

Planning for Lent & Easter, 2001



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Use this for congregational planning or as a family resource hand-out.

Choose from these options:

February 5 (Monday)

Plan pancake dinner for Shrove Tuesday (Feb. 27). This may be a congregational, family or neighbourhood dinner.

February 27 (Tuesday)

Host a Shrove Tuesday pancake dinner.

Shrove Tuesday was originally a day to prepare for the beginning of Lent. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday (Feb. 28). It was the custom to make pancakes on this day as a way of using up fat. Based on tradition, Lenten meals are meatless. Even animal fat was not permitted in the olden days. Today, the making of pancakes reminds us that Lent will start tomorrow.

February 28 (Ash Wednesday, first day of Lent)

While many Presbyterian churches do not practice this tradition, it is the custom of worshipers in traditional services to mark their forehead with ashes in the sign of the cross. The ashes are made by burning the dried palms of the previous year's Palm Sunday.

March 4 (1st Sunday of Lent)

Recycle some Christmas ideas:

Make a Lenten wreath. Wrap a circle of grapevines with purple ribbon. *Purple is the colour for the season of Lent, the colour of penitence and reflection.* Evenly space six candles around the wreath. The candles should be white, representing the Sundays in Lent. Light all 6 candles on March 4. As the Sundays of Lent go past, light one less candle. Do not light any candles in Holy Week, then, on Easter Sunday, light all six in celebration of the resurrection.

Put up a Lenten tree. Instead of an evergreen tree, put up a bare tree branch. On each Sunday until Easter hang pictures of events of Jesus' life, parables, teachings, and pictures of the healing stories.

March 5 (Monday)

Order palm leaves from your local florist for Palm Sunday (April 8).

March 11 (2nd Sunday of Lent)

At coffee hour, during worship, in church school or at home, serve pretzels.

Lent is a good time to practice the Christian discipline of daily prayer. Years ago, people held their arms crossed over their chests when they prayed. Pretzels were first made to remind people to pray.

Pass out bread recipes and invite people in the congregation to make bread for next Sunday and bring it to share with others. *Making bread is a reminder of resurrection; yeast seems dormant but when it is mixed with sugar and water, it makes the dough rise. Just when it seemed that Jesus was dead forever, he rose from the dead.*

March 18 (3rd Sunday of Lent)

Enjoy the bread at coffee hour.

March 24 (Saturday)

Have a Gospel all-night reading at the church. Read continuously through the four gospels. People may come and go. Quiet music will add to the atmosphere of a softly lit church.

March 25 (4th Sunday of Lent)

As people enter church, give them a strip of coloured construction paper and a pen. Ask people to write a Lenten prayer on their strip, then join it in a chain with others. If you are decorating a Lenten tree, place it on the tree or use the chain to adorn the front of the sanctuary.

April 1 (5th Sunday of Lent)

Create a Journey to the Cross. Add a picture or symbols at each station. *Many people associate the "Stations of the Cross" with our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters. However, it is an ancient Christian tradition. In Jerusalem Christians today still follow a route similar to the way Jesus went to his crucifixion. Traditionally there are fourteen stations marking events on Jesus' path to Calvary.*

Choose from these suggested stations:

- Triumphal entry (Matt. 21: 1-11)
- Cleansing of the temple (Matt. 21: 12-17)
- Judas visits the chief priests (Matt. 26: 14-16)
- Passover meal eaten with the disciples (Matt. 26: 17-25)
- Washing the disciples' feet (John 13: 4-6)
- The Last Supper (Mark 14:22-26)
- Praying in the garden (Matt. 26: 36-46)
- Jesus betrayed and arrested (Matt. 26: 47-56)
- Jesus before the High Priest (Matt. 26: 57-68)
- Peter denies Jesus (Matt. 26: 69-75)
- Jesus before Pilate (Matt. 27: 11-26)
- Crown of thorns (Matt. 27: 27-31)
- Jesus carries the cross (Matt. 27: 32; John 19:17)
- Jesus pardons one of the two thieves (Luke 23: 39-43)
- Jesus dies/temple curtain tears (Luke 23:44-47)
- Jesus' body placed in tomb (Luke 23:50-56)

Follow up after visiting the stations: If children are part of this activity, you may want to decorate a cross with flowers for Easter Sunday as a reminder that Jesus rose from the dead. Or, plant grass at the foot of the cross. Or, create a tomb and stone from a cardboard carton and invite the children to peek inside to see that the tomb is empty. Jesus is risen!

April 8 (Palm Sunday)

Have a Palm Parade at the opening of worship.

April 12 (Maundy Thursday)

Re-enact the washing of the feet and the Last Supper.

The word "Maundy" is thought to come from a Latin word, "mandatum" which means commandment. Maundy would then refer to the instructions Jesus gave his disciples in the upper room on the Thursday before Passover, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another." (John 13:34)

April 13 (Good Friday)

Good Friday is a somber day. At home, turn down the heat (wear heavy sweaters), do not use electricity (prepare cold meals and go to bed when it is dark.)

April 14 (Holy Saturday)

Prepare for Easter. Boil eggs. *For centuries the egg has been a symbol for Easter. A baby chick emerges from a seemingly lifeless shell. This reminds us of Jesus rising from the tomb.*

Buy or make hot cross buns. *Tradition has it that an English monk of the fourteenth century first baked hot cross buns to give to the poor on Good Friday. Today we eat them all through Lent but particularly on Easter morning.*

April 15 (Easter Sunday)

There are hundreds of ways to celebrate a joyous Easter morning. You may want to have an Easter lily procession (*Easter lilies remind us of a trumpet, sounding the Good News of God's Easter promise*). You may want to colour beautiful butterflies.

Butterflies have long been used as an Easter symbol since the butterfly begins its life as a caterpillar, then spins a cocoon that appears lifeless. When the creature emerges as a beautiful butterfly it reminds us of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

**Best of Blessing:
Lent, Holy Week
and Easter,**

Ginny Arthur editor, Anglican Book Center, 1998, has an excellent program entitled "Why on this night..? Understanding the Seder." The Seder is the Jewish Passover Supper, which Christians refer to as "The Last Supper." This book also contains additional Lenten programs such as a Lenten Fair, A Good Friday Walk and a neighbourhood event for Holy Saturday.

A Blessed Easter to You!