**Symbols of Lent & Easter**

Weekly Discussion Ideas & Activities for Families

**Candle Cross Table Centerpiece**

Select a place in your home to set up the centerpiece, such as your dinner table. Place seven votive candles in the form of a cross on a piece of purple cloth or paper.

**One Great Hour of Sharing**

During Lent, we focus on giving to others through the One Great Hour of Sharing special offering. Use a fish bank (or create a bank of your own) and the OGHS calendar to help you learn about the ministries of this fund. Place your bank in a central location and put your loose change in daily. Encourage children to give from their allowance. During Holy Week, bring your offering to one of the worship services or mail a check to the church office.

**Weekly Devotional Activities:**

**February 22, 2023—Ash Wednesday: Ashes**

* Candle cross: Light all seven candles. Say a short prayer, such as “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” and extinguish one candle.
* See the enclosed Ash Wednesday activity sheet.
* If you can, attend the Ash Wednesday service on February 22 at 6:30 p.m.

**February 26, 2023—First Sunday in Lent: Alleluia Banner**

* Candle cross: Light six candles. Say a short prayer, such as “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” and extinguish one candle.
* Many congregations discontinue singing and saying Alleluia during Lent. Because Lent is a time of repentance and sorrow, we refrain from rejoicing. Color the enclosed Alleluia banner. Have the youngest member of the household (with the help of an adult) hide the banner to be retrieved on Easter morning.

**March 5, 2023—Second Sunday in Lent: Sand**

* Candle cross: Light five candles. Say a short prayer, such as “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” and extinguish one candle.
* Jesus went into the desert for 40 days, where he was tempted to deny God and his calling. As you hold a bag of sand or pass it around the table, talk about a time when you felt drawn to do something wrong. What did you do? Was it the right choice? How did your choice make you feel?
* Use the “What Is Lent?” activity sheet to discuss Lent with your family.

**March 12, 2023—Third Sunday in Lent: Rock**

* Candle cross: Light four candles. Say a short prayer, such as “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” and extinguish one candle.
* Jesus was tempted to turn rocks into bread. He didn’t do it, not because he couldn’t, but because it would have been self-serving and against God’s will. Later, Jesus would multiply a few loaves into enough to feed thousands of people. Have you ever had the opportunity to feed someone in need? Why did you do it? How did it make you feel? How can you provide food for another person this week? Make this a family project.
* Paint an image on a rock and place it with your centerpiece. (Some ideas: cross, flower, butterfly, palm branch.) While you’re painting, reflect on God’s creativity in making the world. What about creation are you most grateful for?

**March 19, 2023—Fourth Sunday in Lent: Bodies**

* Candle cross: Light three candles. Say a short prayer, such as “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” and extinguish one candle.
* Jesus felt the same feelings that we feel. He was tempted to disobey God just like we are. His body hurt like ours do. Jesus gave himself, body and all, so that we could receive forgiveness and have eternal life. Think about your own body. How is your body feeling right now? Think about someone you know whose body is hurting or who feels sick, lonely, or isolated. Send them a card or message letting them know that you are thinking of them and praying for their well-being. You may want to make the card yourself or draw a picture to send them.

**March 26, 2023—Fifth Sunday in Lent: Candle**

* Candle cross: Light two candles. Say a short prayer, such as “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” and extinguish one candle.
* Lent begins in the dimness of late winter and ends with the burst of bright spring. Jesus is, according to John’s Gospel, "The Light of the World." In Matthew’s gospel, Jesus says to his disciples: "You are the light of the world. Don’t be hiding under some bushel basket." With only one candle remaining, think about and discuss how you can be the light to the world.  Where do you shine? How do you keep your light lit? How can you share the light of Christ with others?

**April 2, 2023—Palm/Passion Sunday: Palm Cross**

* Candle cross: Light one candle. Say a short prayer, such as “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” and extinguish one candle.
* Use palm strip(s) to create a palm cross. View instructions here: <https://youtu.be/qJ2vFOqyzes>. Place the cross(es) in a prominent place to remind you of Jesus’ triumphal entry and his death on the cross, perhaps with the candles on your centerpiece.
* Attend worship together. After worship discuss what makes Palm/Passion Sunday different from other worship experiences? What did you do in service that you do not usually do? Why are palm branches a part of the service?
* Use Palm Leaf Pattern activity sheet to make your own palm branch out of construction paper.

**April 3, 4, 5, 2023—Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday of HOLY WEEK**

Each day read one of Jesus’ parables. Discuss with your family what Jesus was teaching us about caring for one another. End the discussion by saying the Lord’s Prayer together.

Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-8) Parable of a Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:5-13)

Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:3-7) Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10)

Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:9-32). Parable of the Two Debtors (Luke 7:36-50)
Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21)
Parable of The Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-24) Parable of The Obedient Servant (Luke 17:7-10)
Parable of The Judge and Widow (Luke 18:1-8) Parable of The Camel and Needle (Luke 18:18-30)
Parable of The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14)

**April 6, 2023—Maundy Thursday: Bread**

* Candle cross: Cover the cross with a black cloth.
* Bake a simple no-yeast loaf of bread together. This video shows a simple recipe: <https://youtu.be/Xlno2ApeD5g> ([No Yeast] 2 MINUTES INTO OVEN)
* Once the bread is done, read Luke 22:7-20, the story of the Last Supper. Young children may have trouble understanding that the bread and wine represent Jesus’ body and blood. Ask: What is happening in this story? What do you think Jesus means when he says this is my body and my blood? (Listen to children’s ideas without trying to correct or guide.)
* Attend the Maundy Thursday worship service together.
* At the end of the evening cover the cross centerpiece with black cloth. All candles should be extinguished by this time.

**April 7, 2023—Good Friday: Calvary**

* Use instructions on the paper plate crosses activity sheet to make Calvary crosses.
* For youth and adults, write in your own words or create a skit or poem of Luke 23:1-56. For young children, read the story from a children’s Bible.
* Attend the Good Friday worship service together.

**April 8, 2023—Holy Saturday: Bread**

Make hot cross buns to eat on Easter Sunday. (Recipe: [hot-cross-buns-recipe](https://www.kingarthurbaking.com/recipes/easy-hot-cross-buns-recipe))

**April 9, 2023—EASTER: Alleluia!**

* CELEBRATE!
* Candle cross: Replace the purple and black cloths with a white cloth and light all the candles, saying “He is risen. Christ is risen indeed.”
* Invite the family to search for the Alleluia banner. If they cannot find it, let the youngest child retrieve it. Celebrate by shouting or singing Alleluia. (Another option: find a video of Handel’s *Hallelujah Chorus* to play after the banner is located.)
* Enjoy the hot cross buns along with your favorite breakfast and other Easter traditions.
* Attend Easter services at Crescent Hill Presbyterian Church.