

## ADVENT CONSPIRACY

### **What is the Advent Conspiracy?**

The Advent Conspiracy is a catalyst to help churches and organizations equip their people to engage in the Christmas story in a way that will transform their people and as a result bring transformation to the world through their people, as they worship Christ at Christmas.

### **The Four Themes**

1. **Worship:** The central theme of the Advent Conspiracy is that Jesus is worshipped in such a way that his followers experience the power of Christ coming into the world. This powerful story brings with it the promise of transformation in his followers as they celebrate His birth with faithfulness and integrity. People being led in this journey will not be competing with the consumerist impulses of our culture but instead be aligning themselves with Christ, thereby worshipping him in a holistic way.

2. **Resisting the Empire:** When Christ was born the empire was threatened and as a result Herod, who was one of the more powerful kings of the day, ordered the killing of all the children two years old and under who were in Bethlehem. The reason for this was that he hoped to take out the child-King that posed a threat to his kingdom.

While we are not living under Herod's reign, there is another empire of consumerism and materialism that threatens our faithfulness to Jesus. Jesus brought with him such an extraordinary Kingdom that is counter-culture to the kingdoms of this world.

Part of saying "yes" to Jesus means that we say "no" to over-spending. We say "no" to over-consumption. We say "no" to these things so we can create space to say "yes" to Jesus and his reign in our lives. The National Retail Federation was forecasting that Americans would spend approximately \$457.4 billion at Christmas in 2006.<sup>1</sup> The American Research group estimated an average of \$907.00 per family to be spent at Christmas in 2006.<sup>2</sup> After the Holiday we work for months to get out of debt, only to find that the presents we bought in the name of Christ furthered a consumerist mentality in us and our children and took our focus off of the greatness of Jesus. As Christ-followers, the Advent Conspiracy starts with us resisting a culture that tells us what to buy, wear and spend with no regard to bringing glory to Jesus.

3. **Relational Giving:** In saying "no" to over-spending we are then invited to say "yes" to give in relational ways. We do this because we worship a God who gave us a relational gift. God gave us His son. This is an incredible opportunity to reclaim the heart of what matters most as we learn together to give gifts of meaning instead of simple material gifts. Pictures, poems, pieces of art, a baseball bat and a trip with dad to the ballpark, all become relational alternatives that foster what matters most in life. In thinking in a new way about what it means to give ourselves to each other, we are transformed by the story of Advent, knowing that we give relationally because God gave relationally.

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<sup>1</sup> The National Retail Federation, "NRF Sees Subdued Holiday Gains in 2006" September 19, 2006. [www.nrf.com/content/default.asp?folder=press/release2006&file=holidayforecast0906.htm](http://www.nrf.com/content/default.asp?folder=press/release2006&file=holidayforecast0906.htm)

<sup>2</sup> American Research Group, Inc., "2006 Christmas Spending Plans Hold Steady" November 22, 2006. [www.americanresearchgroup.com/holiday/](http://www.americanresearchgroup.com/holiday/)

Some organizations have done do-it-yourself workshops to help their people learn the art of relational giving. Whatever you decide to do, the key is that you spend less and give relationally of yourself.

4. Re-Distribution: Christ, though he was rich, became poor to make many rich. It was in the Advent that Jesus entered our poverty so we would no longer be poor. With the money we save by giving relationally and resisting the empire we, in turn, re-distribute the money we saved to the least of these in our communities and world.

We recommend that, before Christmas, each organization take an offering made up of the money that was saved through relational giving and resisting the empire. With these funds each church and organization decides how to re-distribute the money. It is an amazing picture when you see how much money is collected and how much good it can do in the world. In 2006 only five churches participated and they collected just under half of a million dollars. Through this kind of radical giving we are transformed by the advent story as we worship Jesus more faithfully.

5. Water: Advent Conspiracy exists to be a catalyst for the church to help us worship Jesus more fully at Christmas and therefore be transformed by the God of Advent. We believe that we are better together than we are apart and that each year the Advent of Christ should be an opportunity to declare to the world that God has given us the greatest gift.

We are asking that each church and organization that participates designate at least 25% of the offering for clean water projects around the world. The vision is that in the next decade Christ-followers, acting as one people, can blot out the water crisis in the world. The estimated cost to solve the water problem is 10 billion dollars. This is doable given the number of churches and the amount of money that is spent on Christmas each year.

According to the World Water Council, 1.1 billion people live without clean drinking water; 2.6 billion people lack adequate sanitation. 1.8 million People die every year from diarrreal diseases and 3,900 children die every day from water born diseases.<sup>3</sup>

It is truly a declaration to the world that Jesus cares and that is why He came and created the church to act on His behalf. How you go about spending the money for clean water is up to how God leads you. We will let him be in the CEO on this, and just faithfully respond to him.

### **The Ins and Outs:**

We ask that you sign up at our website, [Adventconspiracy.org](http://Adventconspiracy.org).

Through the site we will be providing you with great stories, helpful resources, recommended agencies that you can work through, and all the facts you will need.

You will be able to use our blog to meet other people participating in the event.

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<sup>3</sup> D.Zimmer & D. Renault, "Water Crisis Facts and Figures" World Water Council, 2003.  
[www.worldwatercouncil.org/index.php?id=25](http://www.worldwatercouncil.org/index.php?id=25)

We only ask that you come back after the holiday and share your story with the rest of us; including how much money was re-distributed, in what ways it was distributed and what creative ways you discovered Christ's transformation in your community.

We will send out a monthly e-mail newsletter called the Co-Conspirator, with helpful information that can inspire your group as Advent approaches.

For more information you can visit our site, **Adventconspiracy.org** or email Jeanne McKinley Director of Advent Conspiracy at [Jeans@imagodecommunity.com](mailto:Jeans@imagodecommunity.com).