix, or even necessarily agree, but to genuinely see another person's humanity.

These seven days will likely stretch us. It's uncomfortable to sit with perspectives that differ from our own, to resist the urge to plan our rebuttal while someone else is speaking, or to assume good intent when we've been hurt. Yet this is where bridges begin—in the vulnerable space of choosing curiosity over certainty, and empathy over judgment. You may find that when you stop trying to be understood and start trying to understand, something shifts. Common ground appears where you expected only division. The person you disagree with becomes a person with a story, with fears and hopes not unlike your own. This doesn't mean boundaries disappear or truth becomes relative—it means we're learning to hold our convictions alongside genuine compassion for those who see differently.

#### **Sunday, December 14**

**Choose Curiosity** When you disagree with someone today, ask one genuine question to understand their perspective better.

#### **Monday December 15**

**Listen Without Planning** In a conversation today, resist the urge to plan your response. Simply listen fully.

#### **Tuesday, December 16**

**Reach Across a Divide** Connect with someone you've been distant from. Ask: "How have you been?" and truly listen.

#### **Wednesday, December 17**

**Assume Good Intent** Choose to believe someone acted from their best understanding, even if they hurt you.

#### **Thursday, December 18**

**Acknowledge Common Ground** Identify one value you share with someone you typically disagree with.

#### **Friday, December 19**

**Listen to a Different Story** Read or listen to a perspective different from your own. What can you learn?

#### **Saturday, December 20**

**Offer Empathy** When someone shares with you today, respond first with "That sounds difficult" or "I hear you" before offering solutions.