

Creative prayer ideas

Worshipping through Lent

This simple sheet of ideas is designed to be used by individuals and families during Lent, as a way to reflect on Jesus' love, life, death and resurrection in the lead up to Easter.

During advent, there is much more of a focus, in our homes and culture, as well as our churches, on looking forward to Christmas. Many people fast something for Lent, follow a special course or devotional, or take part in a special appeal and prayer initiative such as Christian Aid's "Count Your Blessings". These are all excellent, and this resource is not designed as a replacement for these. It is merely a simple and visual way of bringing making Easter more visible to you and others, and above all in inspiring a visual prompt for worship and prayer during this time.

It is inspired by, and developed from, our own experiments experiences of bringing crosses into our homes during Lent, placing them outside on Good Friday, and then decorating them with flowers on Easter Sunday. And then further enriched by ideas taken from the resource we developed in partnership with others, "Journeying through Lent with symbols and prayer" which you can also download from

www.thesanctuarycentre.org/whereworldandworshipmeet-seasonal.html

As with any of our resources, feel free to use, adapt, miss out or add in, as suits you and/or your family.

On Shrove Tuesday

- Enjoy your pancakes as usual!
- After your pancakes, think or chat about what comes to mind when you think of Easter and jot everything down – symbols, ideas, thanks, down on a piece of paper. Spend a few minutes giving thanks for all that's on the list, and ask that God would help you understand his love for you and others more this Lent.
- If you have written down your list, put it away somewhere safe, so you can come back to it during the Easter weekend.

On Ash Wednesday

- Construct a simple cross and decide where you will put it in your home – it should be somewhere visible and crucial to your daily routine, such as in the kitchen, or in the living room. (Perhaps where you would normally have your Christmas tree?)
- It's up to you how you make the cross, and what it is made out of, but we have found the following method to be the most effective for both inside and out, and for using for creative prayer:
 - Take two medium sized, dry branches (or planks if you prefer) of around 1.5 metre (up) and 1m (across) respectively and bind them together securely at the centre with garden twine or string.
 - Then wrap more twine, reasonably tightly, around each branch, tying each piece so it hold secure. (Doing this enables you to post things through under the twine, acting as a way to fasten things onto the cross temporarily)
- Display the cross in the chosen position, by propping it up against a wall, hanging it from a hook mounted on the door or wall, or placing it in a plant pot filled with stones to weight it down and wedge the cross upright.

- While you are making your cross, take some time to think or talk about the people, situations and issues that you care about – think about your friends, family, neighbours, community, country, leaders and other nations.... particularly consider individuals, groups or nations who are on your heart because they are living in poverty, or facing grief or suffering, and especially think about those who don't know about, or haven't yet experienced, God's love for them.
- Make a list, poster or pin-board of all these people, adding pictures or photos if you would like to and decide where you will put your prayer list/poster/board that you can come back to it throughout Lent. (It's up to you how often you decide to do this, it could be before supper each day, or once a week, but try to fit it in with the routine of your home so it's easy to build in over the next few weeks.)

Each week, or day, during Lent depending on what you decided

- Thank God for sending his Son, and praise him for who he is. (You might like to keep a list of all the things you think of to thank him for as you go through Lent)
- Choose one or two things from the prayer list/poster/notice-board that you created on Ash Wednesday to pray about. And if you find it helpful to do so, write your prayers down on small-ish pieces of paper, and post them through
- If you are using this resource as an individual, or with older children or teenagers, you might find it helpful to bring different symbols, or pictures of symbols, to the cross each week and leave them there for the week as you journey through Lent. These symbols will help you focus on the story of the passion, and meditate on Jesus' love and example, as you worship him and intercede for others:
 - 1st Sunday/week in Lent – a bag containing ten pieces of silver (or similar)
 - 2nd Sunday/week in Lent – a basin and a towel
 - 3rd Sunday/week in Lent – a cup
 - 4th Sunday/week in Lent – a whip
 - 5th Sunday in Lent/week – a crown of thorns

These symbols are taken from a fuller resource *Journeying through Lent with symbols and prayer* which you can download from www.thesanctuarycentre.org/whereworldandworshipmeet-seasonal.html - in it you will find readings, prayers and prayer points for intercessions (as well as reflective images which you could use) which might be helpful if you would like something more set to follow.

- If you want to, and it is acceptable in your tradition, and you are using them as a family or group of friends, you might also like to use some of these symbols more actively in worship and prayer i.e. to wash each other's feet, or to take communion.

On Palm Sunday

- Take off any paper prayers that you have built up through the last few weeks, and then decorate the cross with greenery.
- Spend some time worshipping Jesus as king, messiah and saviour, and thank him for coming.
- (Liturgy, readings and prayer points for intercessions are available in the same resource highlighted above if you would find that helpful.)
- Leave the greenery up on the cross until Thursday evening.

On Maundy Thursday

- Take the greenery off the cross, and either leave it blank, or drape it with a black cloth.
- Spend some time thinking about Jesus' agonising wait in Gethsemane, and read his prayer for himself, his disciples and church in John 17.
- Spend some time echoing Christ's prayer for the church, and pray for all who are waiting in a long hour of sorrow or suffering because of illness, anxiety or fear.
- (Liturgy and prayer points for intercessions are available in the same resource highlighted above if you would find that helpful.)

On Good Friday

- If you draped your cross last night, remove this now, so that the cross is totally bare.
- Look at the empty cross in its starkness and consider all that Jesus suffered, so publically, to reconcile us to God, and to bring us life in all its fullness, freedom and joy.
- Pray that God would help you also to stand for him publically, even when that is hard.
- Take the cross outside your front door and place it there where others can see it.

On Easter Saturday

- Take out the list of things about Easter that you made on Shrove Tuesday, and also any list you have been thanking God for. Is there anything you would add to either list following the last few weeks, and days? Offer both lists to God in prayer.
- Pray again, in summary, for everyone and everything featured on the prayer list/poster/notice-board that you constructed on Ash Wednesday, and have been using throughout Lent.

On Easter Sunday

- First thing, before you go to church, or give any Easter eggs, go outside and decorate your cross with bright spring flowers.
- Leave your decorated cross up for the next few days as a symbol of the joy of Easter, and all Christ won for us on one day two thousand years ago, that lasts forever.

Other ideas

- You might also like to make a couple of playlists or CDs of worship songs which particularly focus on the cross, Passion, and Resurrection to regularly listen to, and worship with, throughout Lent. If you aren't sure of what songs you could use for this, email info@thesanctuarycentre.org
- If you're having Christian friends to visit, or stay, during Lent, you might like to ask them to join in shared times of prayer. With friends of no, or a different, faith, obviously you will want to be sensitive, but consider telling them that you are praying for everyone you care about during Lent, and asking them if there's anything specific you could pray for.
- Perhaps you could consider hosting an Easter party at your house, or an egg hunt starting from there, or coming back there where you finish, for friends and neighbours. Have fun, leave your decorated cross up at the centre of things to speak for itself, and be ready to talk about what you have been doing, and what it means to you.