

Restore us, O God!

Family worship for Lent, Year A

A resource for God's people, young and old

Prepared for North Baltimore Mennonite Church

following the worship resources for our Sunday Services

from Leader, Lent 2017 "Restore us, O God!"

www.commonword.ca/go/811

What is family worship?

Lent is a special and important time for the Christian church. It's a time to "clean house," to get rid of all the unnecessary things that distract us from seeing what God is doing in the world. Most adults understand the need for this "reset" every year. But the topics of confession, repentance, suffering and death can seem heavy and difficult for children. This resource for family worship is intended to help families walk through the season of Lent in a way that authentically addresses the important themes of the season at the level of a child.

Families may wish to set aside a special time once a week for Lent family worship. You may wish to create a feeling of reverence by lighting candles or playing special music. The Lenten garden can be a helpful focus for younger children. Prayers from Sunday morning have been adapted and simplified. Special suggestions are made for using the *Shine On!* Story Bible (www.commonword.ca/go/152) to connect with the lectionary scriptures. Singing the suggested theme song for Lent can help children feel a sense of rhythm in the season.

Adults who use the NBMC Lenten devotional alongside this family worship will notice that the lectionary scriptures are the same. Parents may wish to read devotional stories from church members to older children as well, to help them understand how God has been working in the lives of other adults they know.

What is included in this resource and how do I use it?

A simple family worship service order is offered for each week of Lent, echoing the scriptures and prayers from Sunday worship. You will find two sections.

1. Orienting material for parents:

- a focus statement – to help parents understand the direction of the theme
- a series of scriptures from the lectionary to read over the week if you choose
- a Memory verse, simple enough for a child to learn and repeat before you begin

2. A brief worship order:

- a prayer, usually with a part for a leader in plain text and a simple response in bold
- a story or two from the Shine On! Bible (www.commonword.ca/go/152) which connects with the lectionary texts
- questions for reflection and family discussion
- an opportunity to respond by creating a Lent garden, adding elements each week
- a suggested theme song.

Use the elements that connect the best with your family members.

Lenten Garden inspirations and instructions came from these websites:

http://www.littlehandspreschool.net/Little_Hands_Preschool/Stories_and_Recipes/Entries/2013/2/15_The_Lenten_Garden...html

<http://www.aholyexperience.com/2009/03/make-easter-garden-visual-parable/>

Restore us, O God! We hunger

Focus Statement

As humans, we hunger for many things. God, our Provider, knows our deepest longings, offering both sustenance and deliverance from temptation.

Scriptures

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7; Psalm 32; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11

Memory verse: Psalm 34:8

Taste and see that the Lord is good.

Prayer

God of abundance, you give us *all* we need.
But too often we only think about what we *don't* have.
We forget that you are the one who takes care of us. Forgive us.
Help us to fill our hearts with your love, and help us to remember that every good gift comes from you. It is enough.

God of abundant grace,
restore us.
Rejoice in the Lord and be glad.
Sing praises to the Lord!
Taste and see that the Lord is good.

From Shine On! “Jesus in the desert” pp. 180-181

Reflection: What does it feel like to be hungry in your tummy?
What does it feel like to be hungry in your heart?
What is the best kind of food for a hungry heart?

Lent Garden:

Prepare your Lenten Garden. As a base, use an old metal, glass or plastic tray, which will hold water. It can be as large as you like. Protect the table holding your garden with some newspaper and a sheet of black plastic or trashcan liner and cover with a cloth. Fill the tray with soil as a base for your garden. For this week, it will be simply an empty field, a blank slate. We remember that God is the only one who satisfies our hunger. Add only a white candle in a holder – God is present with us.

Family song: **STJ 29** You Are All We Have

Restore us, O God! We wonder

Focus Statement

In our humanness, we want to know, to define, and to have concrete answers for everything. However, life is filled with uncertainty. We trust that God, the great Mystery, is always present with us in our wondering.

Scriptures

Genesis 12:1-4a; Psalm 121; Romans 4:1-5, 13-17; John 3:1-17 or Matthew 17:1-9

Memory verse: Psalm 121:2

My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Prayer:

God, there are a lot of things we wonder about.
We really can't understand everything about you – you are too big for us!
Sometimes, you seem amazing and huge, bigger than all the stars in the sky.
Sometimes, you seem a little bit scary and hard to understand.
Forgive us when we don't want to follow you, because we don't understand.

Pause for silent confession.

God of mystery,

Restore us.

Our help comes from the Lord, Maker of heaven and earth.

The Lord will keep you from all harm.

The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore. Amen.

From Shine On! “Sarah & Abraham” pp. 24-25

“Nicodemus visits Jesus” pp. 188-189

Reflection:

What do you wonder about?

How do you feel if you don't know the answer?

Who can you ask?

Lent Garden: In your garden, place the grotto. This can be made from a rock with a hollow or 3 or 4 mossy rocks arranged a grotto, a place that symbolizes the tomb. It is empty now. This is a story that is hard to understand. Caves are dark and mysterious. We wonder, “Why do we need a grave in this garden?” We can wonder and ask God...

Family song:

STJ 29

You Are All We Have

Restore us, O God! We thirst.

Focus Statement

Our bodies know the desperate need for water: we cannot survive without it. Likewise, our deepest selves are parched and yearn to be drenched in God's love. God, who is Love, quenches our thirst so that we can live into the fullness of life.

Scriptures:

Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 95; Romans 5:1-11; John 4:5-42

Memory verse: John 4:14

Those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty.

Prayer

In a dry and weary land,
restore us, O God.

Thirsty and worn out,
restore us, O God.

Thirsty for your living water,
restore us, O God.

We thirst. Receive our worship as a sign of our yearning for you.

From Shine On! "Jesus and the Samaritan woman" pp. 190-191

Reflection: What does it feel like to be thirsty for water?
What does it feel like to have a thirsty heart?
What would help a thirsty heart?

Lenten Garden: Add a pool of water to the garden. This can be made with a shallow glass dish, or dark ceramic dish. Add sand, gravel or very small shells. Add water to your prepared pond. Span the pond with a strip of bark as a bridge. The pond reminds us of God's refreshing, living water.

Family song: STJ 29 You Are All We Have

Restore us, O God! We see.

Focus Statement

We are bombarded by visual images, and can mistake what is seen for what is true. God reveals hidden truths, surprising us and challenging our assumptions. Once our eyes and hearts are opened, we can see with greater clarity.

Scriptures:

1 Samuel 16:1-13; Psalm 23; Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41

Memory verse 1 Samuel 16:7

The Lord does not see as people see.

People look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

Prayer

Here in this place we gather to worship.

Open our eyes and our hearts.

Here in this place we gather to see you.

Open our eyes and our hearts.

Here in this place we gather to see you in all your glory and beauty.

Open our eyes and our hearts.

Help us to see ourselves honestly, and humbly worship you.

From Shine On! “Samuel anoints David,” pp. 86-87

“Jesus heals blindness,” pp. 234-235

Reflection:

What is it like to see with our eyes?

What is it like to see with our hearts?

Lenten Garden In your garden, plant a “tree.” Place a lump of clay, wrapped in a plastic bag to keep it clean. The lump should be ‘mountain shaped’ with the weight spread out at the base. Push the branch that you have chosen as the Lenten Tree into the lump so that it is quite stable. The branch could be of oak, ash or any other tree with a strong gesture in the twigs, and the buds should stay tightly closed for several weeks. The branch may look dead on the outside to us, but God can see the life inside.

Family song: **STJ 29** You Are All We Have

Restore us, O God! We breathe.

Focus Statement

When we come to the end of our own human strength, vitality, and purpose, we recognize the reality of death in and around us. God, who is Spirit, breathes life into us, revealing God's glory and purpose. We, and the community, are restored.

Scriptures

Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 130; Romans 8:6-11; John 11:1-45

Memory verse: Ezekiel 37:6

"I will put breath into you and you will come to life."

Opening Prayer

Come. Bring your tired bones.

Now is the time to worship God who gives us breath.

Come. Bring your disappointment.

Now is the time to worship God who gives us breath.

Come. Bring your sadness.

Now is the time to worship God who gives us breath.

Bring all you that you have and all that you are.

The Spirit is here to breathe life into all that is lifeless.

From Shine On! "Ezekiel and the dry bones," pp. 146-147

"Raising of Lazarus" pp. 242-243

Reflection: What does it feel like to be very tired?

What does it feel like to be very sad?

What would it feel like if God breathes new breath into you?

Lenten Garden: Add some bright green moss, a sprouting spring bulb, or other treasure you find in the outdoors at this time. If you have time, go out looking for what surprise God might show you, to add to your garden. Broken glass becomes beautiful; a tiny weed is transformed into a gracious shrub in your Lent garden. Add small flat stones that lead as a pathway between the tree and the grotto. Give some new color and breath to your garden.

Family song:

STJ 29

You Are All We Have

Restore us, O God! We hope.

Focus Statement

Our human society values status, power, wealth, and success. God turns things upside down by becoming one of us, taking the role of a humble servant. In hope, we shout praise that God can deliver us, even while we ask, “Who is this?”

Scriptures

Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16; Philippians 2:5-11; Matthew 26:14-27, 66 or Matthew 21:1-11

Memory verse: Matthew 21:9

Hosanna! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!

Praise Based on Psalm 118

Who is this who comes, humble and riding on a donkey?

Hosanna! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!

Who is this who comes, looking like one of us?

Hosanna! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!

Who is this who comes, celebrated by little children?

Hosanna! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna! Come join in the celebration of hope!

From Shine On! “Jesus rides into Jerusalem,” pp. 248-249

“Jesus in the temple,” pp. 250-251

Reflection: What does it feel like to celebrate Jesus?

What does it feel like when the same people want to hurt Jesus just a few days later?

Why do we sometimes change our minds and get confused?

Lenten Garden: On Palm Sunday, when the Garden has been completed, some grass seed can be sprinkled on the soil area and lightly forked in. Ideally, the shoots should only become visible on Easter Sunday so if the room is very warm this activity could be put off until Maundy Thursday. Six small white cake candles are evenly spaced along the path between the Tree and the grotto. On Palm Sunday, at some convenient moment of the day, the large candle in the Garden is lit, and from it is taken a light for the first small candle furthest from the grotto. This is allowed to burn right down. During Holy Week, each day, preferably at the same time, another small candle is burnt, until the very last candle at the entrance to the grotto is burnt on Good Friday. Holy Saturday is a day of waiting when only the large candle is alight—perhaps at story time. On Maundy Thursday, it is rather special to sprinkle some wheat grains on the soil, press them down into the earth and water them well. They will sprout and shoot very dramatically in a few days. On Good Friday a child will enjoy making a little caterpillar out of green modeling clay or wax, wrapping it carefully in a small square of real silk (white or cream in color) and placing it on the moss inside the Grotto. On Holy Saturday the caterpillar is still there, but on Easter Sunday morning only the silk remains, and a butterfly

hovers in the branches of the Easter Tree.

Although the Garden must be kept damp all the time, Holy Saturday could be a good day to make more of a ritual of the watering. Choose a pretty jar to hold the water if you do not have a sprinkler. When Easter Sunday arrives, the Lenten Garden will have been transformed overnight into an Easter Garden, to the great surprise and delight of everyone...

Family song: **STJ 29** You Are All We Have

Restore us, O God! We live

Focus Statement

When our hopes for what will bring life are shattered, we come to the tomb feeling lost, confused, disillusioned, and afraid. But it is precisely there that God meets us—revealed in the mystery of the risen Christ. God, the Author of life, empowers us to live fully and enables us to praise once again. We dance, we sing, we proclaim: Christ is risen! Christ is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

Scriptures

Jeremiah 31:1-6; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Colossians 3:1-4; Matthew 28:1-10

Memory verse: Psalm 118:24

This is the day the Lord has made.
We will rejoice and be glad in it!

Praise

O living God, who raised Jesus from the dead
we shout: you won!
we sing hymns of praise!

**Even when we are sad
you are faithful.
You wipe away all tears
and bring joy in the morning.**

Teach us, O God, to trust your love,
to rest in your goodness,
to hope in your promise,
that we may rejoice all our days
and share the good news:

Alleluia! Amen!
Christ is risen! Christ is risen, indeed!

From Shine On! “Jesus is risen,” pp. 270-271
“Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene,” pp. 272-273

Reflection:

I wonder how Mary Magdalene felt on Easter morning when she woke up?
How do you think she felt after she saw Jesus alive in the garden?
Show how you would feel if your heart changed from sadness to joy!

Easter Garden:

As the week swings from an ending to a beginning, from Saturday to Sunday, so the Lenten Garden is transformed into an Easter Garden. Here are some inspirations to get you started!

“Flowers blossom from hidden vases, primrose and violet plants and charming little weeds nestle between the mosses. Tiny creatures emerge from their Lenten hibernation: hens and their chicks, rabbit families and lambs, even turtles can be seen making their way along the path and over the bridge. Dragonflies and butterflies hover over the pond. The Easter Tree is a graceful birch or hazel branch, just breaking into leaf: on it hangs a shower of colored eggs. The Easter hare loiters discreetly beneath the tree with a tiny basket of sugar eggs, and here and there in the moss the glint of colored foil suggests another egg hunt in the offing!

The wheat grains have sprouted with clear green blades, and the morning light catches an almost transparent fringe of new grass over the patch of bare earth. Carrot tops beneath the moss have sprouted little plumes and the whole Garden is refreshed with a fine spray of “dew”. A golden-yellow candle stands at the grotto, and its joyful flame reflects in the golden disc of the sun, (hanging from the tree), that is now rising.”

Family song: **STJ 29** You Are All We Have