



SEEKING

GOD'S WAY

A Lenten Journey

2022 Worship Guide



Mennonite
Church
USA





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Lent At Home 2022
March 2 to April 17, 2022





Seeking God's Ways

When Jesus told stories, he would often present a story or a character people already knew, then change it in an unexpected way. When he taught, he tended to say, "You have heard...and yes, that's true, but also this..." He would often take what the people already knew and spiral it a little deeper, revealing a whole new layer of truth.

When we take time to study and ponder the teachings of Jesus today, we find that Jesus still takes what we think we know and gives it a twist. This year's theme, developed by the writers of the Leader magazine's worship resources, encourages us to take an open-minded and courageous look at Scripture. As we seek God's ways, we will discover the twists, turns, flips and deepening that Jesus can bring to what we think we know. On this Lenten journey, your household is invited to seek God's ways together.

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.
- Come into alignment with the call of Jesus.
- Make space for God to lift us up!

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

Lent Rhythm

1. March 2: Begin with the Ash Wednesday ritual. This will help your household step fully into the Lenten journey.
2. March 2 through April 13: Daily candle and calendar ritual (or do the weekly option).
3. April 14 through April 16: Observe Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday with simple rituals.
4. April 17: Celebrate Easter Sunday with a sunrise ritual and other activities you choose.



Prepare Ahead

1. Create a centerpiece with seven candles. Traditionally, you would use six purple candles and one white candle, but it's okay to use whatever you have on hand. You will light one fewer candle each week. You will also add a new symbol to your centerpiece each week.
2. Print the Lenten calendar and place it wherever you'll be doing your daily ritual. You may want to print copies for each member of the household and laminate them, then use them as placemats for the season of Lent. Alternatives to printing the calendar are printing pages 5-7 from this worship guide, or reading these pages from a tablet or phone.
3. Create your weekly Lenten boxes by placing each week's symbols in their own small boxes that can close. Wrap them if you like. Depending on your household situation, you may want to skip the boxing part of this and simply gather the symbols for each week.
 - Week 2 symbols: stone, grain
 - Week 3 symbol: feather
 - Week 4 symbols: garden tool or natural fertilizer, such as small bag of worm castings or good soil
 - Week 5 symbol: something to represent a banquet, such as a goblet or fancy napkin
 - Week 6 symbol: empty perfume jar or small bottle to represent the perfume of the woman who anointed Jesus
 - Week 7 symbol: a branch from a bush or tree or a paper palm branch
4. Look over the Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday rituals and think about which of these you would like to do. Note what you might want to do to prepare ahead of time.

The Daily Ritual

Choose a time of day that will work well for your household. Supper time and bedtime are common choices. At this regular time of day, you'll gather around your centerpiece with your calendar.

1. Light the candles.
2. Follow the prompt on your Lenten calendar.
3. What does the week's Lenten symbol have to do with today's prompt? Sometimes this will be obvious, and sometimes you'll have to stretch a little to find a connection.
4. Close your time together with a prayer. On your calendar, you'll find a prayer suggestion for each week, or you can do it your own way!
5. Blow out your candles.

It is absolutely okay to change around the prompts during the week (such as doing Monday's prompt on Thursday). Some of the prompts are more activity-oriented and may need to be moved to fit your household's schedule.

Weekly Option

A daily ritual may not feel like a good option for your household. If you'd like to focus your time on one day per week, here's one way to do that.

1. Light the candles.
2. Do the Monday prompt from your calendar.
3. If you like, check through the other prompts for the week and choose one or two to do in addition to Monday's prompt.
4. Pray, using the weekly prayer suggestion or your own way.
5. Blow out your candles.

Ash Wednesday Ritual

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.

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.

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 pitcher of water and some small cups.
- 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://spoti.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, 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 in creating all living things from good soil. And God takes great care as soil receives death and decay. 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.

Air

- Scripture: Joel 2:28-29
- 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. What dreams and visions might the Holy Spirit be stirring in you?
 - For young children: "Jesus gives me life and makes me move." Blow bubbles.

Fire

- Scripture: Psalm 51:15-17
- 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. What are the things that block the light of Christ in your life? What are the "burnt offerings" you're tempted to offer in place of walking in the light of Christ?
 - 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. As a sign of hope and courage, leave your lit candle in the candle holder until you blow it out at the end of this Ash Wednesday ritual.
 - For young children: "Jesus, show me your way." Light a candle.

Water

- Scripture: Isaiah 58:11
- Reflection and Action:
 - Pour yourself a glass of water. Watch as the clear, clean water fills your cup.
 - Drink the water, paying attention as it washes through your mouth, down your throat, through your chest and to your stomach.
 - Imagine it making your bones strong, washing through you to renew and refresh you.
 - Say a prayer of thanks for God's provision and renewal.
 - For young children: "Jesus gives me what I need." Drink some water.

Closing:

From the *adamah* (the Hebrew word for 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.



Daily Ritual Calendar

Week 1, March 2-5: Seek God's Ways

Light seven candles.

Prayer: Jesus, we confess that we sometimes miss the mark. Reveal your ways to us. Give us wisdom to know when it's time to shout and when it's time to be quiet as we follow you. Amen.

March 2: Do the Ash Wednesday Ritual in this resource, or attend a communal Ash Wednesday service.

March 3: Read Joel 2:12-17. What does it look like for you to "return to God" with your whole heart?

March 4: Read Isaiah 58:1. What do you see that's unjust in the world? Go outside and shout about it.

March 5: Read Matthew 6:1-2. Do an anonymous act of kindness for someone.

Week 2, March 6-12: From Security to Generosity

Light six candles.

Prayer: Jesus, we are tempted to shore up our own security instead of trusting in you and in the strength of your community. Open us up to generosity and trust. Amen.

March 6: Worship God in community.

March 7: Open your weekly box and place the symbols you discover on your Lenten centerpiece. What clues do these symbols (stone and grain) give you to the stories of the week to come?

March 8: Read Deuteronomy 26:1-11. The story of Abraham moves the people of God to offer gifts. What story moves you to generosity?

March 9: Read Romans 10:12-13. Write this promise down and tuck it into a bag or pocket you have with you every day.

March 10: Read Psalm 91:11-12. What does it mean to make God our refuge?

March 11: Read Luke 4:1-13. Do you recognize what the devil says to Jesus? Jesus has walked the whole human path, including temptation.

March 12: What things do you hold onto that give you a feeling of security? Perhaps it's extra canned goods, clothing or even savings. Can you share some of it?

Week 3, March 13-19: From Fear to Compassion

Light five candles.

Prayer: Jesus, we sometimes let our fear and lack of understanding keep us from showing your love to others. Open our hearts to compassion. Amen.

March 13: Worship God in community.

March 14: Open your weekly box and place the symbols you discover on your Lenten centerpiece. What clues do these symbols (feathers) give you to the stories of the week to come?

March 15: Read Genesis 15:5-6. Go outside and look at the stars. Try to count them.

March 16: Read Psalm 27. The psalmist needs help, and demands (and trusts) that God will respond. Which verses in the psalm resonate with you right now?

March 17: Read Philippians 3:20. If our citizenship is in heaven, how does that change the way we act in the world?

March 18: Read Luke 13:34. Make a cozy "nest" for yourself and imagine Jesus as the mother hen, snuggling and protecting you.

March 19: Find a way to courageously show compassion.

Week 4, March 20-26: From Earning to Receiving

Light four candles.

Prayer: Jesus, sometimes we forget that all good gifts are from you. We rely on ourselves instead of on you. Open us up to receive your goodness.

March 20: Worship God in community.

March 21: Open your weekly box and place the symbols you discover on your Lent centerpiece. What clues do these symbols (garden tool, fertilizer) give you to the stories of the week to come?

March 22: Read Isaiah 55:1-9. Delight yourself in the Word of God by sharing a favorite Bible verse. Or go literal and delight yourself in some rich food!

March 23: Read Psalm 63:1-8. Sing a song of praise to God.

March 24: Read 1 Corinthians 10:12. When have you thought you were pretty secure, only to find yourself faltering?

March 25: Read Luke 13:6-9. Fig trees usually take three to five years to bear fruit, and they love richly fertilized soil, so the suggestion to give it time and spread some manure was pretty practical. When have you needed to wait patiently?

March 26: Take a walk in nature. Notice the gifts of God's creation.

Week 5, March 27-April 2: From Exceptionalism to Inclusion

Light three candles.

Prayer: Jesus, sometimes we get a little entitled, thinking we have a right to privilege. Open us up to embrace the community you've placed us in and to be part of your inclusive love.

March 27: Worship God in community.

March 28: Open your weekly box and place the symbols you discover on your Lent centerpiece. What clues do these symbols (banquet items) give you to the stories of the week to come?

March 29: Read Joshua 5:10-12. Eat something that is a product of the land around you (a locally grown food).

March 30: Read Psalm 32:5-7. Write down your own confession and put it on your centerpiece - or (carefully) burn it.

March 31: Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21. Go through the next 24 hours thinking of yourself as an ambassador for Christ.

April 1: Read Luke 15:11-32. Act it out.

April 2: Go to a public place, such as a park. Eat, play and/or interact with the community there, considering each person you see to be part of the community God has placed you in.

Week 6, April 3-9: From Scarcity to Abundance

Light two candles.

Prayer: Jesus, sometimes we hold onto things too tightly. We're afraid of not having enough. Open us up to see and share your abundance.

April 3: Worship God in community.

April 4: Open your weekly box and place the symbols you discover on your Lent centerpiece. What clues do these symbols (perfume jar) give you to the stories of the week to come?

April 5: Read Isaiah 43:19. What new thing is God doing around you?

April 6: Read Psalm 126. What are your stories of restoration? What are your current needs for restoration?

April 7: Read Philippians 3:12-14. What are your goals? What do you work toward or strive for? Ask God to help what you want to align with what God wants.

April 8: Read John 12:1-8. Find the thing that is most precious to you. What would it look like to offer this to God?

April 9: Make pretzels and share them. Invented by monks, the folds of the pretzel represent arms folded in prayer, and the three holes represent the Trinity. Try this recipe: <https://sallysbakingaddiction.com/easy-homemade-soft-pretzels/>.

Week 7, April 10-16: From Power Over to Power With

Light one candle.

Prayer: Jesus, sometimes we want to be powerful, to be in control, instead of collaborating with others to do good work through your power. Open us to the kind of power you showed in your death and resurrection.

April 10: It's Palm Sunday! Worship God in community.

April 11: Read Luke 19:28-40. Open your weekly box and place the symbols (leaf or palm branch) you discover on your Lenten centerpiece.

April 12: Read Isaiah 50:4-9. Jesus knew these words of the prophet Isaiah. Imagine him thinking of these words during the week leading to his death.

April 13: Read Philippians 2:5-8. Make a cross out of found materials (sticks and string, Legos or straws) and place it on your Lenten centerpiece.

April 14: Do the Maundy Thursday ritual in this resource, or attend a communal worship service.

April 15: Do the Good Friday ritual in this resource, or attend a communal worship service.

April 16: When Jesus died, the Light of the World went out. Don't turn on any lights today.

Easter, April 17

Happy Resurrection Day! Choose from the Easter Day activities in this resource.



Maundy Thursday Rituals

You will need

1. Towels
2. Large bowl or tub filled with warm water for foot washing
3. A Bible or "Shine On: A Story Bible" (optional)
4. A simple meal (perhaps soup and bread)
5. Set the table for the meal and have everything ready to go before you begin the ritual.
 1. If you're lighting Lenten candles, set those on the table, with one lit.
 2. Consider making this feel like a special meal. Maybe in your household this means it's candlelit, or that you use special dishes.
6. If your household enjoys background music, turn on some soft music, or use this Maundy Thursday Meal playlist: <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2ZEcPhEY9wf8Im4WFHbOOL>

Foot washing

Before the 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 together to remember Jesus' example.

1. Set the scene: Back in Jesus' time, people wore sandals. Roads were made of dirt, not paved like they are now. So imagine: if you were wearing sandals and walking on dirt roads all day, what would your feet look and feel like at the end of the day? Pretty dirty and gross! So usually, a servant of the house would have the lovely job of washing everyone's feet. Imagine the disciples' surprise when this happened instead.
2. Read John 13:3-17 ("Shine On: A Story Bible," page 260).
3. Your turn! Wash the feet of others in your household. If you are alone in your house, consider doing a different act of service of your choosing.
 1. There's no science to washing feet, so do this as it works for you (it is certainly easier to do if the person whose feet are being washed is seated). Take turns washing each other's feet. Young children may want to do it over and over again. Let them lead the way.
 2. If the moment feels right, spend some time noticing how you feel. What was it like to have someone else wash your feet, or to wash someone else's? Were you uncomfortable? Was it gross? Interesting? Did it tickle? Wonder: Did the disciples and Jesus feel any of the things you're feeling?

Meal

After Jesus surprised the disciples and showed them this way of service, they all ate a meal together.

1. Read Matthew 26:17-30 (Shine On page 264).

This isn't just a happy meal together. There's some betrayal creeping its way in. Notice that discomfort, and let it be on your mind as you eat together even if it's not part of the conversation. Even when Jesus knew betrayal and death were coming, he still served and fed his friends. Notice that hope, and remind yourself of it as you eat together.
2. Eat your meal together, knowing that there are going to be some difficult times before the joy of Easter morning.



Closing Words

If you want to wrap up your time together, these words may be helpful: "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.

OR, Pray the Lord's Prayer together. Matthew 6:9-13

Good Friday Ritual

This ritual is designed to take you through the story of Jesus' death. If you have young children, you may want to use the modified ritual. Note that, taken out of the context of the whole Bible, the gospel of John's telling of the night Jesus died can sound like an indictment of the Jews. Take care to remember as you read it that Jesus and all of his disciples were Jewish, and the intention of this Scripture is not to blame the Jewish people for the death of Jesus. Concentrate instead on the actions, both helpful and hurtful, of the people who were close to him.

Begin by gathering around your Lenten centerpiece and lighting all seven candles.

Read John 18:1-11.

Extinguish one candle.

Read John 18:12-18.

Extinguish the second candle.

Read John 18:19-27.

Extinguish the third candle.

Read John 18:28-19:16a.

Extinguish the fourth candle.

Read John 19:16b-25a.

Extinguish the fifth candle.

Read John 19:25b-30.

Extinguish the sixth candle.

Read John 19:31-42.

Extinguish the final candle.

This is an account of the death of Jesus, the Messiah, the son of God.

Modification for young children

Begin by gathering around your Lenten centerpiece and lighting all seven candles.

Read pg 267 in the "Shine On: A Story Bible" or an account of the arrest of Jesus through Peter's betrayal from another story Bible.

Extinguish four candles.

Read pg 269 in the "Shine On: A Story Bible," or an account of Jesus' death from another story Bible.

Extinguish the remaining three candles.

When Jesus died, the whole earth was broken and sad.

Easter Sunday Ritual Ideas



Alleluia! It's Resurrection Day!

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 "Shine On: A Story Bible," but it would be good to read it at least once from the book of John!
- Celebrate! Shout, "Alleluia!" Make some noise, sing a song, dance or run laps around your yard or block. Get silly and joyful in whatever way works for you!
- If you followed yesterday's prompt and didn't turn on any lights, it's time to break your light fast.

Other Celebration Ideas

- Alleluia bells: Any time anyone says "alleluia" today, ring a bell, jingle your keys or, in general, make a joyful noise.
- Symbolic egg hunt: If you have children celebrating with you today, this can be a fun one. Fill eggs with these symbols of Easter and let each child find one egg with each symbol. Come back together to see if you can all figure out what the meaning of each symbol is. We find it's helpful to have three different colors of eggs, one for each symbol, so that each child can find one of each color.
 - Symbol 1: Seeds (to be planted in the spring). We bury the seed in the ground, and we don't see signs of it for a while. Then, it sprouts and bears good things. This can remind us of how Jesus died and was buried, but then rose to new life.
 - Symbol 2: Rock. This reminds us of the stone placed in front of Jesus' tomb that was rolled away. If you want some extra fun, paint your rocks today.
 - Symbol 3: Empty (don't put anything in this egg). When Jesus' friends came to care for his body, the tomb was empty!
- 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/) using store-bought dough, but you can also make them with simple homemade bread dough.
- New Life Treasure Hunt: Go exploring in your yard or a nearby park or trail. Take pictures or field notes, or draw the signs of new life you see.