

Pastors: Don't do these 7 things when getting ready for Christmas

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Here are some “don’ts” to keep in mind through these busy days of Advent and the run-up to the Christmas services.

- 1. Don't neglect to take at least five minutes a day for yourself.** Light a candle. Read a few verses of Scripture that aren't a part of sermon prep. Listen to some music you love.
- 2. Don't feel guilty that you don't get to everyone on your shut-in/needy parishioner list.** If you figure out the time available and what you have to do, you'll see it's not possible. Do your best, and connect with the others in January.
- 3. Don't think the worship experience all depends on you.** Yes, worship planning and preparing are vital. Yet you know as well as I do that something mysterious happens in worship. People can be touched even when you aren't perfectly prepared. God's Spirit is at work in Advent and Christmas worship, beyond anything we can imagine.
- 4. Don't eat everything that people want to give you.** It will sap your energy, and you need your energy. Eat a little, or eat a little more of what you love. And get some protein while you're at it. This is not about “good” and “bad,” but sustaining yourself through these next days.
- 5. Don't forget your extended family.** You may not have time before Christmas, but think now about someone from your wider family to connect with on Christmas Day or after. And while you're at it, think about your favorite Christmas childhood memory. It may give you a boost. Here's one of mine: The year my mom made us new Christmas stockings out of felt. I still have mine.

6. Don't worry about end-of-year giving. Even if it looks tight, you can't control what people give. Worrying will not cause them to give more. Practice celebrating what the church has received this year, and trusting there will be enough.

7. Don't miss out on worship. It's not easy to worship when you are leading and/or preaching. You can miss the worship experience completely. Can you find a way to worship anyway? A few ideas: pay attention during the Advent/Christmas candlelighting, if your church does it. Throw yourself into singing your favorite carol. Listen to the choir or worship team rather than thinking about what you have to do next in the service. Pay attention to the Scripture, rather than thinking about your sermon.