

2025 Lenten Activities

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		March 4 Shrove Tuesday A	March 5 Ash Wednesday A	March 6 S	March 7 P	March 8 F
March 9 First Sunday in Lent A	March 10 S	March 11 F	March 12 A	March 13 P	March 14 F	March 15 S
March 16 Second Sunday in Lent P	March 17 St. Patrick's Day P	March 18 S	March 19 P	March 20 F	March 21 A	March 22 A
March 23 Third Sunday in Lent S	March 24 P	March 25 F	March 26 S	March 27 A	March 28 P	March 29 S
March 30 Fourth Sunday in Lent F	March 31 A	April 1 F	April 2 A	April 3 P	April 4 S	April 5 F
April 6 Fifth Sunday in Lent S	April 7 F	April 8 P	April 9 A	April 10 P	April 11 S	April 12 F
April 13 Palm Sunday *	April 14 *	April 15 *	April 16 *	April 17 Maundy Thursday *	April 18 Good Friday *	April 19 Holy Saturday *
April 20 Easter Sunday *						

St. Paul's Episcopal Church

 www.stpaulsharrishill.org/lenten-practices

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On the calendar above, the letters within each day indicate the type of activity that is set out for that day:

A Activity **F** Fasting & Simplifying **P** Prayer **S** Scripture ***** Holy Week



Lenten Activities



2025

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For each day that follows, you'll find a quick reading or meditation for the day, and a suggested activity you might engage in. You don't need to worry if you don't get to one or if you choose to skip.

If you'd like to engage with others, you can find these ideas posted to our Facebook. Be sure to direct others who might want a copy of this Lenten Meditation to our website. Click on Lenten Practices in the header to get to a page with other ideas and thoughts.

Week 1

☐ March 4 – Shrove Tuesday



Shrove Tuesday is the day before Lent begins. The tradition of eating pancakes on Shrove Tuesday began around A.D. 600, when Christians would give up all meat and animal products during Lent, so they needed to use up their butter, eggs, and milk. The word “shrove” in Shrove Tuesday refers to the absolution of sins and repentance, but most of us leave repentance out of the discussion this day, because tomorrow will be Ash Wednesday, and there's plenty of reflection on sin.



Cook up your favorite pancake recipe and enjoy!

☐ March 5 – Ash Wednesday



Ash Wednesday is the first day of the season of Lent. It is the Wednesday exactly 46 days before Easter Sunday. Ash Wednesday gets its name from the ritual in which ashes are placed on the foreheads of people with the words, “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” These ashes are traditionally made by burning the palm branches from the previous year's Palm Sunday. The ritual marks the beginning of Lent and is a powerful reminder that life is fleeting, that each day is precious and valuable. The ashes are also a symbol of repentance.



Watch the Ash Wednesday invitation to a holy Lent on your computer. Head to the church website and click on Worship > Lenten Practices link at the top.



In the book of Genesis, we read, “The LORD God formed the human from the topsoil of the fertile land and blew life's breath into his nostrils. The human came to life” (Gn 2:7). In Hebrew, the language in which we have the written book of Genesis, there is a very close link between the

word `ādām, meaning “human being,” and āḏāmâ, meaning “ground.” The *adam* was made from the *adama*: the human from the ground.

The image of God breathing into the dirt and creating us is a powerful one. What makes us different from the ceramic jar is God's breath in us, that close and intimate link between God and us. At the end of our lives, as our breath or spirit returns to God, our bodies will turn to dust again, either through cremation or decomposition of earth.

Take a small scoop of dirt and place it into a dish. Together with your family, squish it around with your fingers. Take the dirt and make a cross shape on the back of your hand and say, “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

☐ March 6



The service on Ash Wednesday invites us to the observance of a Holy Lent, “by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by **reading and meditating on God's holy Word**” (BCP, p. 265). Read Exodus 5:10-23 (CEB¹):

So the people's slave masters and supervisors came out and spoke to the people, “This is what Pharaoh says, ‘I'm not giving you straw anymore. Go and get the straw on your own, wherever you can find it. But your work won't be reduced at all.’” So the people spread out all through the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. The slave masters drove them hard and said, “Make sure you make the same daily quota as when you had the straw.” The Israelite supervisors, whom Pharaoh's slave masters had set over them, were also beaten and asked, “Why didn't you produce the same number of bricks yesterday and today as you did before?”

Then the Israelite supervisors came and pleaded to Pharaoh, “Why do you treat your servants like this? No straw is supplied to your servants, yet they say to us, ‘Make bricks!’ Look at how your servants are being beaten! Your own people are to blame!”

Pharaoh replied, “You are lazy bums, nothing but lazy bums. That's why you say, ‘Let us go and offer sacrifices to the Lord.’ Go and get back to work! No straw will be given to you, but you still need to make the same number of bricks.”

The Israelite supervisors saw how impossible their situation was when they were commanded, “Don't reduce your daily quota of bricks.” When they left Pharaoh, they met Moses and Aaron, who were waiting for them. The supervisors said to them, “Let the LORD see and judge what you've done! You've made us stink in the opinion of Pharaoh and his servants. You've given them a reason to kill us.”

Then Moses turned to the LORD and said, “My Lord, why have you abused this people? Why did you send me for this? Ever since I first came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has abused this people. And you've done absolutely nothing to rescue your people.”

¹ Common English Bible translation, ©2011 [Common English Bible](#).



Ask yourself what this passage makes you think about. What will you carry with you from this passage? Where do you hear God speaking to you in this passage?



Talk to God in prayer: "Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with your most gracious favor, and further us with your continual help, that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your Name, and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life. Amen."

□ March 7



The service on Ash Wednesday invites us to the observance of a Holy Lent, "by self-examination and repentance; by **prayer**, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word" (BCP, p. 265). What is prayer? How and why do we pray? There is no better way to deepen your understanding of prayer than to simply do it. Most importantly, there is no one "right way" to pray. When we think of prayer, we often think of "bow your heads and close your eyes and let us pray," but you will find more active forms of prayer in the days ahead.

Many of us started our faith journey in the Roman Catholic faith, where praying the rosary is a common practice. Anglicans use prayer beads too, but the practice is much less structured.



Make a set of prayer beads. These do not need to be elaborate, or even in a circle. Take a string and place on one big, interesting bead to represent a prayer inviting God to be with you in your prayer time. Then string three smaller, flatter beads to represent prayers of gratitude or thanks. Add one medium-sized bead to represent silent listening. Next, place two small round beads to represent praying for others. Finally, finish with a second large interesting bead to represent your closing Amen.

As you pray, simply hold the beads, and practice touching each of the beads as you say your prayer or listen in silence. This practice can help keep you grounded and focused on the present as you pray.

□ March 8



The service on Ash Wednesday invites us to the observance of a Holy Lent, "by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, **fasting, and self-denial**; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word" (BCP, p. 265). Sometimes fasting and self-denial means giving up things we want and other times, it means simplifying our lives. The focus should be on what is added or appreciated, rather than what is taken away.

Our culture is a "buy it, use it, throw it away" type of culture. The ability to buy what we need, on demand, without much thought has pros and cons. One con is the amount of waste that we

create when we buy something that we don't really need, or the way buying something already made can stifle creativity. Instead of buying the newest and greatest, is there something that you can use that is already around?



Can you make or re-use five things you'd normally buy this Lent? Or can you decide to cook dinner at home one more time rather than getting take out?

Week 2

☐ March 9 – First Sunday in Lent



Sundays are a special day in the context of Lent and aren't counted in the Lenten season, as they are celebrations of the Lord's Day. Father Michael Russo says, "Sundays are also considered days of rest from unnecessary work — a reminder that the soul needs rest and nourishment and contemplation. In a very noisy world, we need time for quiet and reflection in order to hear the voice of God, who so often speaks to us in whispers."



Join the livestream church service on Facebook from our website or join us in person at 10:00 am.



Get out and be in the world today. Enjoy the presence of God's continuing creation around you.

☐ March 10



Read Psalm 17 (CEB):

Listen to what's right, LORD; pay attention to my cry!

Listen closely to my prayer; it's spoken by lips that don't lie!

My justice comes from you; let your eyes see what is right!

You have examined my heart, testing me at night.

You've looked me over closely, but haven't found anything wrong. My mouth doesn't sin.

But these other people's deeds?

I have avoided such violent ways by the command from your lips.

My steps are set firmly on your paths; my feet haven't slipped.

I cry out to you because you answer me.

So tilt your ears toward me now—listen to what I'm saying!

Manifest your faithful love in amazing ways because you are the one who saves those who take refuge in you, saving them from their attackers by your strong hand.

Watch me with the very pupil of your eye! Hide me in the protection of your wings,

away from the wicked who are out to get me,
away from my deadly enemies who are all around me!

They have no pity; their mouths speak arrogantly.

They track me down—suddenly, they surround me! They make their plans to put me in the dirt.

They are like a lion eager to rip its prey; they are like a strong young lion lying in wait.

Get up, LORD! Confront them! Bring them down!
Rescue my life from the wicked—use your sword!

Rescue me from these people—use your own hands, LORD!
Rescue me from these people whose only possession is their fleeting life.
But fill the stomachs of your cherished ones; let their children be filled full
so that they have leftovers enough for their babies.

But me? I will see your face in righteousness;
when I awake, I will be filled full by seeing your image.



Ask yourself what this passage makes you think about. What will you carry with you from this passage? Where do you hear God speaking to you in this passage?



Talk to God in prayer: "Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully increase in us your gifts of holy discipline, in almsgiving, prayer and fasting; that our lives may be directed to the fulfilling of your most gracious will; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen."

☐ March 11



The service on Ash Wednesday invites us to the observance of a Holy Lent, "by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, **fasting, and self-denial**; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word" (BCP, p. 265). Sometimes fasting and self-denial means taking our resources and using them for the benefit of others rather than ourselves.

Father Nelson Lee writes, "Almsgiving denotes a sense in which not only is charity given to those in need, but a merciful kind of giving, characterized by pity. Pity is not usually given a positive connotation today, but it essentially that proper human response to the sight of wretchedness, that of tenderness, compassion, and care. We might say that almsgiving comes by being moved to compassion when we see the plight of others, not in a remote sense, but in a direct sense."



Set aside one item from your pantry each day and put it into a box. At the end of Lent, donate it to the food pantry (or simply put it in the shelves in the parish hallway and we'll make sure it gets to Trinity, Lancaster). Give of your first fruits instead of your leftovers... instead of placing random items into the box, make a deliberate effort to fill the box with your favorite things – not just any breakfast cereal, but that special box of Lucky Charms that you love; not the cheapest shampoo you can buy at the dollar store, but a bottle of shampoo that you would give to your friend as a treat; not those cans of tuna that you bought last Lent to make tuna salad, but those packages of tuna that are whole chunks in water.

☐ March 12



In John 6:35, Jesus says, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Do you have a favorite kind of bread? Perhaps you like crunchy bread? Maybe you love really soft bread? Do you eat it buttered or plain? Or do you dip it in olive oil?

There are so many different kinds of bread in the world. Some are hard on the outside and soft on the inside. Some are unleavened, which means they don't rise and they stay flat. Some breads have meat or cheese inside. Others are sweet.

Jesus talks a lot about bread in the Gospels, and he used bread quite a bit in his teaching. In the Lord's Prayer, we say, "Give us this day our daily bread." The multitudes were fed with just five loaves of bread. Each week, we get together to break bread.



Make some unleavened bread using the bread recipe on page 38. As you bake and eat it, think about the many different kinds of bread and how so many cultures enjoy bread and eat it daily.

☐ March 13



Praying doesn't just have to be asking God to give us things or to make things go a certain way. In fact, praying is more a conversation with God than asking for things, but our God is compassionate and loving and cares deeply about all of creation.

Sometimes we can become overwhelmed by all of the things in our lives. God is there to lead us through if we but ask for help.



Practice asking God to help simplify your life. You might choose a prayer that asks God to help you focus on one thing at a time. You might also ask God to teach you to be gentle on yourself when things get harried. Finish your prayer session by thanking God for all the gifts

bestowed upon us daily. Here are three examples from Traci Smith, in the book *Faithful Families for Lent, Easter, & Resurrection*:

For simplification: God, when many things compete for my attention, help me to focus on one thing at a time. When things are messy in my space or in my mind, help me to be gentle with myself as I sift through and keep only what is needed. Amen.

For letting go: God, there are some things I'd like to leave behind and let go. Help me to gently leave them in the past as I look toward a healthy future where I am kind to myself, others, and the world. Amen.

For saying thanks: Thank you, God, for the gifts of sunshine, air, and water. Thank you for the gifts of smiles and words and one another. Help us every day to recognize these free and simple gifts which you freely give us. Amen.

☐ March 14



Many Christians abstain from eating meat on Fridays in Lent, a tradition that goes back over a thousand years. It was originally intended that Christians refrain from eating “flesh meat” on all Fridays of the year in remembrance that Jesus sacrificed his flesh for us on Good Friday, but during the Reformation, the rigid rules that govern that Roman Catholic church were not adopted by churches that followed their own path. In 1966, the Roman Catholic church's rules were changed to require abstinence from flesh meat on Ash Wednesday and all Fridays in Lent.



While the Episcopal Church does not require abstinence from meat, many faithful congregants find that abstaining from something during Lent helps them to find the time to grow in their relationship with God. It could be a food that they really enjoy (chocolate), it could be an activity that uses up time (screen time), or it could even be an attitude (negativity or gossip). What can you give up that will help you draw closer to God? God will not strike you down for failing to adhere to this abstinence throughout Lent, but as we fail, we can try again.

☐ March 15



Read Matthew 5:43-48 (The Message²):

Jesus said, “You’re familiar with the old written law, ‘Love your friend,’ and its unwritten companion, ‘Hate your enemy.’ I’m challenging that. I’m telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the supple moves of prayer, for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. He gives his best—the sun to warm and the rain to nourish—to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty. If all you do is love the

² The Message translation. Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson.

lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that.

"In a word, what I'm saying is, Grow up. You're kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you."



Ask yourself what this passage makes you think about. What will you carry with you from this passage? Where do you hear God speaking to you in this passage?



Talk to God in prayer: "O God, by your Word you marvelously carry out the work of reconciliation: Grant that in all our Lenten fast we may be devoted to you with all our hearts, and united with one another in prayer and holy love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen."

Week 3

☐ March 16 – Second Sunday in Lent



The pretzel is a symbol of prayer. The twist in the pretzel is meant to look like hands in prayer. And pretzels are made with simple ingredients – no sugar, butter, eggs, or milk, which are sometimes given up by cultures in the spirit of simplicity for Lent.



Join the livestream church service on Facebook from our website or join us in person at 10:00 am.



Bake a batch of soft pretzels using the recipe (see page 38). Say a prayer when you bake or serve your pretzels.

"Heavenly Father, bless these pretzels. Let them remind us that Lent is a time of prayer, and let us remember to lift our thanksgivings and needs to you.

"Lord Jesus, use these pretzels. Let them remind us that Lent is a time for fasting. Through such simple ingredients, a tasty treat emerges. Let us remember the sacrifice you made for us on the cross and offer our own sacrifices.

"Holy Spirit, send down your inspiration upon us as we remember that Lent is a time of almsgiving. When we pray and fast, help to inspire us to give abundantly from our hearts to those who have less. Amen."

☐ March 17



St. Patrick is known widely as the Patron Saint of Ireland and yet he wasn't Irish. He was a 16-year-old Roman Briton in the 5th Century when he was captured by Irish pirates and served as a slave for them for 6 years before his escape back to Briton. It was during that time he recorded significant spiritual experiences that resulted in conversion to Christianity. He was ordained in Briton and later in life Patrick returned to Ireland to preach the message of God in the Trinity, convert, and baptize. As a foreigner who refused the patronage of the Kings, he endured much opposition and was without legal protection. He wrote about beatings, being tied up with chains, periodic imprisonment, and threats of execution.

Through it all he Christian-ized many of the early Celtic worship practices, including the now revered symbol of the shamrock that, though more likely a myth, he may have used to explain the Trinity. The famous *St. Patrick's Breastplate*, also known as the Cry of the Deer, is a prayer-poem attributed to him that has been set to music in a variety of ways. Many of the hymnal versions use only a small portion of the lyrics and it often contains several separate melodies and rhythms within the one hymn.



Pray the prayer-poem below and ask God to remind you that each day as you arise, you can pray these words to feel the strength of the Breastplate, the armor of your faith, in your body, your mind, and your soul, now and always. Amen.

The Breastplate of St. Patrick

I arise today
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
Through belief in the Threeness,
Through confession
of the Oneness of the Creator of creation.

I arise today
Through the strength of Christ's birth with His baptism,
Through the strength of His crucifixion with His burial,
Through the strength of His descent for the judgment of doom,
Through the strength of His resurrection with His ascension,

I arise today
Through the strength of the love of cherubim,
In the obedience of angels,
In the service of archangels,
In the hope of resurrection to meet with reward,
In the prayers of patriarchs,
In the predictions of prophets,
In the preaching of apostles,
In the faith of confessors,
In the innocence of holy virgins,
In the deeds of righteous men.

I arise today through
The strength of heaven,
The light of the sun,
The radiance of the moon,
The splendor of fire,
The speed of lightning,
The swiftness of wind,
The depth of the sea,
The stability of the earth,
The firmness of rock.

I arise today through
God's strength to pilot me,
God's might to uphold me,
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look before me,
God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me,
God's hand to guard me,
God's shield to protect me,
God's host to save me
From snares of devils,
From temptation of vices,
From everyone who shall wish me ill,
afar and near.

I summon today
All these powers between me and those evils,
Against every cruel and merciless power
that may oppose my body and soul,
Against incantations of false prophets,
Against black laws of pagandom,
Against false laws of heretics,
Against craft of idolatry,
Against spells of witches and smiths and wizards,
Against every knowledge that corrupts man's body and soul;
Christ to shield me today
Against poison, against burning,
Against drowning, against wounding,
So that there may come to me an abundance of reward.

Christ with me,
Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ in me,
Christ beneath me,
Christ above me,
Christ on my right,
Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down,
Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.

I arise today
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
Through belief in the Threeness,
Through confession of the Oneness
of the Creator of creation.

Amen.

☐ March 18



Read Luke 14:16-24 (CEB):

Jesus said, "A certain man hosted a large dinner and invited many people. When it was time for the dinner to begin, he sent his servant to tell the invited guests, 'Come! The dinner is now ready.' One by one, they all began to make excuses. The first one told him, 'I bought a farm and must go and see it. Please excuse me.' Another said, 'I bought five teams of oxen, and I'm going to check on them. Please excuse me.' Another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.' When he returned, the servant reported these excuses to his master. The master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go quickly to the city's streets, the busy ones and the side streets, and bring the poor, crippled, blind, and lame.' The servant said, 'Master, your instructions have been followed and there is still room.' The master said to the servant, 'Go to the highways and back alleys and urge people to come in so that my house will be filled. I tell you, not one of those who were invited will taste my dinner.'"



Look at your bookshelves and ask yourself: Where are the women? The people of color? Differently-abled voices? LGBTQ+ voices? The ones who come from different faith traditions? Ask yourself, "Who is forming my spiritual life and whose voices are missing?"

☐ March 19



Read Matthew 3:16-17 from three different translations of the Bible:

New Revised Standard Version ³	Common English Bible	The Message
When Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."	When Jesus was baptized, he immediately came up out of the water. Heaven was opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove and resting on him. A voice from heaven said, "This is my Son whom I dearly love; I find happiness in him."	The moment Jesus came up out of the baptismal waters, the skies opened up and he saw God's Spirit—it looked like a dove—descending and landing on him. And along with the Spirit, a voice: "This is my Son, chosen and marked by my love, delight of my life."

Water is essential for life... did you know that our bodies are over one-half water? Our brains and hearts are almost $\frac{3}{4}$ water. Even our "dry bones" are over $\frac{1}{4}$ water. Without water, humans cannot survive. We use water every day for drinking, washing, cleaning, and cooking.

Water is an essential symbol of our faith, too. We are baptized with water, just as Jesus was. Jesus' first miracle was transforming water to wine. Jesus calmed the waters during a storm. Jesus taught much about water (Mt 10:42; Jn 4:10-15; Jn 7:37-39; Lk 22:10).



Drink a cool glass of water and notice how refreshing it feels. Water gives us life and quenches our thirst. As you drink your water, say a prayer and thank God for the gift of water.

☐ March 20



The Lenten tenets of fasting and self-denial can improve our lives as we fast from criticality and judgment. So many times, we find ourselves telling our innermost being that we can't do something or aren't good enough, that we are worthless. We learn from our society that we are to put ourselves last, and we often neglect our own needs.

While we read consistently in the Bible of the need for caring for others, we regularly ignore ourselves. When you travel by airplane, part of the required safety demonstration reminds us to "Put on your own oxygen mask before helping others." We need to invest in ourselves before we can care for others.



The idea of giving a non-tangible gift to yourself might be hard to get to, but make plans to give yourself a gift in the upcoming week. It could be a walk, a nap, a conversation with a friend. Talk with those in your household about how you can support one another as you give yourself that gift.

³ New Revised Standard Version Bible translation, Copyright 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Pray for the uniqueness that exists in our lives: "In our world, there are many sizes, many ages, many colors, many shapes, many languages, many ideas, many perspectives, many moods, and many personalities. May we see the image of God in one another and in ourselves. Amen."

☐ March 21



Read Luke 5:4-6 (CEB):

When Jesus finished speaking to the crowds, he said to Simon, "Row out farther, into the deep water, and drop your nets for a catch." Simon replied, "Master, we've worked hard all night and caught nothing. But because you say so, I'll drop the nets." So they dropped the nets and their catch was so huge that their nets were splitting.



Some of the earliest followers of Jesus were fishermen. They left their fishing nets to follow Jesus. Fish are a very important symbol throughout the story of Jesus. There are three miracles involving fish – another is a very mysterious story where a coin is found in a fish's mouth (Mt 17:24–27); the third is when Jesus fed five thousand people with bread and fish (Jn 6:1–14).

The fish is a symbol of Jesus. To understand, you need to learn a bit of Greek, the original language of the New Testament. In Greek, the words "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior" are Ἰησοῦς Χριστός Θεοῦ Υἱός Σωτήρ. The first letter of each in Greek makes the acronym ἸΧΘΥΣ (IKhThUS), which means fish. For this reason, the earliest followers of Jesus used the sign of a fish to represent their faith in Jesus.

Take the time to draw out the Greek letters shown above and write out "fish" in Greek as you say a prayer for fishermen around the world who are relying on the seas for their livelihood. You could make this a piece of art that you display throughout the rest of Lent.

☐ March 22



Read Numbers 35:33 (CEB):

You shall not pollute the land in which you live; for blood pollutes the land, and no expiation can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it.



If the world, God's precious creation, is treasured and shared, then we are more motivated to care for it and protect it. There are many simple ways to care for the earth as a spiritual practice. Try one practice throughout the rest of Lent, or pick a few to try as the weeks pass. Here are a few suggestions:

- Pick up trash around your home or community. Recycle what can be recycled.
- Reduce the amount of trash your family produces by using reusable containers and water bottles.

- Change the lightbulbs in your house to more energy-efficient models.

Week 4

☐ March 23 – Third Sunday in Lent



Join the livestream church service on Facebook from our website or join us in person at 10:00 am.



Read Psalm 63 (CEB):

God! My God! It's you—I search for you! My whole being thirsts for you!
My body desires you in a dry and tired land, no water anywhere.
Yes, I've seen you in the sanctuary; I've seen your power and glory.
My lips praise you because your faithful love is better than life itself!

So I will bless you as long as I'm alive; I will lift up my hands in your name.

I'm fully satisfied—as with a rich dinner.

My mouth speaks praise with joy on my lips—whenever I ponder you on my bed,
whenever I meditate on you in the middle of the night—
because you've been a help to me and I shout for joy in the protection of your wings.

My whole being clings to you; your strong hand upholds me.

But what about those people who want to destroy me? Let them go into the bowels of the earth!
Let their blood flow by the sword! Let them be food for wild jackals!

But the king should rejoice in God;
everyone who swears by God should give praise when the mouths of liars are shut for good.



Ask yourself what this passage makes you think about. What will you carry with you from this passage? Where do you hear God speaking to you in this passage?



Talk to God in prayer: "Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen."

☐ March 24



Lighting candles to represent prayers is a tradition that spans many centuries and various religious traditions. Candle flames are a simple way to make the prayers or our hearts visible. There are a few ways to use candles to prayer during Lent. Choose one or more of the following ideas and pray today.



As you light a candle, say, "The light of this candle represents God's love for us and for all people. Whenever we pass by it, we will remember God's love for all." When you blow out the candle, say, "Thank you for your love God. Amen."

Light a candle and take a picture or video. Send it to someone you are praying for with a message similar to: "This candle is a prayer for you. Sending you love and peace."

Write the names of people you would like to lift up in prayer on a piece of paper and place it under the candle. As the light of the candle shines onto the paper, remember those people in prayer.

Use a candle to recognize that God is with us by lighting a candle before a meal or any time you'd like to hold holy space. Say, "We light this candle as a reminder that the Spirit is with us." When holy time is over, extinguish the candle with the words, "Thank you for this holy time together. Amen."

☐ March 25



Some people abstain from meat during Lent, but you can also explore spiritual practices that add to your experience rather than taking away. Instead of giving up meat, what if that looked like eating more fruits and vegetables?

Ecologists tell us that the amount of meat that we consume has a tremendous negative effect on the planet and its ecosystems. There's great value in consuming less meat and going to a plant-based diet, even if for only one meal per week. Instead of focusing on giving up meat, turn your focus to enjoying fruits and vegetables.



How many different preparations or types of fruit and vegetables can you try this Lent? You could start by making the bean chalupas and rice recipe found on page 39.

☐ March 26



Read Luke 13:18-30 (the Message):

Then Jesus said, "How can I picture God's kingdom for you? What kind of story can I use? It's like an acorn that a man plants in his front yard. It grows into a huge oak tree with thick branches, and eagles build nests in it."

He tried again. "How can I picture God's kingdom? It's like yeast that a woman works into enough dough for three loaves of bread—and waits while the dough rises."

He went on teaching from town to village, village to town, but keeping on a steady course toward Jerusalem.

A bystander said, "Master, will only a few be saved?" He said, "Whether few or many is none of your business. Put your mind on your life with God. The way to life—to God!—is vigorous and requires your total attention. A lot of you are going to assume that you'll sit down to God's salvation banquet just because you've been hanging around the neighborhood all your lives. Well, one day you're going to be banging on the door, wanting to get in, but you'll find the door locked and the Master saying, 'Sorry, you're not on my guest list.' "You'll protest, 'But we've known you all our lives!' only to be interrupted with his abrupt, 'Your kind of knowing can hardly be called knowing. You don't know the first thing about me.'

"That's when you'll find yourselves out in the cold, strangers to grace. You'll watch Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets march into God's kingdom. You'll watch outsiders stream in from east, west, north, and south and sit down at the table of God's kingdom. And all the time you'll be outside looking in—and wondering what happened. This is the Great Reversal: the last in line put at the head of the line, and the so-called first ending up last."



Ask yourself what this passage makes you think about. What will you carry with you from this passage? Where do you hear God speaking to you in this passage?



Talk to God in prayer: "Give ear to our prayers, O Lord, and direct the way of your servants in safety under your protection, that, amid all the changes of our earthly pilgrimage, we may be guarded by your mighty aid; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen."

March 27



Read John 13:4-5 (CEB):

So Jesus got up from the table and took off his robes. Picking up a linen towel, he tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a washbasin and began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he was wearing.



Have you ever washed somebody's feet? Have you had somebody wash your feet? Feet can get very dirty from the dust and mud outside. They can get stinky in our shoes and socks.

Can you imagine in Jesus' day just how dirty feet would get from walking along dirt paths in sandals?

Jesus washed his friends' feet to care for them and to show them love. At first, Peter didn't want Jesus to wash his feet, but he later agreed. Jesus used a towel to dry their feet. When we see a towel, we can remember the love and care that Jesus showed to his friends.

Wash your hands or someone else's hands and dry them with a towel. As you dry their hands, remember what a gift it is to use your hands to serve God and other people.

☐ March 28



Prayer doesn't have to be hard or involved. We can pray when we walk, when we sit, before we sleep, while we drive, and at other times. One of the simplest prayers is sometimes called the Jesus Prayer, and it can be prayed once or over and over.



Pray the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Some people prefer to use the words "your beloved child" instead of the words "a sinner." How does that change your prayer?

☐ March 29



Read Hosea 6:1-6 (NRSV):

"Come, let us return to the Lord; for it is he who has torn, and he will heal us; he has struck down, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. Let us know, let us press on to know the Lord; his appearing is as sure as the dawn; he will come to us like the showers, like the spring rains that water the earth."

What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes away early. Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets, I have killed them by the words of my mouth, and my judgment goes forth as the light. For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.



Ask yourself what this passage makes you think about. What will you carry with you from this passage? Where do you hear God speaking to you in this passage?



Talk to God in prayer: "Loving God, so many times I turn away from you and always you welcome me back. Your mercy and love gives me confidence. Thank you for the invitation to share, fast and pray so that you can form a new heart within me. Your powerful compassion for

my weaknesses leads me to ask for mercy and await with great hope the Easter joy you share with us. Amen."

Week 5

☐ March 30 – Fourth Sunday in Lent



So many people want to add more reading into their everyday lives. Even those who don't have this goal seem to feel happier and more fulfilled when they start reading more. We might think that we don't have time to read, but when we add up the time spent on video games or internet scrolling, there's a significant amount of time that might be better spent reading or enjoying a full book. Enjoy your books individually and discuss them with your family, or read the same book together as a family. Even ten minutes here and there will add up to something significant over time.



Join the livestream church service on Facebook from our website or join us in person at 10:00 am.



Take a look at [Goodreads.com](https://www.goodreads.com) or visit the local library to find book clubs and others with whom to discuss what you're reading. Or head to [libraryreads.org](https://www.libraryreads.org) to find some recommended titles each month.

☐ March 31



As an institution, The Episcopal Church recognizes and repents of its harmful treatment of Native Americans. In 1997, the church signed a new covenant of faith and reconciliation almost 400 years after Jamestown colonization, apologizing for its past actions and launching a decade of "remembrance, recognition and reconciliation." In 2009, the church's General Convention passed a resolution repudiating the 15th century-based Doctrine of Discovery, which "held that Christian sovereigns and their representative explorers could assert dominion and title over non-Christian lands with the full blessing and sanction of the Church."



Educate yourself about whose land you are living on by visiting [Native-Land.ca](https://www.Native-Land.ca) and learn something about the people. Acknowledge that you are living on traditional Native Lands through a land acknowledgement. The purpose of a land acknowledgement is to recognize, respect and affirm the ongoing relationship between Indigenous people and the land. Land acknowledgements also raise awareness about the Indigenous histories, perspectives and experiences that are often suppressed or forgotten. Can you figure out who would be named in your personal land acknowledgement?

□ April 1



Read Psalm 112:1, 5-9 (CEB):

Praise the Lord! Those who honor the Lord, who adore God's commandments, are truly happy! Those who lend generously are good people—as are those who conduct their affairs with justice. Yes, these sorts of people will never be shaken; the righteous will be remembered forever! They won't be frightened at bad news. Their hearts are steady, trusting in the Lord. Their hearts are firm; they aren't afraid. In the end, they will witness their enemies' defeat. They give freely to those in need. Their righteousness stands forever. Their strength increases gloriously.



Fasting and almsgiving don't always have to take the appearance of giving money. It seems that trial sizes of toiletries always accumulate around our houses. Perhaps you have 3 extra toothbrushes from visiting the dentist. Find a place to donate your extra toiletries – or donate them in the church for children in need at School 6. Pray for those to whom they are given: “O God of Love, please be near those who receive these supplies. Remain by their sides and meet their needs. Show me how to be a part of their lives by generously giving my prayers, time, and money to help them. Direct my actions so I can help the world understand that when we help those in need, we are acting as the body of Christ. Let me be a cornerstone for those in my area who are less fortunate. I ask you to show me unending opportunities to help them and serve you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.”

□ April 2



Read Luke 23:44-46 (CEB):

It was now about noon, and darkness covered the whole earth until about three o'clock, while the sun stopped shining. Then the curtain in the sanctuary tore down the middle. Crying out in a loud voice, Jesus said, “Father, into your hands I entrust my life.” After he said this, he breathed for the last time.



During Jesus' life on earth, he performed many miracles, taught many important things, and became friends with many people, and so when he died, his friends became so sad. In this scripture, we hear that the sun's light went away and the whole earth was in shadow. Sometimes when we are sad after someone has died, it feels like we are in a shadow too. Sometimes people even say that all the light has gone from their life after a particularly tough time.

Light a candle and look at the flame for a few minutes. Read the scripture and then blow out the candle. After you blow it out, pray: "God, even when shadows cover the earth and light is gone, help us to know that your Spirit is with us always. When we miss someone who has died, give us comfort. Amen."

□ April 3



Praying is an action that isn't one way. We speak **with** God, not **to** God. We listen for God's voice in response to our words.



One way we can pray with all of our bodies is to pray with pens, pencils, and other art supplies. This method of praying can be great if you want to pray but words escape you, if you have trouble sitting still and staying focused, if you want to be a listener in prayer but your mind wanders and your body complains, or if you want a visual, concrete way to pray. You will need a piece of paper, a pen or pencil, and (optionally) colored markers or pencils or pens. Follow along with the instructions for Praying in Color on page 40.

□ April 4



Read Isaiah 43:8-15 (CEB):

Bring out the blind people who have eyes, the deaf ones who have ears. All the nations are gathered together; the peoples are assembled. Which of them announced this? Who predicted to us the past events? Let them bring their witnesses as a defense; let them hear and say, "It's true!" You are my witnesses, says the LORD, my servant, whom I chose, so that you would know and believe me and understand that I am the one. Before me no god was formed; after me there has been no other. I, I am the LORD, and there is no savior besides me. I announced, I saved, I proclaimed, not some stranger among you. You are my witnesses, says the LORD, and I am God. From the dawn of time, I am the one. No one can escape my power. I act, and who can undo it?

The LORD your redeemer, the holy one of Israel, says, For your sake, I have sent an army to Babylon, and brought down all the bars, turning the Chaldeans' singing into a lament. I am the LORD, your holy one, Israel's creator, your king!



Ask yourself what this passage makes you think about. What will you carry with you from this passage? Where do you hear God speaking to you in this passage?



Talk to God in prayer: "O God, you have given us the Good News of your abounding love in your Son Jesus Christ: So fill our hearts with thankfulness that we may rejoice to proclaim the

good tidings we have received; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.”

□ April 5



Read 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11 (The Message):

God didn't set us up for an angry rejection but for salvation by our Master, Jesus Christ. He died for us, a death that triggered life. Whether we're awake with the living or asleep with the dead, we're *alive* with him! So speak encouraging words to one another. Build up hope so you'll all be together in this, no one left out, no one left behind. I know you're already doing this; just keep on doing it.



Have you ever noticed how good it feels when someone says something nice about you? What a great way to make someone feel special. It takes very little time to compliment someone, and it gets easier with practice. While it's easier to compliment someone's looks or what they're wearing, it's even nicer to compliment the deeper attributes of them, too, like their creativity or thoughtfulness or how they made you feel. Practice complimenting others. Can you compliment three people each day for the rest of Lent?

IF YOU PLAN TO COMPLETE THE REFLECTION FOR APRIL 9, YOU WILL NEED TO GRAB A SUPPLY FROM THE CHURCH THIS WEEK.

Week 6

□ April 6 – Fifth Sunday in Lent



Read John 12:1-8 (CEB):

Six days before Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, home of Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Lazarus and his sisters hosted a dinner for him. Martha served and Lazarus was among those who joined him at the table. Then Mary took an extraordinary amount, almost three-quarters of a pound, of very expensive perfume made of pure nard. She anointed Jesus' feet with it, then wiped his feet dry with her hair. The house was filled with the aroma of the perfume. Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), complained, "This perfume was worth a year's wages! Why wasn't it sold and the money given to the poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief. He carried the money bag and would take what was in it.)

Then Jesus said, "Leave her alone. This perfume was to be used in preparation for my burial, and this is how she has used it. You will always have the poor among you, but you won't always have me."



Join the livestream church service on Facebook from our website or join us in person at 10:00 am.



Judas has often been vilified as a disciple. Of the many people that Jesus could have chosen, why did Jesus call Judas? One must assume that Jesus recognized in Judas a tremendous potential in his leadership qualities and felt he had the capabilities of becoming a dynamic disciple. We wonder how and why Judas went wrong. We wonder what caused him to make the decisions he made. Today's Gospel story shows us a side of Judas who cared for the poor and wanted to take care of them; he did not want to keep the money from selling the perfume for himself, but rather to give it to the poor. Or did he? Did the editor in early times want to disparage Judas even more?

Judas misused his potential, and lost sight of the kingdom, until he betrayed Jesus. He wasn't the first or the last person to betray a friend, nor was it the last time someone betrayed Jesus. It is simply the most remembered one.

God has given all of us freedom of choice. How we use this freedom is for us to decide.

□ April 7



Read 1 Samuel 3:9 (CEB): "Eli said to Samuel, "Go and lie down. If he calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down where he'd been."

Every day, we are surrounded by media coming at us from all directions. For one day, take a break. Turn off the notifications on your cell phone (or turn it off completely). Or turn off the radio while in the car today. Shut off the television in the background. Just take in the noise around you from the world.



Pray: "Heavenly Creator, lately the noise of this world seems to grow louder and louder. I want to focus on you but get distracted by the chaos around me. I long for a moment of peace but struggle to quiet the noise in my mind and heart. Forgive me for letting distractions of this world draw me away from you. I want to hear your comforting voice above all else.

Thank you, Lord, for teaching me the importance of having a quiet place. Eli told Samuel to return to his bed and wait to hear from you. In the same way, Lord, speak to me in the stillness. Let me feel your holy presence.

When the demands of life leave little room for meeting you in the quiet places, I will have peace in knowing you are with me. Your rod and staff comfort me. Help me to know even a few minutes with you will comfort my overwhelmed soul. You are an ever-present help in troubled times. Amen."

□ April 8



An easy way to try something new in your prayer practice is to use your body to pray. Focusing quietly with folded hands and a bowed head is one way, to pray, but there are many other postures you can use in prayer.



Try a new posture as you pray:

- Kneeling – try kneeling with your hands folded or with your body over your knees
- Lying flat on your back – great for praying while looking at the sky
- Lifting hands high – this is great for giving gratitude
- Walking – sometimes a walk can be a prayer on its own
- Adding motions to a prayer – learning sign language can help you to pray in new ways, or simply make up your own motions

As you test out the other postures, ask yourself, “How did that position feel? How did I feel connected with God in this prayer position?”

□ April 9



Read John 19:38-42 (The Message):

After all this, Joseph of Arimathea (he was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, because he was intimidated by the Jews) petitioned Pilate to take the body of Jesus. Pilate gave permission. So Joseph came and took the body.

Nicodemus, who had first come to Jesus at night, came now in broad daylight carrying a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. They took Jesus' body and, following the Jewish burial custom, wrapped it in linen with the spices. There was a garden near the place he was crucified, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been placed. So, because it was Sabbath preparation for the Jews and the tomb was convenient, they placed Jesus in it.



The Gospel story says that Nicodemus and Joseph prepared Jesus' body for burial with spices and linen cloth. Seventy-five pounds of myrrh and aloe is a lot of spices. Myrrh is also one of the same spices that the Magi brought to the infant Jesus. Everyone begins their life as a baby, and everyone eventually dies, with most people growing old before they die. When we smell myrrh, we can remember that everyone is born and lives and dies. Our spirit comes from God and returns to God.

Open the packet that contains the cotton ball with myrrh oil on it. This is the smell of one of the spices that was used to prepare Jesus' body for burial. How does it smell to you? What does it remind you of?

□ April 10



Read Matthew 27:57-61 (The Message):

Late in the afternoon a wealthy man from Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus, arrived. His name was Joseph. He went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate granted his request. Joseph took the body and wrapped it in clean linens, put it in his own tomb, a new tomb only recently cut into the rock, and rolled a large stone across the entrance. Then he went off. But Mary Magdalene and the other Mary stayed, sitting in plain view of the tomb.



In Jesus' time, when people died, their body was put inside a tomb. Joseph gently laid Jesus' body, wrapped in spices and cloth, into the tomb, and then rolled a big rock in front of the entrance. The rock was to prevent others from coming in, and to keep Jesus' body safe. I wonder if it was hard for Joseph to roll the rock in front of the tomb by himself. I wonder if the rock was cold.

Take a rock and hold it in your hand. Is it cold or warm? Rough or smooth? As you hold it, think back to the large rock that covered Jesus' tomb and remember Jesus.

Pray: "Dear God, as I hold this rock in my hands, may I be reminded of the heavy rock that was rolled in front of Jesus' tomb. As the tomb was opened and Jesus was no longer there, so may my worries and concerns disappear as I turn this rock through my hands. Amen."

□ April 11



Read Psalm 31:9-16 (CEB):

Have mercy on me, Lord, because I'm depressed. My vision fails because of my grief, as do my spirit and my body.

My life is consumed with sadness; my years are consumed with groaning. Strength fails me because of my suffering; my bones dry up.

I'm a joke to all my enemies, still worse to my neighbors. I scare my friends, and whoever sees me in the street runs away!

I am forgotten, like I'm dead, completely out of mind; I am like a piece of pottery, destroyed.

Yes, I've heard all the gossiping, terror all around; so many gang up together against me, they plan to take my life!

But me? I trust you, Lord! I affirm, "You are my God."

My future is in your hands. Don't hand me over to my enemies, to all who are out to get me!

Shine your face on your servant; save me by your faithful love!



Ask yourself what this passage makes you think about. What will you carry with you from this passage? Where do you hear God speaking to you in this passage?



Talk to God in prayer: "O Lord, you relieve our necessity out of the abundance of your great riches: Grant that we may accept with joy the salvation you bestow, and manifest it to all the world by the quality of our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen."

April 12



Read Isaiah 33:15-16 (NRSV):

Those who walk righteously and speak uprightly, who despise the gain of oppression, who wave away a bribe instead of accepting it, who stop their ears from hearing of bloodshed and shut their eyes from looking on evil, they will live on the heights; their refuge will be the fortresses of rocks; their food will be supplied, their water assured.



Clean water is truly a miracle and a luxury that we often take for granted. Much of the world does not enjoy the ability to access clean water from indoor plumbing. Clean water is such a part of our daily lives that we tend to ignore the miracle. Sometimes we neglect the opportunity to drink cool, clean water and enjoy it, instead needing to mix it with sugar or flavor.

Can you close out Lent by drinking water with your meals instead of something different? As you drink water, deliberately give thanks to God for supplying you clean water.

Week 7 – Holy Week

Holy Week is a journey through the last week of Jesus' life, followed by the most joyous day in the Christian year. For each day this week, there is a simple activity and prayer. May these activities and prayers guide you. If you would prefer to do activities as a family unit, following the Easter Sunday reflection is a week-long worship service for you to do together.

□ April 13 – Palm Sunday



Read Matthew 21:1-11 (The Message):

When they neared Jerusalem, having arrived at Bethphage on Mount Olives, Jesus sent two disciples with these instructions: "Go over to the village across from you. You'll find a donkey tethered there, her colt with her. Untie her and bring them to me. If anyone asks what you're doing, say, 'The Master needs them!' He will send them with you."

This is the full story of what was sketched earlier by the prophet:

Tell Zion's daughter,
"Look, your king's on his way,
poised and ready, mounted
On a donkey, on a colt,
foal of a pack animal."

The disciples went and did exactly what Jesus told them to do. They led the donkey and colt out, laid some of their clothes on them, and Jesus mounted. Nearly all the people in the crowd threw their garments down on the road, giving him a royal welcome. Others cut branches from the trees and threw them down as a welcome mat. Crowds went ahead and crowds followed, all of them calling out, "Hosanna to David's son!" "Blessed is he who comes in God's name!" "Hosanna in highest heaven!"

As he made his entrance into Jerusalem, the whole city was shaken. Unnerved, people were asking, "What's going on here? Who is this?" The parade crowd answered, "This is the prophet Jesus, the one from Nazareth in Galilee."



Make your own palm branch, or use the blessed palm that you received at church today. If you want to make your own, use green construction paper and cut fronds to attach to a sturdy center. You might make fronds by cutting patterns like the leaves shown on the left, or you could trace your hands and make fronds from them.

Jesus rode into the city on a peaceful donkey. Wave your palm branch in the air as you shout, "Hosanna!" which means, "Save us!" I wonder what it means to ask Jesus to save us. I wonder how Jesus felt as he was welcomed in this way.

Pray: "Today we shout 'Hosanna!' which means 'Save us!' Sometimes, God, we need your help. We turn to you when we need guidance or wisdom. Guide us when we don't know which way to go. Guide us especially throughout this Holy Week as we learn and grow in our faith. Amen."

□ April 14 – Holy Monday



Read Matthew 21:12-13 (NRSV) and Luke 19:39-41 (NRSV):

Matthew – Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. He said to them, "It is written,

'My house shall be called a house of prayer';
but you are making it a den of robbers."

Luke – Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out." As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it.



In these two passages, we see Jesus showing two very different emotions: anger and sorrow. Throughout his life, Jesus showed many other emotions as well: happiness, sadness, anger, exhaustion, worry, and hope. We also experience different emotions as we go through our life. Each emotion we feel tells us something about what is happening in our body, in our mind, and in our spirit.

Using a box of crayons or watercolor paints, pick the color that best represents your feelings right now. Use it as the primary color in a picture that you feel inspired to create.

Pray: "On this day, Jesus was tired, angry, and sad. Sometimes we get tired, angry, and sad, too. God, please be near us and surround us with your love no matter how we feel, and remind us that you are always with us, no matter what. Amen."

□ April 15 – Holy Tuesday



Read John 12:30-36 (The Message):

Jesus said, "The voice didn't come for me but for you. At this moment the world is in crisis. Now Satan, the ruler of this world, will be thrown out. And I, as I am lifted up from the earth, will attract everyone to me and gather them around me." He put it this way to show how he was going to be put to death.

Voices from the crowd answered, "We heard from God's Law that the Messiah lasts forever. How can it be necessary, as you put it, that the Son of Man 'be lifted up'? Who is this 'Son of Man'?"

Jesus said, "For a brief time still, the light is among you. Walk by the light you have so darkness doesn't destroy you. If you walk in darkness, you don't know where you're going. As you have the

light, believe in the light. Then the light will be within you, and shining through your lives. You'll be children of light."



Before Jesus died, he prepared his disciples for the fact that he would not be with them much longer. He reminded them that while the light *was* with them, they should enjoy it and walk with it, and believe in it. There is always time for grief, but taking time to enjoy the good things while you have them is an important lesson to learn. The same is true for the people in our lives whom we love – it is always important to enjoy time with them while they are still with us.

Light a candle and enjoy the light that it emits. Think about some of the blessings that you have in life, and write them down or say them out loud. When we take something for granted, it means that we don't enjoy it while we have it. Use this practice as a reminder not to take anything for granted in life.

Pray: "God, help us to enjoy the people we love while we have them with us. Help us to remember that each day is a precious gift. Amen."

□ April 16 – Holy Wednesday



Read John 12:36b (CEB):

After Jesus said these things, he went away and hid from them.



The Bible is silent about what Jesus did on Wednesday after he went away from his disciples. What do you think he did? Did he need a nap? Did he just need to rest? Did he want to meditate and reflect?

Just like Jesus, we need time to practice silence. Practicing silence is not easy. Sometimes it can be quite difficult. At first, we can try being silent for just a minute. While you are silent, feel the air going into and out of your nostrils. Look around at your surroundings and listen to the noises around you. Try to only listen, not talk. Once you've mastered one minute of silence, try for three, and then five or ten. Do you think you could be silent for thirty minutes or an hour?

Pray: "God, please help me to develop a practice of silence. While we try to ignore the distractions around us and be still, help our busy minds return to the stillness and the silence. May we hear your voice in quiet moments. Amen."

□ April 17 – Maundy Thursday



Read Mark 14:22-24 (CEB):

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."



Jesus ate bread and drank wine with his friends and told them that this was a very special reminder of who he is. Bread is such an important part of the meal. As you have seen previously, many different cultures eat bread, and there are many different kinds of bread.

You can choose to make bread today, or you can consider how bread continues to nurture us daily. Take a piece of bread (or tortilla, pita, or naan) and break it. As you rip it apart, notice how it feels to break into it, and how it resists being broken. Pay attention to the textures and how the outside of it may be different from the inside.

Pray: "God, when we smell the wonderful scent of baking bread or eat a freshly baked loaf, may we remember the special meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. Remind us that just as Jesus ate around a table with his disciples, so he is near to us too. Amen."

☐ April 18 – Good Friday



Read Matthew 27:45-50 (CEB):

From noon until three in the afternoon the whole earth was dark. At about three Jesus cried out with a loud shout, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani," which means, "My God, my God, why have you left me?"

After hearing him, some standing there said, "He's calling Elijah." One of them ran over, took a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a pole. He offered it to Jesus to drink.

But the rest of them said, "Let's see if Elijah will come and save him."

Again Jesus cried out with a loud shout. Then he died.



Jesus took his last breath on the Friday of Holy Week, which we call Good Friday, and then he died. The details are hard and sad. Jesus felt abandoned when he died, and it was a tragedy. Even though we already know how this story ends, it can be good to sit for a minute with the sadness and shadows of this dark day. When someone dies or something bad happens in our lives, we don't need to rush ahead to feel better or okay. It's sometimes better to take the time to be sad and remember that sad things happen, and we cannot stop them.

Light a candle. Sit with the light for a brief time, and then blow it out with a sharp breath. As you sit in the shadows with the light gone, how do you feel? Write or draw how it feels to remember the day Jesus died.

Pray: "God, the day that Jesus died was so sad. Darkness covered the whole earth. Please be near to us when we are sad about the death of Jesus or anyone we love. Draw near to us when we grieve. Amen."

□ April 19 – Holy Saturday



Read Matthew 27:63-66 (CEB):

The chief priests and the Pharisees said, "Sir, we remember that while that deceiver was still alive he said, 'After three days I will arise.' Therefore, order the grave to be sealed until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people, 'He's been raised from the dead.' This last deception will be worse than the first."

Pilate replied, "You have soldiers for guard duty. Go and make it as secure as you know how." Then they went and secured the tomb by sealing the stone and posting the guard.



On the day before Jesus rose from the dead, guards and soldiers made sure his tomb was sealed shut. They didn't want anyone to steal his body, and they wanted to make sure that no one lied about him being raised from the dead. So they sealed the tomb tightly and put a guard there to watch it.

Find a rock somewhere outside. Make sure it's a rock you'll be able to find again tomorrow. Take note of where it is, but don't touch it or move it. While you're looking for it, think about how you'll find it again tomorrow.

Pray: "God, on Holy Saturday, we wait and we wonder. We wait for Jesus to rise from the dead, just as he said. We wonder what was happening in that empty tomb. Help us to wait and wonder with hope in our hearts. Amen."

FOR EASTER SUNDAY, AN IDEAL ACTIVITY WILL HAVE YOU UP AT SUNRISE, BUT IT ISN'T NECESSARY. READ AHEAD FOR DETAILS.

Easter Week

□ April 20 – Easter Sunday



Read Mark 16:1-6 (CEB):

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they could go and anoint Jesus' dead body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they came to the tomb. They were saying to each other, "Who's going to roll the stone away from the entrance for us?" When they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away. (And it was a very large stone!) Going into the tomb, they saw a young man in a white robe seated on the right side; and they were startled. But he said to them, "Don't be alarmed! You

are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised. He isn't here. Look, here's the place where they laid him.



Have you ever seen the sun slowly rising in the morning? It can be such a magnificent sight! The sunrise happens slowly and majestically, with colors coming into view bit by bit. The darkness fades away until the light of day is everywhere.

When the women left for their journey to Jesus' tomb, it was still dark, but bit by bit the light came. It turned out to be a special morning; they came expecting to find death, but instead they found life. They were expecting to find the tomb sealed shut, as it had been left; but it was open!

Watch the sun rise. Take a moment to reflect on the beauty as God brings a new day to the world and the sun gets brighter and brighter. If today isn't a great day to watch the sun rise because of the weather or you slept in, take a look at pictures and imagine yourself there.

The women saw the angel, dressed in white, and it scared them at first. Sometimes even good and exciting things can be scary when we're surprised or don't understand what's going on. But this was very good news!

Go and find the rock you looked for yesterday. If it is small enough, bring it inside. If it's a large rock, see if you can move it, even a bit, from where it was. As you move your stone, remember the wonderful day when the stone was rolled away from Jesus' tomb and he rose from the dead!

Pray: "We started this week by saying 'Hosanna!' Save us Lord! We end the week by saying 'Alleluia!' Thank you, God, for all the good gifts of Easter. Thank you for the hope that comes when the tomb is empty. Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen, indeed. Amen."

Alternate Holy Week Service for Groups

Some families and groups prefer to experience Holy Week in community. During Holy Week (just as in the rest of our lives), it can seem like we are being pulled in many directions at once. Time for family is often limited to a few short hours.

For this service, which lasts the whole week from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday, you will need 7 candles with small candle holders, or you can choose to use tealights or votives. You could choose to use six purple and one white, but that isn't necessary. Arrange the candles in the shape of a cross in an area where you can leave them all week.

Readings are suggested for each day, but prayers are not given. You can choose to use whatever prayer comes to you, or you can use the prayers suggested for each day above.

It is recommended that the group gathers right before the close of day.

□ Group Palm Sunday



(Summary – can be read aloud) It is time for Jesus to enter Jerusalem for the last time. He knows what awaits him but he does not turn back.



(Action) Light one purple candle.



(Scripture) Read Mark 11:1-11 (CEB):

When Jesus and his followers approached Jerusalem, they came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives. Jesus gave two disciples a task, saying to them, "Go into the village over there. As soon as you enter it, you will find tied up there a colt that no one has ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'Its master needs it, and he will send it back right away.'"

They went and found a colt tied to a gate outside on the street, and they untied it. Some people standing around said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They told them just what Jesus said, and they left them alone. They brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes upon it, and he sat on it. Many people spread out their clothes on the road while others spread branches cut from the fields. Those in front of him and those following were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessings on the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest!" Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. After he looked around at everything, because it was already late in the evening, he returned to Bethany with the Twelve.



(Wondering) Discuss:

I wonder what part of the story you like the best. I wonder what part of the story is the most important. I wonder where you see yourself in the story.



(Praying) Pray together and extinguish the candle

□ Group Holy Monday



Less than two miles from Jerusalem is the city of Bethany. Jesus has spent the night there with his disciples but has now returned with them to the busy city. Passover has brought a huge crowd to Jerusalem.



Light two purple candles.



Read Mark 11:15-19 (CEB):

They came into Jerusalem. After entering the temple, he threw out those who were selling and buying there. He pushed over the tables used for currency exchange and the chairs of those who sold doves. He didn't allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. He taught them, "Hasn't it been written, *My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations?* But you've turned it into a *hideout for crooks.*" The chief priests and legal experts heard this and tried to find a way to destroy him. They regarded him as dangerous because the whole crowd was enthralled at his teaching. When it was evening, Jesus and his disciples went outside the city.



Discuss:

I wonder what part of the story you like the best. I wonder what part of the story is the most important. I wonder where you see yourself in the story.



Pray together and extinguish the candles

□ Group Holy Tuesday



At night Jesus and the disciples stayed in Bethany. Each day they would go to the Temple. The chief priests and elders were trying to turn the people against Jesus. They often confronted him in the Temple. It was there at the Treasury that Jesus saw a poor widow.



Light three purple candles.



Read Luke 21:1-4 (CEB):

Looking up, Jesus saw rich people throwing their gifts into the collection box for the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow throw in two small copper coins worth a penny. He said, "I assure you that this poor widow has put in more than them all. All of them are giving out of their spare change. But she from her hopeless poverty has given everything she had to live on."



Discuss:

I wonder what part of the story you like the best. I wonder what part of the story is the most important. I wonder where you see yourself in the story.



Pray together and extinguish the candles

□ Group Holy Wednesday



The priests and elders were determined to get rid of Jesus. Crowds now gathered every morning in the Temple to hear him speak. They let it be known that if anyone knew where he could be found without the crowds surrounding him, they would pay for this information. One man came forward.



Light four purple candles.



Read Luke 22:1-6 (CEB):

The Festival of Unleavened Bread, which is called Passover, was approaching. The chief priests and the legal experts were looking for a way to kill Jesus, because they were afraid of the people. Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, who was one of the Twelve. He went out and discussed with the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard how he could hand Jesus over to them. They were delighted and arranged payment for him. He agreed and began looking for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them—a time when the crowds would be absent.



Discuss:

I wonder what part of the story you like the best. I wonder what part of the story is the most important. I wonder where you see yourself in the story.



Pray together and extinguish the candles

□ Group Maundy Thursday



It was time for the Passover meal served to remember the release of the Hebrews from Egyptian slavery. Jesus gathered with his disciples in an upper room.



Light five purple candles.



Read Mark 14:17-26 (CEB):

That evening, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. During the meal, Jesus said, "I assure you that one of you will betray me—someone eating with me."

Deeply saddened, they asked him, one by one, "It's not me, is it?"

Jesus answered, "It's one of the Twelve, one who is dipping bread with me into this bowl. The Human One goes to his death just as it is written about him. But how terrible it is for that person who betrays the Human One! It would have been better for him if he had never been born."

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. I assure you that I won't drink wine again until that day when I drink it in a new way in God's kingdom." After singing songs of praise, they went out to the Mount of Olives.



After the meal, Jesus went into the garden of Gethsemane to pray. When he rejoined the disciples, a commotion broke out.



Read Mark 14:43-46 (CEB):

Suddenly, while Jesus was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, came with a mob carrying swords and clubs. They had been sent by the chief priests, legal experts, and elders. His betrayer had given them a sign: "Arrest the man I kiss, and take him away under guard."

As soon as he got there, Judas said to Jesus, "Rabbi!" Then he kissed him. Then they came and grabbed Jesus and arrested him.



Discuss:

I wonder what part of the stories you like the best. I wonder what part of the stories is the most important. I wonder where you see yourself in the stories.



Pray together and extinguish the candles

Group Good Friday



During that long night after his arrest, Jesus was led from trial to trial. Peter denied him three times. The other disciples were in hiding. In the afternoon, Jesus was taken to a hill outside the city and there he was crucified.



Light six purple candles.



Read Luke 23:44-56 (CEB):

It was now about noon, and darkness covered the whole earth until about three o'clock, while the sun stopped shining. Then the curtain in the sanctuary tore down the middle. Crying out in a loud voice, Jesus said, "Father, into your hands I entrust my life." After he said this, he breathed for the last time.

When the centurion saw what happened, he praised God, saying, "It's really true: this man was righteous." All the crowds who had come together to see this event returned to their homes beating their chests after seeing what had happened. And everyone who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance observing these things.

Now there was a man named Joseph who was a member of the council. He was a good and righteous man. He hadn't agreed with the plan and actions of the council. He was from the Jewish city of Arimathea and eagerly anticipated God's kingdom. This man went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Taking it down, he wrapped it in a linen cloth and laid it in a tomb carved out of the rock, in which no one had ever been buried. It was the Preparation Day for the Sabbath, and the Sabbath was quickly approaching. The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph. They saw the tomb and how Jesus' body was laid in it, then they went away and prepared fragrant spices and perfumed oils. They rested on the Sabbath, in keeping with the commandment.



Discuss:

I wonder what part of the story you like the best. I wonder what part of the story is the most important. I wonder where you see yourself in the story.



Pray together and (optionally) sing *Jesus Remember Me*, then extinguish the candles

□ Group Holy Saturday



Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is dead. His body lays in a sealed tomb. All his followers and the disciples are in despair. They do not remember his words and teachings. They only feel the great sorrow that breaks their hearts.



Light six purple candles.



Meditate for a few minutes and pray silently, extinguish the candles, and then retire to bed

□ Group Easter Sunday

It is recommended to gather before breakfast or getting ready for church



The Sabbath day is over and the women gather at the garden to prepare Jesus' body for burial. They do not know how they will move the heavy stone blocking the tomb, but they are determined to do this for him.



Light six purple candles.



Read Matthew 28:1-7 (CEB):

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the tomb. Look, there was a great earthquake, for an angel from the Lord came down from heaven. Coming to the stone, he rolled it away and sat on it. Now his face was like lightning and his clothes as white as snow. The guards were so terrified of him that they shook with fear and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Don't be afraid. I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He isn't here, because he's been raised from the dead, just as he said. Come, see the place where they laid him. Now hurry, go and tell his disciples, 'He's been raised from the dead. He's going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there.' I've given the message to you."



Their hearts will filled with joy! They rushed to tell the others the wonderful news. The Lord is not dead! He lives! And on this Easter morning, Jesus lives for you and for me.



Light the white candle.



Our hearts are filled with that same joy. Let us now thank God for the Son and the glorious gift of love that was given tall of us on that first Easter long ago.



Pray together and extinguish the candles

Bread Recipe

Ingredients

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 ½ cups milk
- 3 eggs
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons sugar

Instructions

Place all ingredients in a medium mixing bowl. Beat with an electric mixer for about two minutes, scraping down sides if needed. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper and spray with cooking spray. Pour batter into the pan and spread dough to the edges.

Bake at 450 for about 20 minutes, until just very lightly browned.

Pretzel Recipe

Ingredients

- 1 pkg (2 ¼ teaspoons) active dry yeast
- 1 ½ cups warm water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4 cups flour (approximately)
- coarse salt (for top of pretzels)

Instructions

Line baking sheets with parchment and preheat oven to 425 degrees.

Dissolve yeast in warm water.

Add the salt. Stir in 3 cups of flour. Using additional flour, knead the dough until smooth and elastic. (This may be done in a bread machine, if you have one.)

Divide the dough into 18 pieces. Roll each piece into a 10 inch rope. Twist the rope into a pretzel shape and place on baking sheet. Let the pretzels rest for 20 minutes.

Brush with water and sprinkle with coarse salt.

Bake for 12 to 15 minutes.

Bean Chalupas and Rice

Ingredients (makes three full-size chalupas)

1 can pinto beans (can cook dry beans instead if desired)

Cumin to taste

Cilantro to taste

6 whole grain flour tortillas

1 can diced tomatoes, drained

1 avocado, thinly sliced

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup cheddar, shredded

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup Monterey jack, shredded

Plain rice (white or brown) or rice mix

Optional toppings:

Sour cream

Shredded lettuce

Diced red bell pepper

Sliced black olives

Instructions







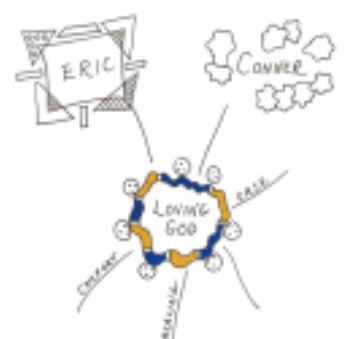
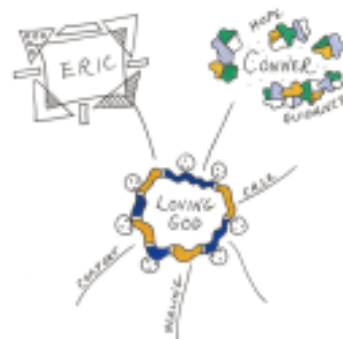

Begin preparing rice as directed on package.

Heat a small amount of olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Cook each tortilla for a few minutes on both sides. Make sure to watch them carefully as they can burn easily, especially when cooking the second side (you may find that it helps to add more oil for each tortilla). Set aside.

Drain most of the liquid from the can of beans. Heat beans on the stove, then mash to make a paste. Season with cumin and cilantro. Place three tortillas on a large baking sheet and divide the bean mixture evenly onto each tortilla, spreading it to the edges. Top with tomatoes, avocado, and cheese. Bake in a 375 degree oven for seven minutes.

Cook remaining tortillas. Top each chalupa with remaining tortillas and return to the oven for an additional two minutes. Add desired toppings and enjoy!

Praying in Color

 <p>Start with God. Write a name for God. Ask God to be part of your prayer. Draw or doodle around the name while you pray.</p>	 <p>When your words run out, keep drawing. Think of each stroke as a wordless prayer. Add dots, lines, color...</p>	 <p>Continue to add shapes, marks and color. If words come to you, pray them. If not enjoy the silent time with God. Write words, if you like.</p>
 <p>Write the name of someone for whom you want to pray. Start to draw around their name. Release the person into God's care. If words come to you, pray them. If not, just keep drawing.</p>	 <p>Imagine that you, God, and the person are spending time together. Add color or keep it black and white. Keep drawing and praying.</p>	 <p>When you are finished praying for the person, take a breath, say "Amen," or "Lord, hear my prayer."</p>
 <p>Add another person to your visual prayer list.</p>	 <p>Pray for the person with words and doodles, color, and silence. Write words, if you like. When you are finished take a breath.</p>	 <p>Add more people to your prayer.</p>

See also Praying in Color at prayingincolor.com

Supply List

- ✦ Piece of yarn or string
- ✦ Two large, interesting beads
- ✦ Three smaller, flattened beads
- ✦ One medium-sized bead
- ✦ Two small, round beads
- ✦ Candles (tealights are fine)
- ✦ Myrrh essential oil and cotton ball