

# Lent in a Bag/Lent Full Circle At Home

You can make your own bag of Lenten materials with items from around your home.

- Purple paper circle
- Empty Easter Egg
- Write Alleluia on a small piece of paper
- Color a picture of a butterfly
- Candle
- Small wooden block
- A palm leaf
- A Sea shell
- A rock
- Picture of a child or toy person

These items to be used as symbols to focus family conversations and prayers during the Season of Lent. Choose one night of the week and invite those around your table to experience the stories through reading or watching the short videos.

These lessons are written by Reverend Christine V. Hides. Please read through her Notes to help you understand more about this thoughtful Lenten activity with tips on sharing the resurrection story with young children.

My prayer is that your family can be on a Lenten journey at home and together you have thoughtful and loving conversations throughout the Lenten Season.

Allison Watkins  
Director of Children's Ministry  
Trinity UMC





## Parent Notes from Christine V. Hides:

Lent doesn't have to be unfamiliar or uncomfortable. The weeks leading up to Easter can be an opportunity to embrace the unexpected and unknown. Rich imagery, tangible objects, stories, prayer, and conversation will help reshape our understanding of this season. We will find the sacred emerging from the ordinary. We will practice putting God's love into action.

Each week of *Lent Full Circle* includes a story of Jesus' life and something to read (or watch), discuss, and do. Short explanatory notes for parents help with the uncomfortable and unfamiliar parts of Lent.

*Lent Full Circle* is for those looking for an entry-point into unfamiliar traditions. This guide is for those who are seeking something new in a familiar season. This guide is for those searching for God's love in the ancient and the everyday. In addition to this guide, you will want to use the objects included in the bag to create a tangible, engaging Lent experience for all ages.

Lent is the season of getting ready for the great mystery of Easter. During this reflective time, we focus on turning our lives more fully toward God. We may fast from things that disconnect us from God and one another, or we might take on new practices of living more like Christ.

During Lent we journey through the stories of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection seeking meaning. Each year offers a new challenge and new hope that earth will be as it is in heaven. In Jesus we find that God is mysteriously making it so. May we share the stories of our faith in ways that meet children where they are, by laying the foundation for a lifetime of growth and discovery about God's amazing love for us.

With Wonder,  
Christine V. Hides.



## Alleluia Tuesday: A Pre-Lenten Celebration

**Read:** A long-held Lenten tradition is using up butter, eggs, sugar, and treats to prepare for a more restrained diet during Lent. Making pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday, was a way to use up milk, butter, sugar, and eggs. Mardi Gras evolved as a way to indulge before Lent. Churches often “put away” the word “Alleluia” during Lent, refraining from singing or saying it during worship. The idea is that when the Alleluias and special treats return on Easter they will taste and sound sweeter!

The Tuesday before Ash Wednesday is sometimes called “Alleluia Tuesday,” a mini celebration to joyfully remind us that Lent is about to begin. Below are some ideas for celebrating at home:

**Create the Circle:** Purple is the church color for preparing or getting ready. Place the purple paper circle on your dining table, or someplace to remind you that you are in the season of Lent.

- What is your favorite way to celebrate?
- How do you feel about the start of the season of Lent?

**Pray:** *Thank you, God, for the gifts of laughter, food, and song. Bless our wondering, reflection, and prayer during Lent that the joy of Easter might be magnified. Amen*

### **Additional Activities:**

- Sing all the songs you can think of that have “Alleluia” in them.
- Make an “Alleluia” sign or banner to bring out on Easter morning.
- Have pancakes for dinner.
- Decorate for Mardi Gras.
- Enjoy a King’s Cake.



## **Ash Wednesday:**

**Read: Genesis 2:5-7** In the second story of Creation, God makes the earth and stars. God makes a human out of dust. The name “Adam” comes from the Hebrew word, Adamah, which means earth.

Just a few lines of text are all that is needed to remind us that we are connected with the billions of stars in the universe, the earth beneath our feet, and our Creator. Stars are balls of burning hydrogen and helium, from which all the heavier atoms are made. Dust comes from stars. And from that same dust, the ancient star-made atoms, the elements that make up the ground we walk on, we are made. From God comes the gift of life.

Ash Wednesday offers a vocabulary to begin to talk about hard things. This day the ashes remind us that we are human; we are connected with the earth and stars, and all God’s creation. Most importantly, we say out loud that God’s never ending love is with us, always.

So, on Ash Wednesday, we mark ourselves with a symbol of God. With ashes of palms, grown in the earth, nourished in ancient stardust, we remember the gift of life. We remember what it means to be human and to be loved by God forever.

**Create the Circle:** Place your paper butterfly and Alleluia paper in the Easter egg, close it tightly, and place it in the center of your purple circle. Place the purple circle and the egg someplace where you will see it every day.

- How does it feel to put away the alleluias?
- How will it feel to open the egg on Easter?
- What do the ashes on your forehead mean to you?

**Pray:** *Gracious and Holy One, as we enter into this season of preparing for the mystery of Easter, we pack away the Alleluias. But we do not fear, for inside the dark egg, joy is still there, waiting like a seed. Thank you for the gift of stars and earth, the gifts of light and life. Let our imaginations grow in the quiet of Lent, so that we might see the ways you are making all things new. Let the story of your love come full circle. Amen*

**Additional Activities:** Attend and Ash Wednesday service at Trinity or watch online. Read the book *Stars Beneath Your Bed* by April Sayre. Or listen to it on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxK63JieuJU> .

If you don’t have ashes at home, you can still make a cross on your forehead with dark eyeshadow or just your finger. Say, “From love you came and to love you shall return.”



## First Week of Lent

**Read: John 1:1-5** or Watch Faces of Easter 1 (Scan QR code below). It feels a bit strange to read the Christmas story in February. We read it now, remembering that all of Jesus' life is a part of the Easter mystery. We know Jesus as The Word, The Light, and as a human who lived long ago. Today, let's remember him as a human baby, made of atoms, organs, and tissue like you and I.

But the story of Jesus doesn't have a beginning or an ending. The word was with God from the very beginning. The circle of Lent stretches wide enough to encompass the universe, everything that has been from the beginning of time and everything that will ever be is a part of God's story.

**Create the Circle:** Place the candle in your purple circle.

- What do you know about this baby and his life?
- How does this story make you feel?
- Share the beginning of your story with your family.

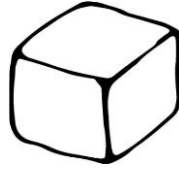
**Pray:** *Holy God, light of the world, who lived and walked among us, guide us through the familiar into the mystery of Easter. Let your light grow within us in the peace of Lent, so that we might show love and compassion to those we meet. Let the story of your love come full circle. Amen*

**Additional Activities:** Care for other young children by gathering toys and clothes you have outgrown to give to those who need them.

Donate to a diaper drive. Diapers are essential for children's health and attendance at childcare. They are also expensive and not covered by assistance programs.



Use Your Phone Camera to Watch



## Second Week of Lent

**Read: John 1:1-5** or watch Faces of Easter 2 (Scan QR code below). There is a large gap in the narrative between Jesus' birth and the beginning of his ministry as an adult, making this one story of Jesus at twelve years old a treasured glimpse into his childhood. While it is hard to imagine a twelve-year-old staying behind, unnoticed, on a trip today, it is easier to imagine a young person filled with questions seeking adults who might answer them.

Jesus' understanding of religious teachings and his response to his parents' concern is surprising. In this short story we catch a glimpse of a young Jesus who seeks God and knows where God is found. The circle of God's story is big enough to hold our searching and our deepest questions.

**Create the Circle:** Place the block on your purple circle.

- What do you imagine Jesus' childhood was like?
- What big questions do you have about God and the Bible?
- What does it feel like to be in God's house?
- Where might god's house really be?

**Pray:** *Holy God, you welcome our wonder and deepest questions. Be with us as we explore the mystery of Easter. Let our searching lead to conversation and connections with others. Let wonder grow in the season of Lent that we might find your dwelling place. Let the story of your love come full circle. Amen*

**Additional Activities:** Start a conversation with someone who has similar questions to you. Maybe you are fascinated by science or history. Maybe you have questions about the Bible. Rather than looking online for answers, try to have a discussion with someone from a different generation. This approach is often more enriching and can build valuable relationships.



Use Your Phone Camera to Watch



## Third Week of Lent

**Read: Luke 3:21-23** or watch Faces of Easter 3 (Scan QR code below). In the Gospel according to Luke, the narrative moves from the boy Jesus in the temple to John the Baptist's ministry and Jesus' baptism. Here we find one of the most touching verses in the Bible. Through baptism we hear the echo of God's voice in our lives, "You are my beloved, with you I am well pleased."

By water and the Holy Spirit, at baptism we become part of the Church. We join in God's loving action in the world and God renews our lives in love. In many traditions when a person of any age is baptized the congregation promises to nurture and support that person as a disciple of Jesus. The circle of God's story, like the waters of baptism, is deep and wide enough for all.

**Create the Circle:** Place the shell on your purple circle.

- When do you feel "beloved"?
- When have you heard about God speaking?
- What does God's voice sound like? How do you know?

**Pray:** *Holy God, you call us beloved. Thank you for the gift of water which sustains us and for your blessings which pour over us daily. Let gratitude grow in the season of Lent, that we might hear your still, quiet voice. Let the story of your love come full circle. Amen.*

**Additional Activities:** Sometimes at baptism a candle is given to symbolize receiving the light of Christ. Light a candle and share your baptism stories. If children were baptized as infants, parents can tell the story. If you have not been baptized yet, talk about what it means to you and what you look forward to in baptism.

Baptism uses the symbol of water which is essential to human life. This week say, "Thank you, God, for water. Thank you, God, for your love poured on me," each time you use water. Discuss together how your household can conserve and care for water, a precious gift from God.



Use Your Phone Camera to Watch

## Fourth Week of Lent



**Read: Luke 4:1-13** or watch Faces of Easter 4 (Scan QR code below). Before Jesus begins his work of teaching and healing, the Spirit leads him into the wilderness for forty days. Forty days is the same number of days in Lent (not including Sundays). “Forty days” is often found in the Bible, suggesting “a long time.” Jesus’ time in the wilderness was very difficult. He faced questions many of us confront in hard times: What is the value of material things? How do we know God is real when we are struggling? What power do we have and how do we use it wisely for God’s purposes?

Today it is common to retreat to wilderness spaces for reflection and renewal. We may also be forced into the metaphorical wilderness in life’s challenges. Both types of wilderness shape our story. The circle of God’s story is strong enough to hold our wilderness experiences.

**Create the Circle:** Place the stone on your purple circle.

- When have you been in the wilderness? What was it like?
- How do you know what the right thing is, when faced with a tough decision
- Talk about a time you have waited until you knew what you were supposed to do.

**Pray:** *Holy God, wherever we go, whatever happens, you are with us. Lead us to the quiet center. Let your deep peace grow this season of Lent that we might know what we are to do. Let the story of your love come full circle. Amen.*

**Additional Activities:** Wilderness retreats may not be possible or desirable for all but the opportunity for silence, reflection, and prayer helps us to manage the stresses of life and come closer to God. Talk with members of your household about what time and space you need to unplug and rest. Do you enjoy the outdoors? Silence? Music? Meditative coloring or prayer? What practices bring you deep peace? Work together to make sure everyone has what they need.



Use Your Phone Camera to Watch



## Fifth Week of Lent



**Read: Luke 13:18-21** or watch Faces of Easter 5 (Scan QR code below). Jesus's ministry, his work, included teaching and healing. Life was hard for many people in Jesus' time. The doctors did not know what doctors know now. There were no faucets with running water, grocery stores, or convenient ways to communicate. The Roman rulers were not fair or just. Even though people worked hard they often did not have what they needed to live a full life.

Jesus told stories and parables to help people understand God's hope for the world, the kingdom of God. Jesus healed and fed people so that they might have what they needed to live fully. God's kingdom is one of justice and peace. The circle of God's story, like a seed, is hard to see, but it grows bigger than we imagine.

**Create the Circle:** Place the peg doll on your purple circle.

- What seeds of God's love and hope do you see today?
- What does it mean to have all that you need to live a full life?
- What would it be like for everyone to have what they need for a full life?

**Pray:** *Holy God, your love grows wild like a seed, like yeast. Thank you for food, water, shelter, and love which help us to live full lives. Let hope grow this Lenten season, that we might see the world as you see it. And in seeing your kingdom, may we help make the world more like your vision. Let the story of your love come full circle. Amen.*

**Additional Activities:** Bake bread using a favorite recipe or plant grass seeds for a "Resurrection garden." Talk about how baking and planting are like the kingdom of God.



Use Your Phone Camera to Watch



## Holy Week

**Read: Luke 19:28-38 and Luke 22:7-22**

or watch Faces of Easter 6 (Scan QR code below).

**\*\* Parents— please read Notes about Holy Week on the back of this page. \*\***

During Holy Week we remember what happened during Jesus' last week. When he arrived in Jerusalem, the place of religious and political power, the people cheered, shouting. "Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord." Later that week he gathered his disciples in an upstairs room to celebrate Passover. He blessed the bread and the cup and told the disciples to remember him when they did the same. He promised that he would be in the bread and the wine. That night he was arrested.

When we have Holy Communion, Jesus is with us, too. God's love and grace are made visible to us. The contrast between the celebration of Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem, his arrest, and death raises many questions. Not all of our questions can be answered. In the symbols of bread and wine we begin to taste and see, to know and understand. The circle of God's story is made of sorrow, joy, and deepest mystery.

**Create the Circle:** Place the palm leaf and cross on your purple circle.

- Which part of this story is the most important to you?
- How do you feel when you receive Holy Communion?
- When have you felt Jesus is close?

**Pray:** *Holy God, you are known in the bread and the cup. You are known in deepest mystery. Let us come close to you this Lenten season, so that we might know you better. Let the story of your love come full circle. Amen.*

### **Additional Activities:**

Attend a Palm Sunday worship service at Trinity and wave palm branches with your friends. Talk about what is transformed in the Easter story and what God transforms in your own life.



Use Your Phone Camera to Watch

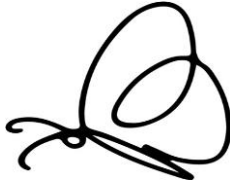
## Ending With Care: A Note About Sharing the Stories of Holy Week with Children

The stories of Holy Week, especially the violence of Jesus' death and the inexplicability of the Resurrection need to be treated with care because they shape our theology, the way we understand God. Because each child is different, be aware of the care we must use with young children when approaching the events of Holy Week and Jesus' death. Adult caregivers are most often the best judge of how and when to share these hard stories. Let these suggestions guide you:

- “Spoil” the ending by including the resurrection when talking about Jesus' death. “Jesus died. That is sad. But it is not the end of the story...” When in doubt if your child is ready to understand Jesus' death in the context of the Roman Empire, it is ok to wait. Remember, God's love and grace have infinite ways of reaching us when we are ready.
- Preview books and Bibles to avoid violent images and language. Even children's Bibles can be surprisingly graphic when describing the cross. It is enough to say, “Jesus died.”
- Focus on the belief that Jesus brings us into relationship with God, “at-one-ment,” rather than how atonement works. Though there are multiple theories of atonement, young children who hear statements like, “Jesus died for you.” may think that they are personally responsible for Jesus' death.
- Embrace the mystery and complexity of the story. Wondering together is a way to explore the rich mystery of Easter without needing to have all the answers about the resurrection. What a wonder to know that God's love is the most powerful thing!



# Easter



**Read: Luke 22:33, 44-56 and Luke 24:1-12** or watch Faces of Easter 7 (Scan QR code below).

Easter is not just one Sunday, it is a season of 7 Sundays. Easter Sunday is often so full of joy and excitement that you may want to share the Bible story the night before Easter, the day after, or another time. Be sure to read the story of the resurrection at the same time as you read the story of Jesus' death. Go ahead, spoil the ending. The climax of the story is the power of God's love. A love so powerful that nothing can separate us from it. Christ is risen! Alleluia!

**Create the Circle:** During Lent, the story of Jesus has come full circle, centered on the mystery of Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection. It is a circle we will return to again and again, each time gaining new understanding. God's story, like a circle, never ends. Today is the day to open the egg! Shout and sing "Alleluia!" Place the empty egg in the center of the purple circle. Look at the full circle of Easter, with the empty egg in the center.

- How does it feel to say "Alleluia" after putting it away for a while?
- What could the empty egg be?
- What part of this story is most important to you?
- Where are you in this circle?

**Pray:** *God of Easter's empty tomb, Alleluia! Jesus Christ is risen! Let the joy we know in you never end, for your love has come full circle. Amen.*

**Additional Activities:** Attend Easter services at Trinity and join your friends at the Easter Eggstravaganza!



Use Your Phone Camera to Watch