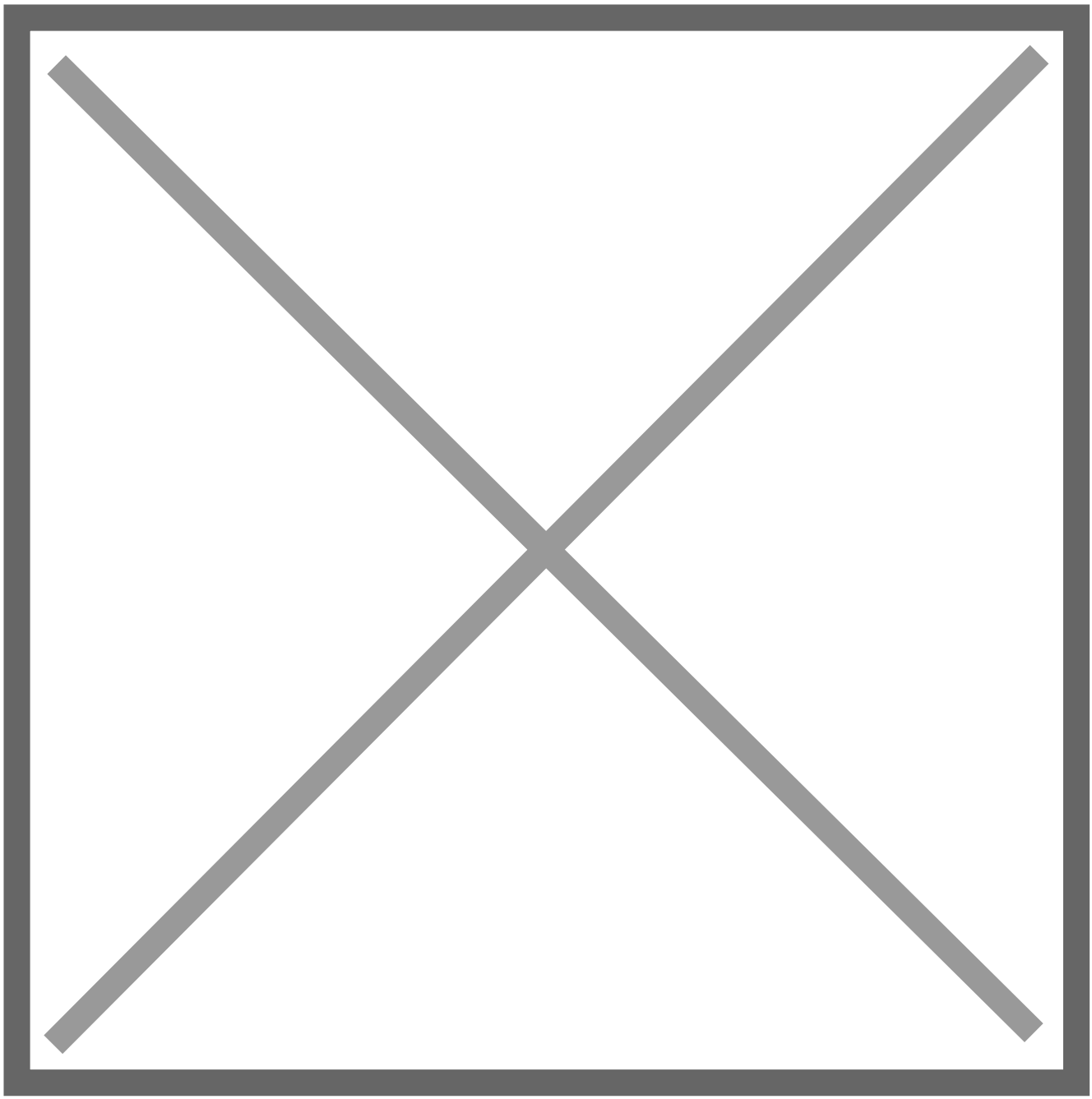
Spirituality



An advent wreath is seen in this illustration photo. (CNS/Nancy Wiechec)

by Dan Schutte

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This Advent season will be different from all the others we've experienced. Those familiar Advent themes of longing for God and waiting in hope take on a special meaning for us in the midst of the storm that surrounds us. As always, God is perhaps giving us a special opportunity this year to grow deeper in hope and stronger in the embrace of God's love.

As St. Paul says, we've each been given a gift to share with the people of God. And each gift is important to the building up of the body of Christ. So, I offer you the gift of these Advent reflections as a way of inviting you to practice hope during this time when hope is being challenged. There's one prayer reflection of each week of Advent, and a final one for Christmas. Let us together enter this season and wait in hope for how our God might reveal the length and breath, the height and depth of divine love for us.

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Christ, circle round us

This third week of Advent invites us into the circle of God's family where all of us, both saint and sinner, are embraced by Emmanuel, God-with-us. When we allow ourselves to be embraced by the love that sees us in all our goodness, we also begin to see the light of Christ that shines in the eyes of those around us, inviting us to sit at the banquet of heaven and dine with him. Won't that be a joyous moment when we sit down and eat with the One who loves us to death and welcomes us into the joy prepared for us before the beginning of time.

This story appears in the **Advent Reflections with Dan Schutte** feature series. View the full series.