Show promo video.

Well, it's just about that time of year again! So, as we head into this holiday season, we want to take this moment to remind ourselves what Christmas is really about... when the hope of humanity was born. Though rich, God became poor to directly involve Himself in our world's brokenness.

This Christmas, we want to invite you to join us in our third Advent Conspiracy and turn your Christmas upside-down. What if instead of focusing on presents, we focused on God's presence here with us? What if we began loving others in a way that truly represents Christmas - a love that reaches beyond us, meets needs, and restores the broken?

What if Christmas became about hope, again? Over the next few weeks, we're going to give you opportunities to meet needs and get into the true Christmas spirit. Remember, we'll be heading to San Joaquin on December 7. And if you want to join us, make sure to sign up in the dining room today. And at the same time, we're turning our focus to feed starving children around the world: Providing meals that will save lives for just 22 cents each. By buying one less gift, you can feed a child for 3 months for just $20. Or, for $80 feed a child for a year and do so in someone else's name - as their Christmas present. Starting next week, we'll provide you with cards that'll explain how you gave a gift in their name.

That first Christmas, God changed the world. This Christmas, you can change a child's world.
SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT (2 of 7):

Today marks the beginning of Advent, a time where believers look forward to celebrating Christ’s birth. And this holiday season, we’re joining thousands of other churches in conspiring to make Christmas a world-changing event again. While others may busy themselves with checking off shopping lists, we’re intentionally spending a little less in order to bring hope to the least of these. Why? Well, because that’s where Jesus is.

You see, not only did God choose to become poor: born to a peasant girl and placed in a manger, a feeding trough for animals. But then He also aligns himself with those who have not, saying that when we visit the lonely, clothe the naked, and feed the hungry, we’re really doing these things for Him (Matthew 25). These are our acts of worship.

Through our partnership with Feed My Starving Children, 22 cents can provide a meal designed specifically to combat severe malnourishment. These meals literally save lives and give hope, and FMSC works with Christian partners in over 70 countries who care for both the physical and spiritual health of the children they serve. Our Christmas wish is to raise $____ in the coming weeks and give hope!

And we want to invite you to conspire with us and to worship our Lord where He is. Inside your bulletin, you’ll find an offering envelope that you can use today to start setting aside funds before the holiday shopping becomes overwhelming. Just drop your offering in the offering bags, along with your tithes, when the ushers come down the aisle. You’ll also have the opportunity to give in the following weeks, and to even give in another’s name, as their Christmas present. Just make checks payable to 4others.

Next week we’ll have greeting cards that you can pick up that tells your friend all about the donation you made in their name. Starting today, you can also visit the 4others table in the dining room for a simple way to bring Christmas to the homeless in our community.
SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT (3 of 7):

This holiday season, we want to invite you to conspire with us. No, we're not doing anything illegal. But in a sense, we are planning and plotting together to take back Christmas. To restore the original hope and joy that the first Christmas was all about. What once began as a story of God's great love and the beginning of his restoration of the broken … has gradually turned into a celebration of stuff.

According to the National Retail Federation, Americans are projected to spend $465.6 billion on Christmas decorations and gifts this year. And we all contribute to that. Most of us spend the holidays running around, trying to score the best deals and checking off items off of our shopping lists, while trying to manage credit card debt and making sure we don't leave anyone out because our spending money is somehow an indicator of our love.

So, it's no wonder that the Advent Conspiracy movement is totally counter-cultural. It seeks to undermine what undermines Christmas by conspiring against materialism. But like you saw from last week's video, it's not about stopping our shopping.

It's about spending just a little bit less... one less unneeded sweater, one less soon-to-be-forgotten Best Buy gift card, one less coffee mug to go with a collection of past Starbucks Christmases, one less hurried trip to the mall, one less fight for a good parking spot, one less credit card bill, one less worry.

And by spending a little less, it frees us up to give a little more. Giving time with your children, baking Christmas cookies. Giving time with your spouse watching a good movie. Giving thought to our gifts so we can give something more meaningful than a gift card. Giving hope to the poor and least of these because when we give to them, we give to Christ, and He's who this holiday is all about.

Last year, many of you chose to join us in taking back Christmas. Some of you bought a few less gifts and donated the money you spent. Others of you chose to donate in another's name, making that their Christmas present. And you picked up a Christmas card from us, which explained that your loved one made a lasting impact in this world because of the gift made in their name. Today, I'm challenging you to, at the very least, match your commitment last year, but even more so, to take another step in changing the way you do Christmas, to make it match more like what Jesus intended it to be.

Today, you can find more information at our 4others tables in the narthex and dining room. You can make a donation as a Christmas gift and pick up a card to go with it. You can give a special offering using the envelope in your bulletins and drop it off with the ushers or in the box at the back. You can give all at once... or as you shop, you can keep reminding yourself to spend a little less, and set aside that money and donate each week.
SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT (4 of 7):

As you know, our goal this Christmas season is to feed # children for a year, providing nutritious meals through our partnership with Feed My Starving Children. By raising the funds to do this, not only will we be feeding the hungry, but we will also hit our first milestone in raising the funds necessary for the upcoming Food 4others MobilePack. So, we hope you'll enter the story and join us in making Christmas count. You can donate using the envelope in your bulletin or at the table in the dining room.

Already, with just the early commitments that have been made, we're able to feed # children for a year! So, we're off to a good start!

And we hope that not only will you get involved, but that you'll also get your family and friends involved, too! Let them know how you're changing up the way you do Christmas by making a donation in their honor and picking up a card at the 4others table in the dining room that tells them about it. Or, by asking your friends to commit to buying one less gift and join you in giving that money they saved to feed a child.

And as you encourage friends to give hope this Christmas, we want to make it easy for you to also share with them about God's gift of hope to all of us through the birth of Jesus. So, we created these invite cards for you to use to invite your friends and family to either our Christmas Eve service or our Christmas morning service. So, consider who you can give an invitation to. You can pick up these cards at the end of service at our 4others table in the dining room.
SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT (5 of 7):

Today marks the beginning of Advent, a time where churches look forward to celebrating Christ’s birth. But what was once a story of promise, hope, and extravagant love has gradually turned into a season of stress, shopping lists, traffic jams, endless lines, and credit card debt. And it makes me wonder if maybe we missed the point.

Because on that first Christmas, God didn’t just give stuff. He changed the world by giving the ultimate gift—Himself. He stepped down from his throne and entered humanity. Through Jesus, God chose to directly involve Himself in the world’s brokenness. Though rich, He became poor to love the poor and the forgotten.

So we want to invite you to follow Jesus’ example by giving relationally and showing love to the poor.

Instead of buying tons of stuff for your loved ones, give something really valuable... like your time. Rather than hitting the mall every day, bake cookies with the kids, go look at Christmas lights, and enjoy time with friends. After all, aren’t our favorite Christmas memories the ones that have something to do with relationships, spending time with those we love? Most of us probably can’t even remember what we got for Christmas each year.

Now, we’re not against buying gifts. We like buying and receiving presents. But consider buying a few less and instead use that money to give more to those in need.

As you know, we’re focusing on hunger this holiday season. Because 1 child dies every 5 seconds from hunger-related causes. Last week, I shared the stories of Toussaint and Omar. Omar was 8 years old and weighed what the average 10-month-old baby in America weighs.

But through our partnership with Feed My Starving Children, we’re able to feed children like Omar with meals specifically designed with the nutrients they need to bring them back to health and an appropriate weight. Each meal costs only 22 cents. Our goal is to raise $___ this month to ___ children for a year.

And the best part about it is that not only will you be purchasing the meals, but you will also have the opportunity to hand-pack them with your families, as part of San Jose’s Food 4others MobilePack this spring.

For more information, you can see the flyer in your bulletin and then I want to invite you visit our Advent Conspiracy tables in the dining room and outside to make a donation. You can make a straight donation, or you can make it on behalf of someone else — as their Christmas present. And if you make a donation in someone else’s name, you can pick up one of these Christmas cards to tell them all about it.

Next Sunday is also Second Harvest Sunday. This is your opportunity to bring food donations for Second Harvest Food Bank to fight local hunger.

By acting locally and giving globally, we can help Christmas become a world-changing event again this year.
SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT (6 of 7):

Try to imagine living a life of poverty. Walking 10 miles for a bucket of water. Going days at a time with no food. Living in filth with no sewers. A child eating a dirt ball hoping it will hold off the hunger pangs. 18,000 children die of starvation every day. It's a hopeless situation.

And yet Jesus says, "Whatever you do for the least of these, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40). Today, we have the incredible opportunity to give hope to the hungry.

Through our partnership with Feed My Starving Children, we can provide life-saving meals for only 22 cents each. Meals that are filled with the right nutrients a severely malnourished child needs to survive.

Feed My Starving Children's motto is feeding children, hungry in body and spirit. So, they partner with missionaries in 70 different countries, who are able to get the food directly to the people and children who need it through orphanages, schools, and relief centers. And they're able to share the gospel while doing so.

FMSC's goal is help children get on a feeding program, providing meals to them year round rather than just giving enough food to temporarily hold back the hunger pangs. We can help by giving $80 which will enable a child to be on that feeding program for a year. Our goal is to be able to do this for _#_ children.

And not only will we be able to raise the funds to feed them, but we will also be able to personally hand pack each meal in Silicon Valley’s 3rd Food 4others MobilePack this spring.

In a couple of weeks, we will have our special Christmas Sunday service on December 23. On that Sunday, we're going to collect a special offering for the Food 4others MobilePack, providing meals to children. But you can choose to give hope to the hungry before then. Today, you can go to the Advent Conspiracy tables (inside the dining room and outside) if you want to make a donation on behalf of someone else. Just make checks payable to 4others and then you can pick up a greeting card that tells your friend all about the donation you made in their name. And you can keep track with how many children we're feeding for a year by taking a look at our bulletin board in the dining room.
SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT (7 of 7):

Christmas is definitely a day worth celebrating and giving worship.

In fact, on that first Christmas night, when the angels saw what was happening... *they* responded with worship. Singing the glory of the newborn king.

And when the shepherds heard what was happening... *they* responded with worship. Running to go see Jesus and then telling everyone they met about what God had done.

And when the wise men found out what was happening... *they* responded with worship. Coming to Christ and bringing the best they had to offer.

Today, we heard the Christmas story, and now it's *our* turn to respond. I want to encourage you to respond with *worship*. Sing heartfelt praises to Christ. Tell others about the reason for the season, and invite them to our Christmas Eve service this week. Candles and Carols at 6:30 pm, and nursery childcare will be available.

God tells us in His Word, in Isaiah 58, that another way He desires our worship is by sharing food with the hungry. Instead of keeping Christmas in our hearts, we can give it away to those who need it. After all, Jesus says that whatever you do for the least of these, you did for me.

As you know, this Christmas season, we've been providing meals to children who are severely malnourished. Not only are we fundraising for it, but we’re preparing to hand-pack these meals in the near future in our Food 4others MobilePack. And so today, we have the opportunity to give a special offering to celebrate Christmas and provide food for others.

If you look in your bulletin, you'll find a special envelope for this offering where you can put in any amount.

So, we'll give you a moment. And as we prepare to give, take a look at this video to see the bigger picture of where our donations are going.

VIDEO

We're going to continue worshipping our Lord by giving our regular tithes and this special offering to feed children. As the ushers come forward, will you join me in prayer?

PRAYER