

Lent at Home

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The Desert Waits (an invitation to Lent)

The desert waits,
ready for those who come,
who come obedient to the Spirit's leading;
or who are driven,
because they will not come any other way.
The desert always waits,
Ready to let us know who we are –
the place of self-discovery.

And whilst we fear, and rightly,
the loneliness and emptiness and harshness,
we forget the angels
whom we cannot see for our blindness,
but who come when God decides
that we need their help;
when we are ready
for what they can give us.

-Ruth Burgess



Image by Maria Laughlin

Celebrating Lent at Home

Lent is a 40 day period that echoes Christ's 40 days of prayer, fasting, temptation, and trust in the desert. The season of Lent has traditionally been used as a time when Christians prepare their hearts for Holy Week through prayer, giving to the poor, and fasting – a time when we remember Christ's journey to the cross and his death.

But in this death, we are given hope because we remember the rest of the story: That we are also on a journey *towards Easter*, when God raised Jesus from the dead and made him alive again – the first movement in undoing and defeating death for all of creation.

In this booklet are resources that you may want to use as you walk through Lent. In particular, there are liturgies for Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday and Holy Week,* a collection of action prayers to be explored during the six weeks of Lent, and ideas for embracing practices and holding space during the season.

On our own and as a community, we go forward into Lent, trusting that Christ's blessing is with each of us on the journey, and that we will be met in the wilderness.

*These resources have been taken in part from *Eggs and Ashes: Practical and liturgical resources for Lent and Holy Week* and from the community of Iona.

Lenten Dates

2021

Shrove Tuesday	February 16
Ash Wednesday	February 17
Palm Sunday	March 28
Holy Week	March 28 – April 3
Good Friday	April 2
Resurrection Day!	April 4



What is Shrove Tuesday?

Shrove Tuesday (also known as Mardi Gras or Pancake Tuesday) is the day before Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent. The name originates from an old word, *shrive*, which mean “to confess.”

In most traditions the day is known for the eating of pancakes before the start of Lent. Pancakes are eaten because they are made out of the main foods that were traditionally given up during the ritual fasting associated with Lent: sugar, fat, flour and eggs.

Consider enjoying a pancake or crepe meal, and ponder (and talk with any children in your home) about the walk of faith in abundance and scarcity, in times for rejoicing and times for repentance, and in seasons when you experience death and seasons when life re-emerges after a long, cold winter.

Pancake Liturgy for Shrove Tuesday

adapted from Judith Jessop,
Broomhill Methodist Church Liturgy Group

For this liturgy you will need a mixing bowl, a whisk, a griddle or frying pan, and a spatula, as well as the following ingredients:

- *Mixed together*
 - 1 ¼ cups flour
 - 3 teaspoons baking powder
 - 1 Tbsp sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 egg
- *Mixed together*
 - 1 cup milk (or milk alternative)
 - 2 tablespoons oil



Children can participate in this liturgy as readers as they are able. They can also be encouraged to present the ingredients when they are mentioned in the liturgy and to mix them all together at the end.

Reader 1:

God calls us to move on from where we are,
To walk with Jesus on the Lenten journey.

Reader 2:

Come leave what you cling to, lay down what you clutch
And find, with hearts empty, that hearts can hold much.

Present the ingredients as the readers say:

Reader 1:

So, we sift some flour, our sadness from the past.

Reader 2:

And we add a touch of salt for flavor.

Reader 1:

We take an egg, a symbol of new life.

Reader 2:

And we take some milk, nourishment for the journey ahead.

Add ingredients to the mixing bowl and stir just enough to moisten the flour (The batter will be lumpy).

Reader 3:

We mix it all together
to use up ingredients of the past,
ready to move forward on our walk with Jesus.

And as we share this food,
may we be amazed at the new life
that God is bringing into our lives
and into the world.

Amen.

Bake on a hot griddle or greased frying pan. Flip with a spatula when the bubbles on the surface of the pancake begin to pop.



What is Ash Wednesday?

“Come back to me with all your heart.”

Joel 2:12

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent and occurs 40 days* before Easter, the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

According to the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, after his baptism Jesus was sent by the Spirit into the wilderness where he spent forty days fasting and being tempted by the devil. During this time of hunger and temptation, Jesus depended and trusted entirely on the Creator and was formed for the work God was calling him to. At the end of 40 days he was cared for by angels and he came out of the wilderness, announcing, “Turn around! The kingdom of heaven has come close!”.

Ash Wednesday remembers this story and marks the beginning of the 40 day period of prayer and fasting of the Lenten season.

Ash Wednesday derives its name from the practice of placing ashes on people’s foreheads as a sign of mourning and repentance to God.

**There are 6 Sundays during the Lenten period; these are traditionally not part of the season of Lent. Hence there are 40 days of Lent between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday.*

Observing Ash Wednesday

Setting Lenten Intentions

*Included in the Lent mail out package is an **Ash Wednesday labyrinth and liturgy for setting Lenten intentions** from Illustrated Ministry. Please contact admin@gcbchurch.ca if you would like additional copies of this.*

Ash Wednesday Podcast

*There will be a **contemplative Ash Wednesday** podcast available, with details to be posted on the church website and in the weekly email bulletins.*

Ash Wednesday Zoom Service

*You are invited to enter into this family-friendly service of ashes with others from our church at the **6:30pm Ash Wednesday zoom service on February 17th**. Check the website for details.*

Practical instructions about the ashes

- *First off, have a damp cloth and a small container of soapy water close by to make it easy to clean your hands*
- *Open package of ashes carefully and transfer into a small bowl*
- *Ashes can be used on their own or with a small drop of olive oil to mix into a paste*
- *Do NOT mix ashes with water. This makes them caustic when applied to the skin*

Instructions on how to make sign of a cross with ashes.
We will be led in this during the service:

- *Dip your right thumb into the container of ashes, just touching the surface of the ashes so that the edge of your thumb is black.*
- *Draw a cross on the forehead or hand with your thumb. It will probably come out looking like a plus sign. You can do this for yourself or for another person in your home.*
- *As you put the ash on your forehead or hand or on someone else, say: “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. Repent and believe the good news. God longs for you to be whole.”*
- *Clean your hands with a damp cloth*

Links to Lenten songs and chords can be found on the website at gcbchurch.ca/pages/songs-for-the-season-of-lent

Song: Behold (Emily Parsons-Dickau)

Behold, behold.

Behold, behold.

Behold the Lamb who takes away

The sin of the world.

Have mercy, Have mercy

Have mercy on us.

Song: Dust We Are and Shall Return (The Brilliance)

From dust we've come and dust we are and shall return

Be still my soul and let it go, just let it go

Glory to God, Glory to God in the highest

Glory to God, Glory to God in the highest

Naked we came and shall return into the grave
Be still my soul and let it go, just let it go

Glory to God, Glory to God in the highest
Glory to God, Glory to God in the highest

Be still my soul, Lord, make me whole, Lord, make me whole

Be still my soul, Lord, make me whole, Lord, make me whole, Lord, make me whole

Be still my soul, Lord, make me whole, Lord, make me whole

Glory to God, Glory to God, Glory to God, Glory to God

Prayer: From Dust We Came

From dust we came,
to dust we will return
We belong to God

We gather in penitence,
we gather in confidence
We belong to God

At the beginning of Lent,
at every moment of our lives
We belong to God

(Silence)

Jesus said: Take up your cross and follow me.
We will follow you, O Christ,
into the needs of the world,
into the truth of our lives,
into the pain of our hearts,
into the presence of God. AMEN

Holding Space During Lent

In the Orthodox church, Lent is referred to as the season of “bright sadness.” Many of us feel a deep longing to create and hold sacred space in this season as a way of participating in the bright sadness that draws us along the road to the cross and, beyond that, to the resurrection and new life of Easter.

Though there are still health restrictions in place that are preventing us from gathering to hold space together in person, here are some ideas for marking space as well as time this Lent:

- **Strip away colours, flowers, decorations** from your home. This has been an important practice in Christian homes from hundreds of years as a way of embodying the practice of letting Lent be a time when we notice what is essential and what may be distracting us from God. If there are children in your home, explaining this practice to them and involving them in making choices on what to strip away is one way to draw them into the story. Covering crosses and icons with purple cloth and removing flowers in this stripping away allows us to anticipate the coming Easter celebration when we uncover the icons and flowers will be a big deal in celebrating our risen Lord!
- **Create a simple focal point** somewhere in your home that reminds you of what is important and where you are on the journey.

- **Purple** is the liturgical colour for Lent (the colour of royalty and “a sad, serious colour,” in the language of Godly Play). Use purple sparingly to draw your attention, perhaps with a piece of purple fabric as a centerpiece or a purple cross cut out of paper that you tape to the wall.
- A **Lenten “road”** that leads to a cross. This road can be made of a strip of fabric or paper that is marked out with 6 stones. You may want to have a candle that you move along the road each week.
- **Extinguishing candles:** Have 6 candles, lighting all of them on Ash Wednesday, and then for the following 5 weeks, lighting one *less* each Sunday until you reach Holy Week.

Lenten Practices

The traditional Christian practices of Lent include:

- Fasting
- Repentance
- Giving
- Prayer

These actions are intended to draw us deeper into the season as we walk with Jesus on his journey towards the cross, to draw us away from distractions and towards the justice, mercy and forgiveness of God.

We invite you to consider ahead of time what practice(s) you will take up during Lent. While it is often recommended that you tell only one other person about the Lenten practices you are committing to, if there are children in your home this is a wonderful opportunity to talk about the meaning of Lent and

Easter. Is there a simple practice that your kids might want to engage in for Lent that you can help them with?

Included in the Lent mail out this year is an **Ash Wednesday labyrinth** and a **colouring page for drawing or writing your intentions** for Lent. We encourage you to use these prayerful (and with lots of grace for yourself and others) as you prepare for the season.

Please email the office at admin@gcbchurch.ca if you would like extra copies of the labyrinth and intentions colouring page.

Some Lenten Practices:

Fast in order to come closer to God

Fasting is the practice of giving up something in order to turn away from sin and draw closer to God. The thing we give up might be good in itself, but we give it up in so that there is room in our lives to receive and come close to God's presence.

Fasting can be a form of repentance (showing that we are sorry for sin), as well as a spiritual discipline that strengthens our will, prepares us for God's call on our lives (just as Jesus fasted in the wilderness when he prepared for his mission from God), and puts us in solidarity with the suffering of Christ and suffering people around the world.

See page 19 for some ideas for a partial or whole fast during Lent.

Give Generously

Get out a big piece of paper and drawing supplies, and draw a line through the centre of the page. On one half of the paper, brainstorm needs you see in the world, neighbourhood, and community. On the other half, draw or write resources that you have; these could include time, money, things in your home, or skills you have to offer. Then think about ways that you could generously match some of these needs with some of the resources that you have been entrusted with. Draw lines connecting needs and resources.

If there are kids in your home, do this exercise together as a family and make sure that your children have the opportunity to name needs they see and resources they have to give, too.

Then plan a way that you will do some of these things during Lent. As an individual or a family, you might want to pick three things in order to keep it simple. Give your children the opportunity to make choices to generously give what they have been given in order to care for the earth, animals, and people who have particular needs.

Throw away your sins

Within Judaism there is a practice during the autumn festival of Rosh Hashanah called *Tashlich* (a Hebrew word meaning “you shall cast into the sea”) which could be adapted for a Lenten setting. In her book, *Celebrating Biblical Feasts*, Martha Zimmerman explains that during Rosh Hashanah, it is traditional to go to a river, stream, lake or ocean, collect a pocketful of pebbles or stones and throw them into water. The stones represent particular sins in your life and, as you toss

each one away, you enact your desire to repent, tell God you are sorry, and ask for forgiveness.

If you do this activity with children, take some time to pick up stones together, talk about (and ask each other) what sins you've noticed in your lives that you want God to take far away from you. You could read aloud Micah 7:19 and then enjoy the embodied experience of throwing each stone as far as you can out into the water.

*Once again you will show loving concern for us.
You will completely wipe out
the evil things we've done.
You will throw all our sins
into the bottom of the sea.*

Micah 7:17

Learn the Lord's Prayer or another prayer from the Christian tradition and say it often throughout the season

There is a version of the Lord's Prayer included in the Lent mail out package.

Tips for memorizing:

- Take **one phrase at a time** and repeat it over and over.
- **Walk** while you memorize. Moving your body has been shown to help memorization stick.
- Put the words of the prayer to a **simple tune**. Sing this tune each day and during bedtime routines.
- **Bounce a ball** to your child saying one word of the prayer and have them bounce it back, saying the next word, and so on.

- **Use sign language** or make up motions to go with the words.
- Have an **older child write the prayer** in a journal, maybe using colored pencils and color-coding certain words.
- Discuss the prayer with your child or with a friend.
Wonder about what it means.
- **Pray together**, asking Jesus to help you learn this prayer that he taught his friends.

Learn how to make **the sign of the cross** prayerfully. (You can find many illustrated tutorials online.) Learn this, teach it to any children who are in your life, and do it often through the season as an embodied way of remembering the blessing of Christ and coming close to God in prayer with your whole self.

Come close to Jesus in the stories of his life

Choose one of the gospels or a children's Bible, and read through the stories of the life of Jesus during the season.

For adults, consider reading the whole gospel of Mark in one sitting (it's only 16 chapters long) and then reading small sections each day (slowly and out loud) throughout the season.

You may want to draw or journal your responses to these stories, taking particular note of your senses. (What do you notice about sounds, images, smells, physical sensations and feelings that are evoked in your imagination?) Ask the Holy Spirit to draw you deeper into the life, death, and resurrection of Christ through this practice.

Songs for Lent

Links to Lenten songs and chords, including “Behold” and “From Dust We Came” (page 11-12) can be found on the website at:

gcbchurch.ca/pages/songs-for-the-season-of-lent

Two Ideas for Fasting

See **page 15** for an explanation of the purpose and meaning of Christian fasting.

A Partial Fast

A *partial fast* can involve food and drink, or certain habits. Here are some possibilities for a partial fast:

- **Foods** associated with feasting: chocolate, desserts, coffee, tea, alcohol
- **Media** or entertainment: cell phone, tv, streaming video, radio, music, email, computers, video games
- **Habits**: shopping, gossiping, unnecessary snacking, swearing, overworking

Here are some questions to help you discern a partial fast (from Aaron Damiani’s book *The Good Of Giving Up: Discovering the Freedom of Lent*):

- What cravings have a hold on me?
- What would be truly liberating to leave behind?
- Short of an addiction, have I become dependent on a particular food, drink, substance, or activity?

- What would be truly challenging for me to give up during Lent?
- What is Jesus' invitation to me?

Jesus instructs his followers to fast “in secret” (Matthew 6), as an act of repentance, dedication, and trust that is between God and the person entering into the fast. Don't put your fasting intentions on social media or tell lots of people about them. As you pray through the questions above, try picking one food or drink and one media or habit to give up, and then **share this with one other person** as a way to embrace accountability.

One more thing about partial fasting during Lent: **Sundays don't count!** Sundays are “feast days,” which means you don't practice your fast on Sundays. (Lent is actually 46 days long: 40 days of fasting and 6 Sundays of feasting!) Practicing a feast day helps make our Lenten fasts sustainable.

A Whole Fast

In addition to a partial fast, you may also consider embracing a *whole fast* (or “regular fast”). A whole fast is not abstaining from food for all of Lent, but rather **the practice of skipping entire meals (and snacks) for a specific amount of time.**

During a whole fast, you can continue to drink water or some other non-substantial liquid, like chicken broth. (We don't recommend fruit juices when you're on a whole fast, as their sugar content is typically very high!)

It should be pointed out that a whole fast isn't for everyone. **Young children, the elderly, pregnant or nursing mothers, and those with relevant health issues should not attempt a**

whole fast. If you're concerned about fasting, talk with a medical professional about it before trying it.

But if you decide to try a whole fast during Lent, consider starting with a **24-hour fast once a week**. Traditional days for Christians to fast are Wednesdays (to commemorate Jesus' betrayal) and Fridays (to commemorate Jesus' crucifixion).

Here's how to do it:

1. Have a light dinner the night before, and don't eat anything more before bed.
2. Then skip breakfast and lunch the next day, breaking your fast at dinnertime that evening.

Other traditional days to practice a whole fast are Ash Wednesday, and some people will fast all the way from Maundy Thursday to Holy Saturday, breaking their 3-day fast on Easter morning.

However you decide to fast during Lent, approach it as an experiment in grace. The point is to create space in our souls to feast on the presence of Jesus in our midst. So celebrate the gospel as you fast, and look for God's grace to meet you.

Ideas for partial and whole fasts adapted from a Gravity Leadership article online, February 2020

Praying in God's Love

Embodied Prayers for Each Week in Lent

During the season of Lent,
You are invited to explore
some of these embodied,
intercessory prayers
for others.



You could choose the same time each day to practice the week's prayer, such as when you wake up, after dinner, or before bed, or you could set aside a special time once a week to try the suggested prayer.

Don't worry about getting these prayers 'right' – This is a time for you to play in prayer, to practice and experiment with taking part in the generous conversation that God's Holy Spirit is always inviting us into.

Be well held in the love of Christ as you enter into prayer.



Feb 17-20

Week 1 – Action Prayer

Read the passage from Ephesians and imagine God's love and power deep down inside you, in your heart, from your toes to the top of your head to the ends of your fingers.

¹⁶ I pray that God will use his glorious riches to make you strong. May his Holy Spirit give you his power deep down inside you. ¹⁷ Then Christ will live in your hearts because you believe in him. And I pray that your love will have deep roots. I pray that it will have a strong foundation. ¹⁸ May you have power together with all the Lord's holy people to understand Christ's love. May you know how wide and long and high and deep it is. ¹⁹ And may you know his love, even though it can't be known completely. Then you will be filled with everything God has for you.

Ephesians 3:16-19 (NIRV)

Now stand up. Begin with your hands at your side. Lift your hands in front of you like you are holding a package and think about the person or situation that you would like to pray for. Lift your hands up like you are presenting the package to God. As you do so pray these words, "O Lord, I offer this to you." Release the person or situation to God, extending your arms wide and then bring them back to rest at your side. Repeat.



Feb 21-27

Week 2 – Singing Peace

Think about a person who you want God's love and peace to be with. As you think about this person, sing out loud this song of blessing for them:

*The peace of the earth be with you, the peace of the heavens too;
the peace of the rivers be with you, the peace of the oceans too.
Deep peace falling over you; God's peace growing in you.*

There are some lovely versions of this on youtube, including one by the Wild Goose Worship Group:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kYsTzXby4vU>



Feb 28-March 6

Week 3 – Celtic Christian Circle Prayer

Stretch out your arm and point your finger, then turn around so you make a circle with your finger in the air. Use your imagination to see yourself and the person you are praying for in the circle of God's love and protection. Think of one good thing that you want for this person and one bad thing that you want them to be protected from.

As you are imagining this, pray this prayer:

Circle (*name*), Lord.

Keep (*say the good you want revealed*) near
and (*say the evil you want removed*) afar.

Example:

Circle my friend, Lord. Keep protection near and danger afar.



March 7-13

Week 4 – Resting Prayer

Put on some calm music and get in a restful position. Imagine resting in the arms of God. Soak in God's love and peace. Then when you are ready, think about the person you want to pray for – Imagine that God is giving that person a big, warm hug filled with peace and love.



March 14-20

Week 5 – Into God's Hands Prayer

Think about something or someone that makes you feel sad. Sometimes we call these sad, heavy feelings "burdens." Draw large hands on a piece of paper and inside the hands draw the people, situations, or feelings that are like heavy burdens. As you draw think about God's hands being big enough to hold all of our burdens. You may want to pray these words as you draw: "I place this in your strong and caring hands, O God." (You can also do this imaginatively, or by choosing a bowl that represents God's hands and placing symbolic objects or slips of paper in the bowl.)

**** Children can sometimes carry heavy burdens or anxieties. This prayer is a way that they can learn to release those burdens and anxieties to God.*



March 21-27

Week 6 – The Zoom Prayer

Zoom out and think of something happening in the world that you would like to pray for. Now, zoom in and imagine one person living in that situation. Imagine what it may be like for that person and what they would be hoping that people would be praying for. Pray a prayer to God based on what you have imagined as you zoomed in and out.

A Liturgy for Holy Week



For the liturgy on the following pages you will need:

- **Six candles** (one of them red)
- **Palm cross**, a branch of cedar, or another branch
- Copy of the **Lord's prayer** (in the mail out package)
- **Bottle of perfume** (or essential oil)
- Purse filled with **money** (pretend money is okay)
- Bowl of warm **water** and a **towel**
- Wooden **cross** (you could use two sticks or cut a cross out of paper or cardboard)
- Small **model of a cave** (create one with modeling clay or salt dough or by taping cardboard together)
- **Stone** that can roll in front of the cave
- The **makings of an Easter garden**: flowers, Easter eggs, etc.
- A **special Easter candle**



Palm Sunday

Place six candles on the family table and arrange them in the shape of a circle. Light the six candles. Place a palm cross (or cedar branch) on the table, in the centre of the circle.

Reading: Matthew 21:1-11

Question: Why do we have six candles and this branch on the table today?

Answer: Because this week is Holy Week. In six days it's Good Friday, and Easter is coming.

Today we remember how all the people welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem by waving palm branches.



Holy Monday

Light five candles (of the circle of six). Place a copy of the Lord's prayer on the table in the centre of the circle of candles.

Reading: Luke 19:45-48

Question: Why do we have five candles and the Lord's Prayer on the table today?

Answer: Because this week is Holy Week. In five days it's Good Friday, and Easter is coming. Today we remember that Jesus threw the money-changers out of the temple. "My house shall be called a place of prayer," he told them. His special prayer is for us all.

Read the Lord's prayer together



Holy Tuesday

Light four candles. Place a bottle of perfume on the table, in the centre of the circle of candles.

Reading: Mark 14:3-9

Question: Why do we have four candles and some perfume on the table today?

Answer: Because this week is Holy Week. In four days it's Good Friday, and Easter is coming.

Today we remember the woman from Bethany who anointed Jesus' head, who recognized that he was the King of kings and would soon die.



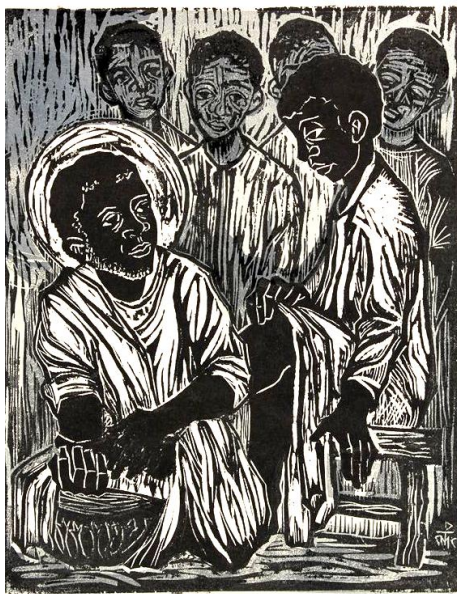
Holy Wednesday

Light three candles. Place a purse filled with money in the centre of the circle of candles.

Reading: Mark 14:10-11

Question: Why do we have three candles and this purse full of money on the table today?

Answer: Because this week is Holy Week. In three days it's Good Friday and Easter is coming. Today we remember that Jesus was betrayed for money, and that Jesus wants us to give what we can to help those in the world who are poor.



Maundy Thursday

Light two candles. Have a bowl of warm water and a towel on the table between the candles. The family washes each other's hands before the meal. The meal could include elements of a Passover meal (unleavened bread, wine...).

Reading: John 13:2-5, 12-15 and Mark 14:22-26;

Question: Why do we have two candles and this towel and water on the table today?

Answer: Because this is Holy Week. One candle is for Good Friday, and one is for today, Maundy Thursday. Today we remember the last Passover meal that Jesus celebrated with his disciples. At that meal he washed their feet and called them to take care of each other the way that he took care of them.



Good Friday

The palm cross (or cedar branch) is put on the front door until the Sunday after Easter or until Pentecost.

The one red candle is lit. A wooden cross is placed on the table.

Pause for a moment and then blow out the red candle.

Question: Why did we blow out the candle today?

Answer: Today is Good Friday. This is the day that we remember that Jesus died.

Reading: Mark 15:25-39

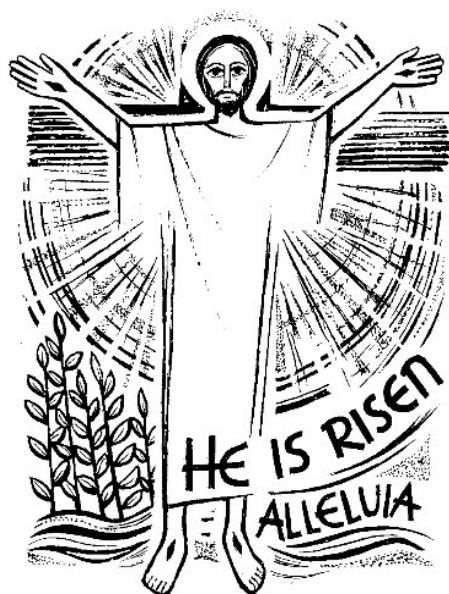
Everyone is quiet for a few moments.



Holy Saturday

Reading: Mark 15:42-47

The family together makes an Easter garden on a tray or plate. An Easter garden includes a model of a cave, with a stone covering the entrance that can be rolled away on Easter Day. The cave represents the tomb where Jesus was buried. Spring flowers are traditionally included in the garden. Let your creativity play.



Easter Day – Resurrection Sunday

Light seven candles (the circle of six and the special Easter candle in the centre of the circle). Roll away the stone from the cave/tomb and light a candle beside it. Have on the table: spring flowers beside the circle of candles, Easter eggs, and whatever else you like to make the table festive.

Reading: John 20:11-18

Question: Why do we have Easter eggs and all these flowers and candles today?

Answer: Because today is Easter Day, the last day of Holy Week. Today we remember that Jesus rose from the dead and showed us the new life God offers all of us, not just after we die but through the difficult bits of living now.

All respond: Alleluia!