



A HOME LENTEN STUDY 2021

CENTRAL SQ. CONG'L CHURCH, UCC
BRIDGEWATER, MA

What is Lent?

In the church's calendar (called the liturgical calendar), Lent starts on Ash Wednesday and runs for the 40 days (not counting Sundays) leading up to Easter. Easter is observed on the first Sunday following the full moon that comes on or after the vernal equinox (March 21). This means that Easter can take place as early as March 22 but no later than April 25. This year, Easter is on April 4th. So... counting backwards 40 days (not counting Sundays) that takes us to February 17. This year, Lent begins on Wednesday, February 17, Ash Wednesday.

Lent is the Christian season of spiritual preparation before Easter. During Lent, many Christians observe a period of fasting, repentance, moderation, self-denial, sacrifice, and spiritual discipline. The purpose of the Lenten season is to set aside time for reflection on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and your relationship to God. It is a time to look into yourself, to connect with all in you that is "of God", and to focus on Jesus and what his life, death, burial, and resurrection means for us.

During the six weeks of self-examination and reflection, Christians who observe Lent typically make a commitment to fast, or to give up something—a habit, like watching TV, swearing, or a food or drink, such as sweets, chocolate, or coffee. Some Christians also take on a Lenten discipline, like reading the Bible and spending more time in prayer to draw nearer to God.

So why 40 Days?

The 40-day period of Lent is based on two episodes of spiritual testing in the Bible: the 40 years of wilderness wanderings by the Israelites after the exodus from Egypt (Numbers 33:38 and Deuteronomy 1:3) and the Temptation of Jesus after he spent 40 days in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13).

In the Bible, the number 40 holds special significance in the measurement of time, and many other important events revolve around it. During the flood, it rained for 40 days and 40 nights (Genesis 7:4, 12, 17; 8:6). Moses fasted on the mountain for 40 days and nights before God gave the Ten Commandments (Exodus 24:18; 34:28; Deuteronomy 9). The spies spent 40 days in the land of Canaan (Numbers 13:25; 14:34). The prophet Elijah traveled for 40 days and nights to reach the mountain of God in Sinai (1 Kings 19:8).

What is Holy Week and Easter?

Holy week is the last week of Lent. During this week we walk alongside the last week of Jesus' life. Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday. Jesus spent his life travelling all over Israel helping people, doing miracles, and telling them about God's love. Palm Sunday is the day Jesus entered Jerusalem, the capitol and most important city. This was something the Bible had been promising for hundreds of years. While Jesus was in Jerusalem, he shared a special meal with his followers and washed their feet (Maundy Thursday), prayed in a special garden, was arrested, and was put to death (Good Friday) because of what he taught. Remember, Jesus taught that all people are special and loved by God. He taught that we should forgive, that we should share all that we have, and that we should always try to do what is right. The people in power were scared that Jesus was trying to take their power away and that is why they put him to death. But that isn't the end of the story! The best part of the story is that Jesus' legacy never died. This is what we celebrate on Easter Sunday! We say things like "He is risen!" and "Jesus Lives!" because what he taught us lives on.

Especially for Parents/Guardians:

Teaching about the Crucifixion and Easter is pretty heavy. But children have an innate spirituality and curiosity about God, so it's important that we guide them along their faith journey and share our faith stories with them in a way that suits where they are. We need to have an understanding about the developmental appropriateness of the

concepts we're exploring with them. Here are some developmental guidelines from psychologists for teaching children about Jesus' death.

Ages 3-5 are "The Age of Fantasy" and this is not a time to give graphic details about the events of the cross. Preschoolers' imaginations can build such details into frightening scenes that keep them awake at night. Saying only that "Jesus died for you" might cause a child to feel guilty. Instead, try saying, "Jesus taught the world what love means and we remember him because of that".

Ages 6-9 are "The Age of Questioning" and, although children can tolerate more details: the images of the nails and the cross are still too intense for this age group. Children can learn the sequence of events in Holy Week and some of the details. Telling them about Jesus' concern for his mother while on the cross can help children understand Jesus' humanity and love for others. Telling them that Jesus forgave the people who hurt him can teach children about Jesus' character. This age group does have a concept of right and wrong, so you can share with them that what happened to Jesus was wrong.

Ages 10-14 are referred to as "The Age of Intensity" and children this age are ready to move to a deeper understanding of the sense of the dramatic and they learn best when their minds and imaginations are engaged together. Discussions, questions, and books with an emotional impact are ideal for this age group. Consider watching and discussing movies together like "Jesus of Nazareth" or "Jesus Christ Superstar". By this age young people can understand the nuances of politics, time period, interpersonal dynamics, and more abstract concepts.

General Guidelines for talking with children about the events of Jesus' death are:

- Increase realism over time
- Increase intensity over time
- Move from general to specific over time
- Let your child's sensitivity lead.
- Books, videos and online resources vary in quality and appropriateness for children so please select carefully!
- **It's important to give children the whole story of Holy Week.** Teach about all of the events leading up to Easter and always talk about how Jesus overcame death because his legacy of love still lives in us.

LENTEN PRAYERS

General: *God, please show me what I should give up or take on for Lent.
 Remind me to pray to You...
 To thank You...
 To love You...
 To hear from You...
 Each and every day in Lent. Amen.*

Before a Meal: *Thank you, God.
 We are grateful for the gift of nourishing food,
 and time to enjoy family and food together.
 May we eat, always, in remembrance of Jesus. Amen.*

For Family and Friends: *God, we send blessings and love
 to friends and family far away:
 May they feel our love.
 May they know we miss them.
 May they be happy and at peace.
 May their journey through Lent
 be full of Growth and Connection. Amen.*

For Easter: *God, thank you for sending Jesus to teach us
 about how to love the world.
 Help us to be caring and giving, just like Jesus.
 Today and always, may we remember
 that when we do what is right and good,
 we are living as Jesus wants us to live.
 Jesus lives on, through us. He is risen! Amen.*

A HOME LENTEN STUDY

Ash Wednesday

(February 17, 2021)

- Read: Genesis 2:7
"Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being."
- Discuss: We typically think of dust as a bad thing, something that needs to be cleaned away. Instead, it's the very essence of what we are! Do you feel a deeper connection to dust knowing that it is a part of you?
- Activity: Dust an appliance or surface, thinking about this passage of scripture.
- Pray: Loving God, this Lent, help me enter deeper into my own life.
Break me free from apathy, self-absorption, and despair.
Remind me that my every breath comes from you. Amen.
- Ritual: You may have gotten a cotton swab with ashes on it from the church.
You can make the sign of the cross with the ashes on your forehead reciting the words "From dust I came, to dust I shall return". This is a physical reminder that we are connected to all things, throughout time.

Week 1

(February 21, 2021)

- Read: Deuteronomy 26:6-9
"When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey."
- Discuss: Do you have an experience in your life where you can recall God's presence when you needed it most? What did it feel like? Who was with you? Who else has helped you and journeyed with you through tough times in your life?
- Activity: Write a thank you note to God.
- Pray: Liberating God, open our eyes to the ways we hold your Earth and your people captive. Show us the places in our lives where we are doing harm, and then turn us around and set us free. Amen.

Week 2

(February 28, 2021)

- Read: Luke 13:34
"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!"
- Discuss: When you see injustice, how do you respond?
- Activity: We all have some aspect of our lives that we aren't giving enough attention or is cluttered, neglected. Commit to paying attention to that area this week.
- Pray: God, gather us under your wings and teach us how to be your people. When we are lost, find us; when we are wrong, correct us; when we are bound by fear, free us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Week 3

(March 7, 2021)

- Read: Isaiah 55:2
"Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food."
- Discuss: What are the necessities in your life? How do you treat those things?
- Activity: Make a gift or treat for someone who may be lonely or is going through a tough time.
- Pray: God of majesty, forgive us when we spend too much on ourselves, fill up on foods that do not satisfy, and tune out the cries of the vulnerable. Open us outward, toward you and our neighbors. Amen.

Week 4

(March 14, 2021)

- Read: Luke 15:31-32
"Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"
- Discuss: What grudges have you been holding on to? What can you do to let them go? How might you feel when you let those things go?
- Activity: Draw a heart on your hand with a permanent marker. Notice how long it stays with you.
- Pray: God who always seeks and always finds, thank you for showing us what love looks and feels like. Thank you for always watching the horizon and welcoming us back again and again and again. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Week 5

(March 21, 2021)

Read: Isaiah 43:18-21

"Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. ¹⁹I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. ²⁰The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, ²¹the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise."

Discuss: What makes you worry? How can worry be helpful? How can it be harmful?

Activity: Hold silence for 4 mins. Breathe in new life, breathe out despair and worry.

Pray: God of new things, help us to see the dawn - even through the darkness. Help us to see your rivers - even in the desert. And help us to declare your praise – even when our mouths are full of ashes! In Jesus' name, Amen.

HOLY WEEK



Palm Sunday

(March 28, 2021)

Read: Luke 19:28-40

After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'"³² So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. ³³As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them,

"Why are you untying the colt?" ³⁴They said, "The Lord needs it." ³⁵Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. ³⁷As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, ³⁸saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" ³⁹Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." ⁴⁰He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

- Discuss: God is constantly asking us to do things, even when we don't want to and maybe especially when we don't want to. What are some instances where you did as God asked you, despite what others would say? Did you feel secure in your decision to follow God instead of popular opinion? What was the outcome?
- Activity: In this Gospel story, people laid their coats out to make a path for Jesus. Pick an organization who may need items for the betterment of someone else's path. Commit to give something that could serve someone else.
- Pray: God of joy, even as we approach the cross, help us to delight in your triumphant, humble, glorious arrival into Jerusalem. Help us to hope, and to sing "Hosanna!" at the top of our lungs. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Maundy Thursday (April 1, 2021)

- Read: Luke 22:14-19
When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; ¹⁸for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."
- Discuss: Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me" during his last meal with those closest to him. What are some things that you do in your life in remembrance of others? What do you think others do in remembrance of you?
- Activity: Share a meal or a recipe with someone you love (either in person or online) and remember the last meal Jesus shared with his disciples on the eve of his death.
- Pray: Holy God, on this day we remember your meal with those closest to you. We seek to be more and more like you every day, through the sharing of meals, words, and gestures of kindness. We do this so that through our love, the world may know your goodness. We do these things in remembrance of you. Amen.

Good Friday (April 2, 2021)

Read: Luke 23:44-49

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent." And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

Discuss: What moves you most about this scene? When have you been wrongly judged? When have you watched someone else be punished and been unable or unwilling to stand up for them?

Activity: Do an online search of images or artistic renderings of this story. What sticks out to you? How do the images resemble or differ what images you see in your head?

Pray: God, on this Good Friday, we ask forgiveness for all the ways we participate in perpetuating cruelty. We confess how we sometimes look the other way when we see injustice or suffering. In spite of this, you forgive and love us. Help us to stand up for what is right and true and good and holy. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Holy Saturday (April 3, 2021)

Read: Luke 23:50-56

Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

Discuss: We remember Joseph of Arimathea as the one who was brave enough to bury Jesus and we remember the women who tended to his body after death. What would you most like people to remember about you after you die? What is your legacy?

- Activity: Think of someone in your life and write down three things you're grateful for and share them.
- Pray: God, on this Holy Saturday we sit in the darkness of loss. We ache for those who also sit in darkness. We worry about what will happen next. As we hold this story in our hearts, whisper to us the truth; that hope is coming. May we be still and know that you are God. Amen.

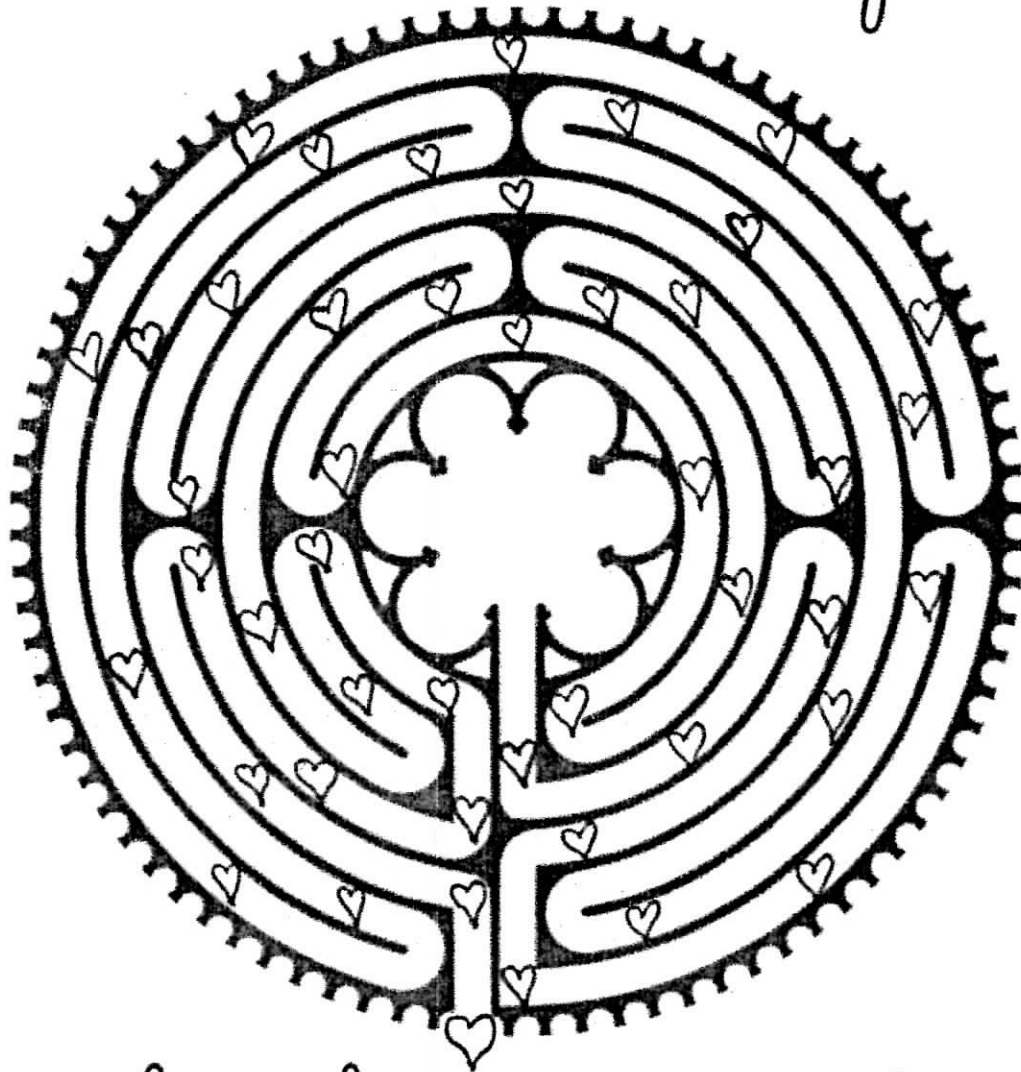
Easter Sunday *(April 4, 2021)*

- Read: Luke 24:1-12
But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.
- Discuss: How have you experienced transformation in your life?
What were the before and after moments?
- Pray: God of Easter morning, open our hearts to your amazing grace.
Roll the stone away and bring us to new life!
In the name of our risen Christ, Amen.
- Sing: "Christ the Lord is Risen Today"
*Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!
Mortal tongues and angels say: Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
Sing, glad heavens, and earth reply: Alleluia!*

*Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!
Death in vain forbids Christ rise, Alleluia!
God has opened paradise, Alleluia!*

*Soar we now where Christ has led, Alleluia!
Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!
Made like Christ, like Christ we rise, Alleluia!
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!*

We are all on the path



precisely where we need to be

Color in a heart on the labyrinth every day of Lent.

Start on Ash Wednesday (2/17) and when you get to the center, it will be Easter! On Easter, draw an image in the center of what God's Grace means to you.

Directions for Making a Lenten Prayer Chain

Lent is a journey of introspection and change. From Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday (not including Sundays "mini-Easters", anticipating the big Easter), the 40 days of Lent are set aside to help us increase the awareness of how we are living our lives. During this time we focus on telling ourselves the truth about our hearts, our selves, and the world we live in. This year, you'll be making a prayer chain, each day symbolically breaking free from the chains that bind you.

What you will need:

- 6 pre-printed purple sheets with numbers
- 1 pre-printed white sheet with "Mini-Easter" Sundays
- Scissors (or an adult with scissors)
- Adhesive (glue stick, glue dots, stapler, or double-sided tape)

Assembly Instructions:

- Start with the Ash Wednesday strip on February 17, 2021. Cut along the dotted line, bend it into a circle, and dab with your adhesive to secure.
- Thread the next strip (it will have a 2 on it) through the Ash Wednesday (1) Strip. Continue on to strip 3, 4, & 5.
- Remember to add the Sunday strips in, after the purple Saturday strips.
- So... as you go along, you should have 4 purples, 1 white, 6 purples, 1 white, 6 purples, 1 white, etc. until you get to Holy Saturday.
- Each day break a strip on your chain. Follow the instructions on the strip to help you center yourself and explore your life this season.
- If you have any questions, please reach out to Rev. Beth!

Prayer Chain





Ash Wednesday

HOLD: Thirty seconds of silence (breathe in life, breathe out death)

READ: Matthew 6:19-21

PRAY: Loving God, this Lent, help us change our lives. Break the bonds of apathy, self-absorption, and despair. Free us for heavenly treasure - for where our treasure is, there our hearts will be also. Amen.



Thursday

For centuries, three primary Lenten practices have been these: fasting, giving things away (including money!), and prayer. Today, find a quiet place to pray for someone you know who is having a hard time.



Friday

CONVERSATION STARTER: Pick a subject or two (your neighborhood, springtime, etc.), and complete this sentence: "The best thing about [subject] is _____!" Gratitude and appreciation can help break the chains of negativity that hold us back.



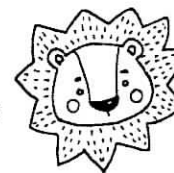
Saturday

Be especially alert today to ways you can "be kind to one another and tender-hearted" (Ephesians 4:32). Make a special effort to thank the people working at your grocery store, your pharmacy, your school, or other places that might otherwise go unnoticed.



Monday

Color or draw a few pictures, and mail them to your local nursing home. Think of them as a gift to those in need of care, or as an appreciative "thank you" to the staff. "Even to your old age and gray hairs, I am God. I am the one who will sustain you and rescue you." + Isaiah 46:4



Tuesday

Learn to say "hello" in three different languages represented in your community. Break the chains of separation!



Wednesday

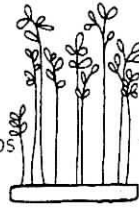
Do an internet search together to find organizations that serve refugees in your area. Find out what they need, how you can volunteer, and then make it happen! "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me." + Matthew 25:35



8

Thursday

With family or friends, decide together on an organization to support financially. For the work of compassion and justice, no donation is too small - and giving helps open the heart of the giver, too! Break the chains of self-absorption and despair!



9

Friday

CONVERSATION STARTER: If war, violence, or poverty forced you to leave your home, what would you take with you? Stand in solidarity with refugees around the world by sharing your answers on social media (use the hashtag: #WhatWouldYouTake).



10

Saturday

Reach out to someone who is by themselves, or seems lonely. Give them a call, send an email, or drop off a tiny bouquet of spring flowers. Break the chains of loneliness!



11

Monday

Start (or increase) a practice of composting this Lenten season. Composting is a great way to reduce household waste, and - voila! - turns it into something nourishing for creation.



12

Tuesday

Try this experiment: Say only kind and positive things all day today. Break the chains of bitterness, gossip, and negativity!



13

Wednesday

In the United States, there are almost 400,000 children under 18 in foster care. Donate to an organization that supports kids in the foster system in your area. "Religion that is pure...is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress." + James 1:27



14

Thursday

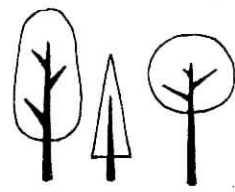
Do a household chore for a family member without them having to ask - or even without them knowing about it. Break the chains of toil and increase everyone's delight!



15

Friday

CONVERSATION STARTER: What's your all-time favorite memory (or one of your top five)?



16

Saturday

Do the Popcorn Prayer! Pop some microwave popcorn and have everyone shout out something they are grateful for when they hear a kernel pop.



17

Monday

This week or this Lent (or longer!), try eating less meat, eggs, and/or dairy products. Animal agriculture, and factory farming in particular, is hard on animals (especially female animals) and hard on the Earth, too. Remember, God's mercy is "over all God has made." + Psalm 145:9



18

Tuesday

Give someone in your household a hug - "just because." Break the chains of isolation!



19

Wednesday

Today and for the rest of the week, avoid processed food as much as possible - food "which does not satisfy" (Isa 55:2). The gifts of the Earth are the gifts of God!



20

Thursday

Try an online game night with someone you don't know very well. Break the chains of loneliness!



21

Friday

CONVERSATION STARTER: What are the most serious problems the world is facing today? What do you think you could do to help solve them?



22

Saturday

Write (or find) a poem - simple or complicated, long or short - for someone you love.



23

Monday

Pick a day this week to decorate the inside of your mailbox, or outside of your mail slot, to bring a smile to your mail carrier's face. Help make "sorrow and sighing flee away..." + Isaiah 25:10



24

Tuesday

Record a video love letter and send it to someone who needs it (a voicemail works, too). Break the chains of indifference!



25

Wednesday

For the rest of Lent, try sharing and borrowing as much as possible, instead of buying more stuff. Get back to your early Christian roots, when the disciples held "all things in common!" + Acts 2:44



26

Thursday

"Pay It Backward!" The next time you're at a toll booth or in a drive-through, pay for the person behind you. Kindness feels different when it's from a stranger - and when it's a surprise! So find a surprising way to be kind this week.



27

Friday

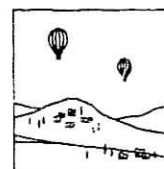
CONVERSATION STARTER: Do you believe everyone deserves forgiveness, no matter what? If so, why? If not, why not?



28

Saturday

Show support to an artist you love! Buy what they make, send them a donation, or drop them a note of thanks and admiration.



29

Monday

Try growing flowers from seeds this week: in cups on your window sill, in your yard, or in a public space or abandoned lot. Break the chains of misery, and help "the earth laugh with flowers." + Ralph Waldo Emerson



30

Tuesday

The next time you're in line, let someone go in front of you. Break the chains of stress and frustration! "Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God." + Micah 6:8



31

Wednesday

For the remainder of Lent, commit to becoming even more plastic free: reusable shopping bags; glass, metal, or ceramic water bottles and coffee mugs; and skip straws altogether! Break the chains of damage and disregard for creation!



32

Thursday

Select three local businesses you love (and who could use some support!), and write each of them a positive online review. Break the chains of toil and discouragement!



33

Friday

CONVERSATION STARTER: What's your idea of a perfect day? Where would you go, what would you do, and who would you do it with?



34

Saturday

Write a handwritten note to someone today, letting them know how much you appreciate them. "Love your neighbor as yourself." + Luke 10:27



35

Monday

Pray for someone you don't like, or someone you're estranged from. Challenge yourself: Is a step toward reconciliation possible? Break the chains of resentment!



36

Tuesday

Write down three things you're grateful for today - and share them with a friend. Then write and share three ways you hope for resurrection in your life this week.



37

Wednesday

Make plans to virtually visit an organization doing good work in your community - and find out how you can get involved. Break the chains of apathy! "I am among you as one who serves." + Luke 22:27



38

Thursday

Unplug: Try an intentional "technology fast" today. Break the chains of distraction! Share a meal with someone you love (in person or online), and remember together the last meal Jesus shared with his disciples on the eve of his death. + Luke 22:7-27



39

Friday

CONVERSATION STARTER: What would you most like people to remember you for after you die? What would you like written on your tombstone?



40

Holy Saturday

Plan a visit to a cemetery and tidy up an overgrown headstone. Let the whole world see that God is still with us, even in death. "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." + Matthew 28:20



Hopes and Expectations for Lent



First Sunday of Lent

HOLD: One minute of silence (breathe in liberation, breathe out captivity)

READ: Deuteronomy 26:6-9

PRAY: Liberating God, open our eyes to the ways we hold your Earth and your people captive. Show us the places in our lives where we are doing harm, and then turn us around and set us free. Amen.

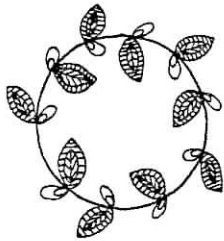


Second Sunday of Lent

HOLD: One and a half minutes of silence (breathe in love, breathe out apathy)

READ: Luke 13:34

PRAY: Mother God, gather us under your wings and teach us how to be your people. When we are lost, find us; when we are wrong, correct us; when we are bound by fear, free us. In Jesus' name. Amen.



Third Sunday of Lent

HOLD: Two minutes of silence (breathe in healing, breathe out hurt)

READ: Isaiah 55:2

PRAY: God of majesty, forgive us when we spend too much on ourselves, fill up on foods that do not satisfy, and tune out the cries of the vulnerable. Open us outward, toward you and our neighbors. Amen.

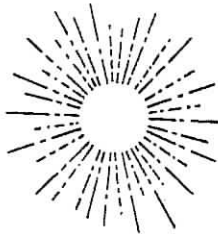


Fourth Sunday of Lent

HOLD: Two and a half minutes of silence (breathe in grace, breathe out doubt)

READ: Luke 15:31-32

PRAY: God who always seeks and always finds, thank you for showing us what love looks and feels like. Thank you for always watching the horizon and welcoming us back again and again and again. In Jesus' name. Amen.



Fifth Sunday of Lent

HOLD: Three minutes of silence (breathe in newness of life, breathe out "the former things")

READ: Isaiah 43:18-21

PRAY: God of new things, help us to see the dawn - even through the darkness. Help us to see your rivers - even in the desert. And help us to declare your praise - even when our mouths are full of ashes! In Jesus' name. Amen.



Palm Sunday

HOLD: Three and a half minutes of silence (breathe in hosanna, breathe out cynicism)

READ: Luke 19:28-40

PRAY: God of joy, even as we approach the cross, help us to delight in your triumphant, humble, glorious arrival into Jerusalem. Help us to hope, and to sing "Hosanna!" at the top of our lungs. In Jesus' name. Amen.



Easter Sunday

HOLD: Four minutes of silence (breathe in new life, breathe out despair)

READ: Luke 24:1-12

PRAY: God of Easter morning, open our hearts to your amazing grace. Roll the stone away and break all the chains, even today, even now! In the name of our risen Christ. Amen.

SING: "Amazing Grace"