

**Touchstones Faith in Action**

**In-Reach / Out-Reach / Justice-Making**

**Kindness**

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**1.0: Introduction**

The theme on spirituality in November focused on kindness and gratitude. The current theme of kindness extends that focus and adds giving to it.

The winter/spring season of lent is a solemn spiritual preparation ahead of Easter week characterized by fasting and sacrifice symbolized by giving up something, often a particular food or activity. By contrast, the December observance of advent is a joyous spiritual preparation of receiving and giving gifts. This is followed by the 12 days of Christmas from December 25 (Christmas) through January 6 (the Epiphany). As someone said, “Kindness is a gift everyone can afford to give.”

An act of kindness often leads to happiness. As Peter Economy writes, “There are a myriad of things the world could benefit from having more of. Kindness is one of them. When you are a kind person, you're not only helping others, you are helping yourself, too. There's substantial scientific evidence that being kind makes you—and others around you—happy.” Note that all of section 3.5 was included in the November Faith in Action document. Item **3.5.5** is new.

**2.0: Observances**

**2.1: Advent, November 29 to December 24, 2020**

Consider creating an advent calendar that features a daily act of kindness.

**2.2: Christmas Day, December 25, 2020**

**2.3: The Twelve Days of Christmas, December 25, 2020 to January 6, 2021**

Consider observing these 12 days of Christmas with 12 acts of kindness.

**2.4: A New Year: 2021 and 12 months of Kindness**

Download 12 monthly calendars that feature acts of kindness from the Random Acts of Kindness Foundation.

Link: <https://assets.randomactsofkindness.org/calendars/neighborhood/2021/2021_RAK_kindness_calendars.pdf>

**3.0: Resources**

**3.1: Action for Happiness**

“Action for Happiness is a movement of people committed to building a happier and more caring society. We want to see a fundamentally different way of life—where people care less about what they can get just for themselves and more about the happiness of others.”

This organization, which is based in England, was founded in 2010. The Dalai Lama, their patron, has stressed both kindness and happiness in his teachings. Consider the following quotes by the Dalai Lama: “My religion is very simple. My religion is kindness,” and “Happiness is not something ready-made. It comes from your own actions.”

**3.1.1:** *Kindness Calendar for December*

Action for Happiness publishes a monthly calendar. The one for December is on kindness and can be downloaded at <https://www.actionforhappiness.org/december>

It is also included at the end of this document on page 6. An alternative activity would be to brainstorm acts of kindness and have students create their own calendars.

**3.1.2:** *Action for Happiness Calendars*

They offer monthly calendars on line at <https://www.actionforhappiness.org/calendars>

The calendars go back to December 2017 and generally follow these themes. There may be thoughtful ways you can make use of them with children youth, and families.

* January: **Happy New Year** (general happiness actions)
* February: **Friendly February** (key: [Relating](https://www.actionforhappiness.org/10-keys-to-happier-living/connect-with-people))
* March: **Mindful March** (key: [Awareness](https://www.actionforhappiness.org/10-keys-to-happier-living/live-life-mindfully))
* April: **Active April** (key: [Exercising](https://www.actionforhappiness.org/10-keys-to-happier-living/take-care-of-your-body))
* May: **Meaningful May** (key: [Meaning](https://www.actionforhappiness.org/10-keys-to-happier-living/be-part-of-something-bigger))
* June: **Joyful June** (key: [Emotions](https://www.actionforhappiness.org/10-keys-to-happier-living/look-for-whats-good))
* July: **Jump Back July** (key: [Resilience](https://www.actionforhappiness.org/10-keys-to-happier-living/find-ways-to-bounce-back))
* August: **Altruistic August** (key: [Giving](https://www.actionforhappiness.org/10-keys-to-happier-living/do-things-for-others))
* September: **Self-Care September** (key: [Acceptance](https://www.actionforhappiness.org/10-keys-to-happier-living/be-comfortable-with-who-you-are))
* October: **Optimistic October** (key: [Direction](https://www.actionforhappiness.org/10-keys-to-happier-living/have-goals-to-look-forward-to))
* November: **New Things November** (key: [Trying Out](https://www.actionforhappiness.org/10-keys-to-happier-living/keep-learning-new-things))
* December: **Kindness Calendar** (for advent/festive season)

**3.2:** **Other Kindness Challenges (for ideas)**

* <https://www.doinggoodtogether.org/bhf/30daykindnesschallenge>
* <https://www.moritzfinedesigns.com/acts-of-kindness-challenge/>

**3.3: How 30 Days of Kindness Made Me a Better Person by Cecilia Meis**

A thoughtful article about generosity as kindness and as a path to happiness. Meis writes, “To find lasting happiness through generosity requires a suppression of our ego, an analysis of our motives and a reflection on how these acts alter our perception of the world.”

Link: <https://www.success.com/how-30-days-of-kindness-made-me-a-better-person/>

**3.4: Kindness andHouston Kraft**

**3.4.1:** *Kindness Journal*

This is a thoughtful 30-day program that incorporates activities with a journal to write about the daily experience through prompts, a video, and other materials. To access the journal go to <https://characterstrong.lpages.co/educator-resources-landing-kindness-journal/> You can complete a brief form and receive via email a zip file with 30 pdf files to download. You can also download each file lower on the page.

**3.4.2:** *Book about Kindness by Houston Kraft*

Kraft is the author of the book *Deep Kindness: A Revolutionary Guide for the Way We Think, Talk, and Act in Kindness* (2020, 179 pages). The “book takes an honest look at the gap between our belief in kindness and our ability to practice it well—and shows us how to put intention into action.” It is based upon his decade-long focus on kindness. (Kraft also works for Character Strong, an organization that develops K-12 curricula for Social Emotional Learning.)

**3.4.3:** *CNN Interview of Houston Kraft*

Print interview by Ryan Prior

Link: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/25/health/houston-kraft-deep-kindness-wellness/index.html>

**3.4.4:** *Kindness Videos by Houston Kraft*

* *Virtual Assembly: Making Kindness Normal* by Houston Kraft (7:35)

Link to Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LSywOITPWRw>

Several other videos by Kraft can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=houston+kraft+ted+talk>

Kraft has interviewed 38 people about deep kindness. See <https://deepkindness.com/>

**3.5: Kindness Organizations**

**3.5.1:** *Kindness.org*

This organization provides various resources about kindness on their website at <https://kindness.org/>

**3.5.2:** *Life Vest Inside*

Life Vest Inside, founded in 2011, is a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering the masses to engage in acts of love and kindness. Curriculum for purchase.

Website: <http://www.lifevestinside.com/>

Following are some of the videos at their website:

Life Vest Inside - Kindness Boomerang - "One Day" (5:44)

Link to Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nwAYpLVyeFU>

Life Vest Inside - Revolution of Love (7:20)

Link to Video: <https://wwyoutube.com/watch?v=4o2B7j4ZXiA>

TED Talk - Kindness - Orly Wahba (10:16)

Link to Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yn9VxUPlC5g>

Consider organizing a Dance for Kindness at a middle school or high school. Details at <https://www.danceforkindness.com/> While this is usually done in November, doing it around Valentine’s Day also makes sense.

See the following as well:

<http://www.spreadkindness.org/>

<http://www.doinggoodtogether.org/bhf/24quickactsofkindness/>

<http://www.timetoorganize.com/resources/kindness/>

<http://www.momentsaday.com/making-kindness-cards-for-community-helpers/>

**3.5.3:** *Random Acts of Kindness Foundation*

The phrase “practice random kindness and senseless acts of beauty” was written by Anne Herbert on a placemat in Sausalito, California in 1982. Paloma Pavel writes, “Anne Herbert and I were responding to our despair at accelerating systemic violence, specifically the Rodney King incident of racial violence and police brutality, and the international drum beat to war in the Persian Gulf that was engulfing the nighttime news. We wanted to stop the wars…. To create a spell that would shatter the trance. So, we took the phrase “random violence and senseless acts of cruelty” and created a “reversal” (to use feminist philosopher Mary Daly’s strategy). It was not too tough to find kindness for violence. Not wimpy kindness but tough Dalai Lama “never give up kindness.” “Beauty” for “cruelty” was the radical innovation.”

Neither violence nor cruelty needs planning. They can emerge in an instant out of the darkest regions of humanity, so random and senseless are apt depictions for violence and cruelty.

Kindness and beauty are products of an enlightened mind, heart, and spirit. Herbert's book, *Random Acts of Kindness*, was published in February 1993 in which she shared true stories of acts of kindness.

The Foundation offers a range or resources including curricula. See <https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/>.

**3.5.4:** *Kindness: The Center for the Greater Good*

Extensive Resources on kindness.

Link: <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/search?q=kindness>

**3.5.5:** *Kind Spring: A Global Movement*

Offers a 21-day kindness challenge, stories of kindness, and more.

Link: <https://www.kindspring.org>

**3.6:** *Discussion of the poem Kindness* by Naomi Shihab Nye

Discuss the poem *Kindness* by Naomi Shihab Nye and listen to Krista Tippet’s interview of Nye, *Your Life Is a Poem*, where they talk about the poem, Nye’s life as a poet, and the role of poetry.

Text of Poem: <https://poets.org/poem/kindness>

Tippet Interview: <https://onbeing.org/programs/naomi-shihab-nye-your-life-is-a-poem-mar2018/>

Videos about the poem:

* + Naomi Shihab Nye reads *Kindness* and shares how it came to be written (4:44) at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bBYzMsUVvtQ>
  + Kindness by Naomi Shihab Nye, A Poetry Film by Ana Pérez López (2:25) at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFLQOOiAqxQ>

