



CHRISTIAN FORMATION

LENT RESOURCES

The Season of Lent

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, and lasts 40 days, ending with Holy Saturday. The word “Lent” comes from an Anglo-Saxon word *lencton* meaning lengthen - the time of year in which the days grow longer.

In the early church, Lent was the time for the preparation of people for baptism and membership in the church. During this season, they were expected to study, pray and fast. On Easter Even (Saturday before Easter) they were baptized and received communion and were made members of the church.

The liturgical color for Lent is purple, for royalty. Churches may choose to use burlap or other rough cloth to remind them of sack-cloth, a biblical era mourning cloth.

On Ash Wednesday, we receive ashes on our foreheads symbolizing death and returning to dust. These ashes are often the result of burning palm branches from the previous year’s Palm Sunday palm branches. During the season of Lent, the music is more somber and “alleluias” are not said or sung to remind us of the penitential season and the contemplative mood of the season.

We often think of giving up something for Lent. It is also a time to take on something - something different and new to reinvigorate our lives as Christians.

Lent at Home

The season of Lent provides us with many opportunities to observe a “holy Lent” as we pray at the Ash Wednesday service. How does one help the members of the congregation do this? How many times have you heard, “I don’t have the time to do the stuff I need to do, much less adding something else to do.”

Offer the families in your congregation a simple devotion that can be done in two minutes or expanded to 5-10 minutes. There are many devotional booklets that will fill this need. CandlePress has several choices for easy, short devotions (www.candlepress.com). Creative Communications also has a number of excellent devotional booklets and aids for the season (www.creativecommunications.com). There is no reason to re-invent the wheel.

Another idea is to offer a home devotion calendar. Each day could suggest a scripture passage, the Collect for that Sunday, a good book to read, some act of kindness, some suggestion for an offering, etc.

Books offer a great family time activity - for all ages and stages. There are a number of books that lend themselves to this time of year. Some favorites would include anything by Dr. Seuss, Leo Lionni, Patricia Polacco or Tomi di Paola. Some good chapter books have been written by C. S. Lewis, Walter Wangerin, Madeleine L’Engle, or Katherine Paterson (*Bridge to Terabithia*).

Lenten Program Suggestions

Lenten Offerings

You might have each person bring an empty soup or vegetable can to church. Cover the cans with white contact paper, cut to fit. Cut a circle that is 1 inch in diameter larger than the can opening out of purple construction paper. Attach the paper top to the can using a rubber band. Cut a slit for the money in the top of the paper. Decorate the can with stickers, magazine photos, markers, etc. Through the use of a calendar or booklet encourage donations to the can for the season of Lent. Bring the can to church on Easter Sunday.

There are many other worthwhile recipients of such a Lenten offering. Project Heifer or a local charity, such as a Women's Center, are good Lenten projects.

Burying the Alleluias

You might like to bury the alleluias on the last Sunday of Epiphany. This act helps us remember that alleluias are not used during Lent in our hymns, liturgical responses or service music. There are many different ways to accomplish this task. Some are more pleasant than others. The following, tried and true, fits this criteria.

Supplies needed:

- 5 foot long, 2 inch wide piece of satin ribbon for each class.
- felt adhesive-backed letters to spell "Alleluia" for each class.
- Spring-themed stickers or rubber stamps and stamp pads, scrapbooking artwork (spring themed), butterflies, flowers, glitter, sequins, etc. that can be glued on the ribbons.
- Small bells of all descriptions are a most wonderful addition.
- a large wooden box to hold the finished ribbons.

Begin at least 2 Sundays before the burial!

Each class gets a ribbon, lettering and craft stuff. The "Alleluia" is affixed to the ribbon and then the ribbon is decorated. At the pre-determined time, all classes gather around the box with their ribbons and a prayer is said, something mentioned about the burying of the alleluias and then the ribbons are carefully placed in the box. The lid is shut and locked and the box can sit in a very visible place during Lent. You might like to put a sign on the box designating its purpose.

For Easter Sunday, the ribbons are removed, the box is left open and an Easter Lily is placed in the open box. The ribbons are affixed to a large round embroidery hoop that has been wrapped in white ribbon. The whole hoop is then attached by ribbon to a banner pole and carried in procession on Easter Day.

The Discovery Series

The Discovery Series: A Christian Journey video series published by the Diocese of Texas can be used as a Lenten program. Of special interest, please check out these segments:

- Instructed Eucharist
- Baptism segments
- Segment on Prayer

The extended resources in the back of the guide offer a number of suggestions to enhance the segment. For instance, if using the Prayer segment, Anglican Rosaries can be made, the labyrinth can be walked, mandelas, icons and an extended reading list would allow that particular topic to work for several weeks as a Lenten program. Likewise with the Instructed Eucharist and also Baptism. The Discovery Series places great emphasis on the Baptismal Covenant and the five promises. Especially given the lectionary readings for Year A, an in-depth study of the promises would be a good program for adults and children/youth as well.

Shrove Tuesday

A Shrove Tuesday Pancake supper could have the added fun of a pancake race, a popular activity in Britain on this day. Pancakes were the chosen food because families were using up their milk, eggs and fat - foods that would not be allowed during Lent.

A good idea from our friends in the Diocese of Connecticut is to use frisbees instead of pancakes so as to not use edible food. Have one Frisbee per team of 6-8 people. The teams line up behind the starting line with their "pancake" (alias frisbee) on a dinner plate. Each person runs to the finish line flipping their "pancake" on their plate 6 flips. Upon returning to the starting point, the plate and "pancake" are handed off to the next runner. If the "pancake" falls off the plate, the runner must start over again at the starting line. The winning team is the team with all the racers having run and the "pancake" still on the plate.

Passover

Some questions have come up recently regarding Seder meals. If you are planning such an observance, the following considerations should be taken:

1. Having a rabbi or other Jewish leader put the event together, using the language and symbols of our Jewish ancestors.
2. Having your own "Christian Passover" meal (not a Seder) using Christian symbols and customs without co-opting our Jewish brothers and sisters' customs and changing them to fit Christian practices.
(Thanks to NAECED members for input)

Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross have long been observed by the Church during Lent, particularly on Fridays and especially Good Friday. If one is fortunate enough to travel to Jerusalem for the Stations on the Via Dolorosa, it is a time never to forget. For those who cannot travel to Jerusalem, we can join with countless thousands before us who also could not make the trip and who devised a pilgrimage in their own church, using statues, icons or other artistic depictions of the stations to meditatively walk with Christ, still in practice today.

Traditionally there are 14 Stations of the Cross. Many Episcopal churches use 12. Customarily, the group travels from station to station, pausing for a reading about the station and then having prayers and quiet time before moving on. One of the wonderful things about this service is that it can be done by a single person or by a group.

A children's version of the Stations of the Cross can be found on the www.epicenter.org webpage under Christian Formation and then under resources for children and youth.

The Episcopal Public Policy Network has a Stations of the Cross for Global Justice and Reconciliation on their website at <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/3654>. This particular Stations offers the opportunity to experience the Stations in light of those who suffer from poverty, disease or hunger.

Library Resources

The Diocesan Resource Library has a number of Lenten resources to assist you in your programming needs for this season. To access a catalogue listing, please go to <http://www.epicenter.org:8090/> and enter keyword Lent, Baptism, Eucharist, Prayer, etc. to see what we have available for your use. We are happy to assist you in any way and also happy to mail resources to you. Please be mindful of the 2 week check out period and let us know if you wish to keep resources longer than that.

Destination Easter! Lenten Programs & Practices for Youth,
Kaylea Hutson

*Passion for Pilgrimage: Notes for the Journey Home,
Meditations on the Easter Mystery*, Alan Jones

Living Lent: Meditations for These Forty Days,
Barbara Cawthorne Crafton

Bible Stores for the 40 Days, Melissa Musick Nussbaum

Creative Ideas for Lent, Vol. 1-3, Educational Ministries

A Walk in Jerusalem: Stations of the Cross, John Peterson

A Place to Pray: Conversations on the Lord's Prayer,
Roberta Bondi (Video)

The Passion: The Last Days of Christ, video

Lent: A Time for Renewal, video

Pardon and Peace: Sacrament of Reconciliation, video

Penance: A Story of Forgiveness, video

The Gospel: Rescue or Recruitment, video

*God With Us: The Companionship of Jesus in the Challenges
of Life*, Herbert O'Driscoll

Sowing Tears, Reaping Joy: The Bible and Brahms's Requiem,
Carol Bechtel Reynolds

*Stages of the Way: Worship Resources for Lent, Holy Week
& Easter*, Wild Goose Worship Group

The Way of the Cross, Rev. Richard Orlinski

*An Illustrated Stations of the Cross: The Devotion and Its
History*, Jim Nisbet

The New PrayerBook Guide to Christian Education,
Joseph Russell

Other Resources

The Tale of Three Trees, Angela Hunt

Easter, Jan Pienkiwski

Jesus, Brian Wildsmith

The Mystery of Easter, Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Petook, Caryll Houselander

The Way of the Cross, Biffi

Never Said a Mumbalin' Word, Mark F. Bozzuti-Jones

The Gospel According to the Simpsons, Mark Pinsky

The *Lenten Study and Action for Year B* guide can be found at www.comeandgrow.org. This study program for adults provides a connection between the Lenten scripture readings and resources for congregational and personal transformation.

Ecufilm has a number of good videos that are appropriate for the season.

Other good online resources include:

- Episcopal Relief and Development "Seeking God's Perspective" http://www.er-d.org/resourcecenter_7075_ENG_HTML.htm.
- The Text This Week <http://www.textweek.com/lent.htm>
- Anglicans on-Line <http://anglicansonline.org/special/lent.html>.
- Forward Movement <http://www.forwardmovement.org>

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