



Lent IN A BAG

Visual props for Reflection

Lent is a season when many of us make a special focus on enhancing our relationship with God. It is a journey – through ups and downs just as Jesus experienced during his time on earth. We remember Jesus' life, ministry and death during this season. It is a time to think about how God is with us all the time. It is also a time to look at our own lives and draw closer to God. We do this through prayer, meditation, reading, exploring nature, fellowship, outreach – anything that connects you to God is a great practice.

Lent in a Bag equips you with symbols of the season of Lent to help you have prayer and/or conversation at home. Each week we will give you a devotion that focuses on one of the symbols in the bag. Questions are intended to start conversation. Use whatever version of the bible passages you like. Use these props and devotions during your weekly Lenten meditation as you journey with Jesus to the cross.

Ash Wednesday

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday when we are marked with the cross of Christ and hear “You are dust and to dust you shall return.” (Genesis 3:19)

Lent makes us mindful that our bodies are fragile but our souls can be made strong. Lent gives us a new chance to nourish our souls and discipline our bodies.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

Are you giving up something in order to discipline your body?

Are you taking something on in order to nourish your soul?

This Lent, how will you receive the gift of eternal life?

Words from Scripture and Book of Common Prayer:

“We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 6:9-11)

“Discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore, lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.” (Hebrews 12:11-12)

“You only are immortal, the creator and maker of mankind; and we are mortal, formed of the earth, and to earth shall we return. For so did you ordain when you created me, saying, “You are dust, and to dust you shall return.” All of us go down to dust; yet even at the grave we make our song: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.”

Lent – Week 1 – Sand

Jesus went into the desert for 40 days to be “tested”. The desert is a dangerous place and Jesus was hungry, cold and tired. He was also tempted and tormented, but he didn’t give up.

The “tests” that Jesus faced in the desert can be equated as the temptation to power, to pride and to possessions. Lent has traditionally been understood as a “desert time,” in which we seek the grace to confront sin and overcome temptation in ourselves and the world around us.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

When things get tough, how do you remember God is always there for you?

What constitutes the wilderness in your life?

What have you learned there? What might you learn there?

When are you tempted toward pride, power and possession?

When is it hardest for you to resist temptation? easiest?

This week, be mindful of the ways you experience and resist temptation.

Words from Scripture:

Read the story of Jesus wandering in the desert – Luke 4; Matthew 4; Mark 1.

Touch the sand inside the bag and think about what it was like for Jesus in the wilderness.

“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.” (Luke 4:1-2a)

“Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the

heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:14-15)

“Blessed is anyone who endures temptation... No one, when tempted, should say, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one. But one is tempted by one’s own desire, being lured and enticed by it; then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death. Do not be deceived, my beloved.” (James 1:12-16)

Lent – Week 2 – Rock

While in the wilderness, Jesus was invited to transform stone into bread. He knew he was not called to do this by God so he didn’t change that rock into food. Later, Jesus became known for doing amazing things. Jesus fed people who were hungry for food, or for love, or for a word of encouragement, or for simple acceptance.

When you are sad or angry, it may feel like your heart has become a rock. Jesus may have felt this way too but he always showed love for the people around him. Jesus can change your heart too! He is always with you to help you through the difficult situations of life.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

Is there a place in your life where you could make better choices?

What attitude or habit could you change so it becomes a gift for you and for others?

How can you help someone who has a “rock” in their heart?

How does it feel to help others?

This week, think about a time when you helped someone.

Words from Scripture:

Read the story of Zacchaeus – Luke 19:1-10.

Jesus transforms Zacchaeus. Jesus transforms us and helps us make better choices. Hold the rock in your hand and think about the choices you have made.

“Then Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.” (Luke 19:9-10)

“The tempter came and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.’ But he answered, ‘It is written, “One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”’ (Matthew 4:3-4)

“Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. No one, when tempted, should say, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one. But one is tempted by one’s own desire, being lured and enticed by it; then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death. Do not be deceived, my beloved.” (James 1:12-16)

Lent – Week 3 – Shell

The sea shell, especially a scallop shell, is an ancient symbol of baptism. Lent began as a time to teach new Christians about the meaning of their Christian faith before they were baptized at Easter. Now that Christianity is an established religion, Lent has become a focused time to practice our faith as baptized people of God.

Jesus began his ministry after his baptism. When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, God spoke to him and said, “You are my beloved Son.” In baptism we also are received as God’s beloved sons and daughters, cleansed of sin and risen with Christ to newness of life.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

Do you remember your baptism? What have others told you about your baptism?

What does being baptized mean to you?

What difference does your baptism make in your life day to day?

How are you living out the promises made at your Baptism?

This week, share memories of your or your child's baptism.

Words from Scripture, Book of Common Prayer, ELW:

Read the story of Jesus' baptism – Luke 3:21-22

Touch the shell to remember your baptism.

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything...” (Philippians 4:4-5)

“Grant, O Lord, that all who are baptized into the death of Jesus Christ your Son may live in the power of his resurrection and look for him to come again in glory; who lives and reigns now and forever. Amen.” (Book of Common Prayer page 306)

“When you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.” (Colossians 2:12)

“You have made public profession of your faith. Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you at holy baptism: to live among God's faithful people, to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper, to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?” (ELW Affirmation of Baptism)

Lent – Week 4 – Human Figure

Because Jesus was fully human, as we confess in our creed, he understands us from inside our skin and knows from experience that we are each capable of great and Godly things. No matter what we do, Jesus keeps on inviting us to join in his work in the world. Jesus' work has become ours. Jesus knows we can do good things on earth, just as he did.

As Jesus' disciples, we are ministers of the gospel. The 40 days of Lent give us time to slow us down so that we can focus on this core purpose of our lives. As you go through this Lenten journey, think about what you can do to more closely reflect Christ who lives in and through you.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

What can you do to be more like Jesus at home? At school?

At work? Everywhere? How can you live like Jesus?

This week, share how have you been a witness for Jesus.

...by coming to worship and partaking of the Eucharist

...by serving your family and others in need

...by being a friend to someone who is lonely

...by sharing your faith story with someone who doesn't know Jesus

Words from Scripture and ELW:

Read the story of Jesus washing the disciple's feet – John 13:1- 17. Hold the clothespin figure in your hand and think about Jesus as a real human, just like you.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of

activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

“As you bring your children to receive the gift of baptism, you are entrusted with responsibilities: to live with them among God’s faithful people, bring them to the word of God and the holy supper, teach them the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments, place in their hands the Holy Scriptures, and nurture them in faith and prayer, so that your children may learn to trust God, proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and work for justice and peace.” (ELW Baptismal Promises page 228)

Lent – Week 5 – Seeds/Butterfly

The transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly or seeds into a flower is amazing. It reminds us of the miracle of hope and transformation that is coming in the promise of Easter.

The seeds change; they decay as they transform into a new life – a new life that we can’t really imagine when we plant the seeds. The caterpillar goes through a transformation to become a beautiful butterfly – another change that is hard to imagine until it happens.

The miracle of Jesus death on the cross and resurrection gives us hope and new life. When we put our hope and trust in Jesus, amazing things can and will happen. Jesus can and does transform lives.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

Where is there hope in your life?

Where is there mystery?

What things can you think of that change?

This week, describe a time Jesus gave you hope.

Words from Scripture and ELW:

Read the Parables of Jesus (Matthew 13)

Plant your “butterfly” seeds – either in the garden outside or in a small cup of dirt inside.

“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see everything has become new!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

“Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4)

“I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.” (ELW Apostles Creed)

Lent – Week 6 – Candle

Lent begins in the dimness of late winter and ends with the burst of bright spring. Spring is a time where we think of sunshine and flowers blooming.

Lent is a time to shed light on our lives, our habits, and to let God’s presence be known. It is a spring cleaning of the soul - we open up our dark corners and are renewed.

Jesus is, according to John’s gospel, the ‘Light of the world’. That light shined brightly in the disciples who chose to follow Jesus. Jesus instructs us to be a light too and make a difference – ‘You are the light of the world. Don’t be hiding under some bushel basket.’

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

Where do you shine in the world?

How do you keep your light lit?

How can you help “light” others “candles”?

How can you encourage someone to see the good in themselves?

This week, share how you have let your light shine.

Words from Scripture:

Read Jesus Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:1-16.

Sing the song This Little Light of Mine and light your candle.

“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16)

“[Jesus said,] ‘I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness...’” (John 12:46)

“This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” (1 John 1:5-7)

Holy Week & Easter - Cross

Lent is a 40 day journey to the cross. The cross is a both a sign of crucifixion AND of resurrection.

The stories of Holy Week complete our journey to the cross. We see Jesus eating a meal with his friends on Maundy Thursday. Then we move into the events of Good Friday – Jesus’ betrayal by Judas, his denial by Peter, his trial before Pilate, and finally his crucifixion on the cross. Holy Saturday is when we remember Jesus descending to the dead. And finally, Easter when we joyously proclaim “Christ is risen!”

It is said that one long worship service begins Thursday evening and ends Sunday morning ... with breaks for resting, working, eating. It makes sense that we would remember, mourn and rejoice for three whole days because Easter is the most important holiday in the Christian faith. It is a time when mourning turns into dancing and sorrow into joy.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

What did you discover about yourself on your journey through Lent?

What is the hardest part for you about Holy Week?

Why? What is your favorite part of Holy Week? Why?

This week, describe a time you felt renewed.

Words from Scripture:

Read the events of Holy Week and the resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 26-28). Hold the cross in your hand and think about Jesus death and resurrection.

“I am the resurrection and the life.” (John 11: 25)

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8)

“And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

