

# LENT

at home

---

2021 worship guide

---





# Table of contents

What is Lent?.....	1
Ash Wednesday At Home.....	2
Lenten Weekly Ritual.....	4
Holy Week At Home.....	6
Maundy Thursday Rituals.....	7
Good Friday.....	8
Easter Sunday Ritual.....	9

---

This material may be reproduced and adapted by Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA congregations free of charge. If making changes, please add an explanatory note to acknowledge adaptations and credit those who made the changes.

We would love to hear how you are using this material, and we are interested in your suggestions for making it more useful and accessible. Please write to Shana Peachey Boshart at [shanapb@mennoniteusa.org](mailto:shanapb@mennoniteusa.org).

Written by Talashia Keim Yoder  
Edited by Shana Peachey Boshart and Camille Dager  
Illustrated and designed by Erin Ramer

**Lent At Home 2021**  
February 17 to April 4, 2021

© Mennonite Church USA  
Contact: Shana Peachey Boshart, denominational minister for faith formation,  
Mennonite Church USA  
P: 319-936-5905 E: [shanapb@mennoniteusa.org](mailto:shanapb@mennoniteusa.org)  
W: [www.MennoniteUSA.org/FF](http://www.MennoniteUSA.org/FF)





# what is Lent?

Lent prepares us for Easter, as Advent prepares us for Christmas. It is a time to:

- Focus on the life and work of Jesus.
- Clean out our lives and make room for hearing and responding to Jesus' call to us.
- Think about our response to the call to follow.
- Confess what stands in our way of responding to God's call.
- Practice humility, confessing our human limitations and our need for God.
- Make space for God to lift us up!

**Lent is when we walk with Jesus all the way to the cross.**

## Lent Rhythm

1. February 17: Begin with the Ash Wednesday ritual. This will help your household step fully into the Lenten journey.
2. February 17 through March 27: Read weekly Bible stories and do a weekly or daily candle ritual.
3. March 28 through April 3: Observe Holy Week with daily stories and a Maundy Thursday ritual.
4. April 4: Celebrate Easter Sunday with a sunrise ritual and other activities you choose.

## Weekly or Daily Candle Ritual

Create a centerpiece of seven candles. Traditionally, this is six purple candles and one white candle, but it can be whatever colors you like! Each week, you will light one fewer candle.

### Tips:

- You may want to light these candles as you eat together or do another quiet activity that your household enjoys and is sustainable for the weeks of Lent.
- If you are doing the candle ritual daily, you may choose to read the story every day or once during the week.

## You Will Need:

- Your Bible (Households with younger children may want to read from the *Shine On* story Bible.)
- A centerpiece of seven candles
- Matches or lighter

## Extra Ideas:

- Weekly Lenten meals. There are many ways to do this. Some possibilities:
  - a. Cook the meal together, or invite someone over to cook, eat and worship with you.
  - b. Make more than what your household needs, and share it with someone else.
  - c. Have company.
  - d. Be intentional in one meal each week about going easy on the planet.
  - e. Make an inexpensive meal, and donate the money saved.
- Clean out and make space: Choose one project for each week. Do a literal cleaning out of your fridge, freezer, junk drawer, keepsakes box, clothing, books, etc.
- Read all four Gospels during Lent. If you're feeling ambitious, read a full Gospel in one sitting, once a week.
- Fasting. This tradition works well if done intentionally. Every time you want that thing you have given up for Lent, say a prayer. Remember, Sundays are little Easters, so fasts don't apply to Sundays during Lent.



# Ash Wednesday at Home

Note that this simple ritual can easily be adapted for a corporate setting. In fact, it is based on an all-age Ash Wednesday service from College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Indiana.

## What is Ash Wednesday?

- Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent.
  - We confess our humanity. We are humans, not gods.
  - That means we miss the mark. We hurt others. We break relationships.
  - And being human means we are created by God, in the image of God. It means God sticks with us.
  - Being human means we are an integral part of creation, created to live in community with God, ourselves, others and all of creation.
- To be human means to be deeply connected with God's sustaining creation – with the water that cleanses and renews us, the fire that refines and comforts us, the wind that moves us, and the earth from which we come and is our life source.

**On Ash Wednesday, we dig deep and start to discover what it is that keeps us from being our best human selves.**

# Ash Wednesday Ritual

## Prepare for the Household Ritual

### Ashes

- Traditionally, we burn the palm branches from the previous Palm Sunday, but you can burn any organic material to make your ashes.
- Mix them with a bit of oil (olive oil is great) to help them stick together. This may be a fun household project!

### Stations

- Earth: A container with some soil (preferably good, rich soil!) and a towel to wipe off hands
- Fire: A "Christ candle" (maybe use your candle from Advent) and enough other candles with candle holders for every member of your household
- Water: A bowl of water large enough to put hands in and a towel
- Air: A bottle of bubbles and bubble wands
- Print out the Scripture passages and the reflection and action instructions for each station if you want the stations to be self-guided. Otherwise, you can just read these for each station.

## Do the Ritual Together

**Introduction:** Introduce the ritual by explaining the meaning of Ash Wednesday. You could read through all of "What is Ash Wednesday," or choose points from it that are most helpful for your household. You may want to play this Ash Wednesday playlist (<https://spotify.fi/37kVXbv>) softly in the background (Free Spotify account required).

**Imposition of Ashes:** Anoint each other's foreheads (or your own forehead) with ashes in the shape of a cross. Speak the words, "From dust we come, and to dust we will return." Genesis 3:19

**Explore Your Humanity:** You may want to do each thing as a household, or let everyone explore at their own pace. Very young children will probably need to partner with a grown-up. There is an option for a (very simplified) reflection for young children.

### Earth

- Scripture:

- Genesis 2:7
- Genesis 2:9
- Genesis 2:19
- Ecclesiastes 3:19-20

- Reflection and Action:

- We come from good soil that has been shaped and brought to life by God. And we will return to the soil.
- Put your hands in the soil. Touch it. Smell it. Look at it closely.
- God has taken great care to create you from good soil. God has taken great care to create everyone from good soil. God has taken great care in creating all living things from good soil. God takes great care as soil receives death and decay. And what remains is good soil, ready for God to use, again and again.
- For young children: "Like things grow in this good soil, the love of Jesus grows in me." Explore the soil.

### Fire

- Scripture: John 8:12

- Reflection and Action:

- Light a small candle from the Christ candle.
- Reflect on the ways that the light of Christ provides direction, comfort and challenge in your life.
- Sit (or stand) with the light, inviting an awareness of God's presence with you.
- Pray for courage to face whatever lies before you and to walk in the ways revealed to you by the Light of the World, Jesus Christ. Leave your lit candle in the candle holder as a sign of hope and courage.
- For young children: "Jesus, show me your way." Light a candle.

### Air

- Scripture: Psalm 104:3-4

- Reflection and Action:

- The Holy Spirit can be a gentle breeze that lightly lifts a fallen leaf or a rushing wind that rearranges the world. The Spirit moves around us and through us, connecting us in our very human form to our Creator.
- Blow some bubbles, and as you do, notice the way your breath helps to create them. Observe the different kinds of bubbles that form when you blow with a gentle breath or with a stronger breath.
- Imagine the Holy Spirit creating in you the way that your breath creates the bubbles.
- For young children: "Jesus gives me life and makes me move." Blow bubbles.

### Optional Prayer of

**Confession:** Holy God, we confess our humanity, our attachment to earthly treasures, our hypocrisy and hidden idols. Forgive us. We confess our dependence on you, our need for your Holy Spirit, our need for your gifts of earth, air, wind, fire and water, our interdependence with your creation. Grant us peace and mercy to let go of all that keeps us from you. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

## Water

- Scripture: Psalm 51:10-12
- Reflection and Action:
- We can think of Lent as “spring cleaning.” Just as we clean our houses in preparation for a visit from a special guest, we take time to examine our lives in preparation for our encounter with the risen Christ at Easter.
- Dip your hands into the water in the bowl, then wipe them dry on the towel provided.
- Reflect on what your life could look and feel like, thoroughly rinsed with God’s love.
- For young children: “Jesus, make me clean.” Wash your hands.

**Closing:** From the *adamah* (soil) of the earth, God shaped us and breathed life into us. Nothing separates us from the love of God. One day, we will all return to the earth from which we’ve been made, fed, nurtured and sustained, and out of which new life comes. What a glorious circle of life!

Ashes to ashes.

Dust to dust.

Life to life.

Love to love.



# Lenten weekly ritual

## Week 1, Beginning February 17

### Candle Ritual

1. Light all seven candles.
2. Read the weekly story: The Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7. *Shine On* pages 194-203.
3. Pray: Creator God, we confess that we are humans, created in your image yet often missing the mark. Holy Spirit, blow your wind through us and show us the corners that need to be cleared out to make room for you. Jesus, stay by our sides as we walk with you. Amen. Or make up your own prayer, or have free prayers.
4. Blow the candles out.

## Week 2, Beginning February 21

### Candle Ritual

1. Light six candles.
2. Read the weekly story: Jesus Calms the Storm, Matthew 14:22-33. *Shine On* page 212.
3. Pray: Creator God, we confess that we are humans, created in your image yet often missing the mark. Holy Spirit, blow your wind through us and show us the corners that need to be cleared out to make room for you. Jesus, stay by our sides as we walk with you. Amen. *Or make up your own prayer, or have free prayers.*
4. Blow the candles out.

### **Week 3, Beginning February 28**

#### **Candle Ritual**

1. Light five candles.
2. Read the weekly story: Feeding of the Multitude, Mark 6:30-44 and Mark 8:1-10 (read both and notice the differences between them!) *Shine On* has a similar story on page 210.
3. Pray: Creator God, we confess that we are humans, created in your image yet often missing the mark. Holy Spirit, blow your wind through us and show us the corners that need to be cleared out to make room for you. Jesus, stay by our sides as we walk with you. Amen. *Or make up your own prayer, or have free prayers.*
4. Blow the candles out.

### **Week 4, Beginning March 7**

#### **Candle Ritual**

1. Light four candles.
2. Read the weekly story: Jesus Blesses the Children, Matthew 19:13-15 and Mark 10:13-16. *Shine On* page 238.
3. Pray: Creator God, we confess that we are humans, created in your image yet often missing the mark. Holy Spirit, blow your wind through us and show us the corners that need to be cleared out to make room for you. Jesus, stay by our sides as we walk with you. Amen. *Or make up your own prayer, or have free prayers.*
4. Blow the candles out.

### **Week 5, Beginning March 14**

#### **Candle Ritual**

1. Light three candles.
2. Read the weekly story: The Greatest Commandment and the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37. *Shine On* page 223.
3. Pray: Creator God, we confess that we are humans, created in your image yet often missing the mark. Holy Spirit, blow your wind through us and show us the corners that need to be cleared out to make room for you. Jesus, stay by our sides as we walk with you. Amen. *Or make up your own prayer, or have free prayers.*
4. Blow the candles out.

### **Week 6, Beginning March 21**

#### **Candle Ritual**

1. Light two candles.
2. Read the weekly story: Mary and Martha, Luke 10:38-42. *Shine On* page 224.
3. Pray: Creator God, we confess that we are humans, created in your image yet often missing the mark. Holy Spirit, blow your wind through us and show us the corners that need to be cleared out to make room for you. Jesus, stay by our sides as we walk with you. Amen. *Or make up your own prayer, or have free prayers.*
4. Blow the candles out.

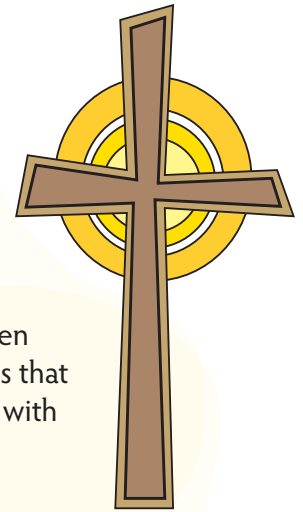


# holy week at home

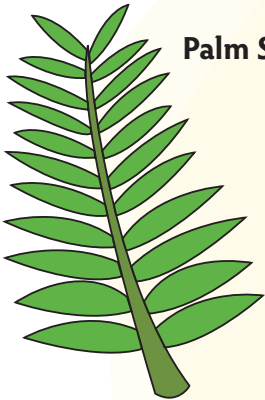
## Week 7, March 28

### Daily or Weekly Candle Ritual

1. Light one candle (the white one, if you're using purple and white).
2. Read the daily story. See below for the daily prompts.
3. Pray: Creator God, we confess that we are humans, created in your image yet often missing the mark. Holy Spirit, blow your wind through us and show us the corners that need to be cleared out to make room for you. Jesus, stay by our sides as we walk with you. Amen. *Or make up your own prayer, or have free prayers.*
4. Blow the candles out.



## daily stories and activities for holy week



### Palm Sunday, March 28

- Story Prompt: Read Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-40. *Shine On* page 249. Notice the differences and similarities in the telling of the Triumphal Entry.
- Activity Prompt: Hosanna parade
  - Make or find your own palm branch. Use a branch from a tree growing where you live, or create one out of fabric or paper.
  - Do your own palm processional around your home – or take it outside and give the neighbors something to talk about!

### Monday, March 29

- Story Prompt: Read Matthew 21:12-13 and John 7:53-8:11. *Shine On* pages 250 and 252. These stories include anger and condemnation. Notice Jesus' behavior in both situations.
- Activity Prompt: Create art out of stones or rocks. Turn what could be a tool of violence into a thing of beauty.

### Tuesday, March 30

- Story Prompt: Read Mark 12:41-44. *Shine On* page 257. We often read this as Jesus saying we should give all we have like the widow did. But another interpretation is that Jesus was saying a system that required her to give all she had while others only gave a little of their abundance is a corrupt system. What do you think?
- Activity Prompt: Give something away.

### Wednesday, March 31

- Story Prompt: Read Matthew 25:31-46. *Shine On* page 258. How does it change the way you look at the people around you if you see them as Jesus?
- Activity Prompt: Open your eyes to Jesus around you. Feed, clothe, safely visit, or welcome someone.

### Maundy Thursday, April 1

- If you want to do the full Maundy Thursday Rituals of foot washing and Seder meal, follow the instructions under that heading below. If you choose only to light your candle, pray and read the scriptures, the scriptures are given here for you.
- Foot washing Story Prompt: Read John 13:3-20. *Shine On* page 260.
  - Seder Meal Story Prompt: Read Exodus 12:21-27. *Shine On* page 4



# Maundy Thursday Rituals

## Foot Washing

Before the Passover meal with his disciples, Jesus washed their feet. He told them that they should also serve each other in this way, so we do it to remember together Jesus' example.

1. Read John 13:3-20 or *Shine On* page 260.
2. Wash the feet (or hands) of others in your household. If you are alone in your house, consider choosing a different act of service.

## Seder Meal

*At the "last supper," Jesus and his disciples were celebrating Passover. Celebrate this makeshift Passover meal in your home. This simplified ritual takes you through the main parts of the meal and weaves the gospel story into it.*

1. Gather the symbols of the meal:
  - a. Matzo (or crackers)
  - b. Greens (Parsley is traditional, but lettuce, celery or any other herb works fine.)
  - c. Hard-boiled or roasted eggs
  - d. Horseradish
  - e. Salt water
  - f. Applesauce (to be more authentic, add some nuts and cinnamon to it)
  - g. A piece of roasted meat (not pork!)
  - h. Grape juice
2. Prepare the plates: Put a small amount of each food item, except matzo, on a plate for each member of your family. Give each person a small bowl of salt water.
3. Hide a piece of matzo. Traditionally, this is hidden in a special cloth, like a napkin, in the middle of the table. You could also riff on the tradition and hide it wherever you like!
4. Read Exodus 12:21-27 and/or this summary story:

Then a Pharaoh came to power who didn't know the story of Joseph. The people, now called Hebrews, were put into slavery. Life was very hard for them. Because there were a lot of them, the Pharaoh was afraid of them and ordered that every baby boy born to them should be killed. A baby named Moses was born to a Hebrew woman named Jochebed. With the help of her daughter Miriam, Jochebed saved Moses, who was raised by an Egyptian princess. Even though Moses grew up in privilege, he sympathized with his people.

One day, Moses became so angry at the unjust way he saw a fellow Hebrew being treated that he lost his temper and killed an Egyptian. He fled Egypt, and, in the land of Midian, he married a woman named Zipporah. While there, he heard God calling him to go back to Egypt and free God's people.

With his brother Aaron, he asked the Pharaoh to free the Israelites. The Pharaoh refused. So, God performed signs and wonders to show the people the might of God. The Pharaoh was stubborn for nine signs and wonders, but the tenth was a plague that finally broke his will: Every Egyptian firstborn died. Finally, Pharaoh let the people go.

They set out in a hurry toward the Red Sea. The waters parted so that they could cross on dry land. When Pharaoh's army followed them into the Red Sea, the water flowed back again and covered the army of Pharaoh.

This is the story of God's saving act of emancipation that we celebrate in this Passover meal.



5. Eat the food together, explaining each element as you eat it.
  - a. Dip some of the **greens** in the salt water and eat them. God's people were crying, because others were not being kind to them. This salt water reminds us of their tears. The greens are like the people of God – they taste good as they are, but if they are left in the ground for too long, they become bitter. God's people were like that. They were becoming bitter because they didn't know God was listening to them. We eat this to remember that the people of God were crying out for God's help.
  - b. Break the **matzo** or crackers. Hide part of it in a napkin in the middle of the table.
  - c. Eat some of the matzo. God heard the people's cry for help, and they had to escape in the middle of the night. That meant their bread didn't have time to rise, so it was hard like this "bread" we're eating.
  - d. Eat some **applesauce**. The people of God had to work very hard to make big buildings for the people who weren't being kind to them. This applesauce reminds us of the mortar they used to build the buildings.
  - e. Dip some matzo or greens in **horseradish** and eat it. We call that a bitter taste. Being in slavery was bitter for the people of God. They needed help.
  - f. Eat the **meat and egg** (and finish other elements of the meal that haven't been eaten yet). The egg reminds us of the offerings that people brought to the temple to thank God for saving them. The meat reminds us of the lamb that the families butchered and the blood they put on their door frames so the spirit of God would pass over their houses.
6. Pour some **grape juice** for each person at the table. In a Passover meal, there are several cups of wine to remind us of God the creator, God's redemption, and God's call on us to also be liberators. Luke 22:17 says, "Jesus took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves, for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.'" Drink your grape juice.
7. Determine who the youngest person at your table is. This person gets to find the hidden piece of matzo, which represents the Messiah. He or she breaks it and gives a small piece to each person at the table. Luke 22:19 says, "Jesus 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.'" Eat your matzo.

### Closing Words

We have remembered God's act of salvation in the story of the Exodus. We have remembered that God is a God of justice and mercy. We have remembered the meal Jesus shared with his disciples and his service to them as he prepared for what he knew was to come. We now continue in Holy Week, moving toward Jesus' death, which we can remember on Good Friday tomorrow. And on Sunday, we will emerge from the depths into new life.

### Prayer

God, we cried to you, "Hosanna, save us!" You answered in ways we did not expect. Walk with us in this journey of your passion. Lead us to live out your new covenant in all that we do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### Good Friday, April 2

Story Prompt: Read Matthew 26:36-27:54 or *Shine On* page 267.

Activity Prompt: Blow out your final Lent candle. "Shroud" it (cover it with a cloth), and say, "It is finished."

### Saturday, April 3

Story Prompt: Read Matthew 27:55-66 or *Shine On* page 269.

Activity Prompt: When Jesus died, the light of the world went out. Don't turn on any lights today.



# Easter Sunday Ritual

## Here Comes the Sun (a sunrise ritual)

- Wake up just before dawn. Check to see what time sunrise is in your area, and get your household up 10-15 minutes before sunrise.
- Grab your Bible, bundle up, and go outside. If you aren't able to go outside where you live, go to an east-facing window.
- Turn on the Easter morning playlist (<https://spoti.fi/3adic4Q>) and watch for the sunrise.
- Read John 20:1-18 as the sun comes up. Read it a couple of times, maybe taking turns reading it or acting out the story. This story is on page 270 of the *Shine On* story Bible, but it would be good to read it at least once from the book of John!
- Celebrate! Make some noise, sing a song, dance, run laps around your yard. Get silly and joyful in whatever way works for you!
- When you go back inside, take the shroud off your candles and light them. Turn on the lights in the house.

## Other Ideas for Easter Sunday Activities

- Go on a "new life" treasure hunt around your yard. Take pictures or field notes, or draw the signs of new life you see.
- Taste of Easter: Here are a few ideas of things you can eat today in your celebration.
  - Resurrection Rolls: As you make these, tell the story of Jesus' body being prepared for burial, then placed in a tomb. When they come out of the oven, marvel at the empty tomb. Here is a recipe ([apinchofjoy.com/2012/04/resurrection-rolls/](http://apinchofjoy.com/2012/04/resurrection-rolls/)) using store-bought dough, but you can also make them with regular homemade bread dough.
  - Eggs: Eggs are a symbol of fertility, but Christian tradition also sees them as a symbol of new life.
  - Look up "Easter food" on Wikipedia ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter\\_food](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter_food)) to find all kinds of Easter foods from around the world!