

Marvelous in our Eyes

2005 At-Home Lent Resource
Lectionary Cycle A



Written by Elsie Rempel

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Marvelous in our Eyes: 2005 At-Home Lent Resource

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Introduction

Worshiping as a family or a household nurtures the awareness of God in our daily lives and in our congregational worship. As this relationship with God develops, healthy connections grow between homes and congregations.

During the season of Lent, as God's children we reflect on the life and death of Christ in ways that set us apart from our society. We prepare in ways that remind us of God's great gift of transforming forgiveness and strengthen our anticipation of Christ's second coming. This year, our Lent materials invite us to see the Lord's doing in the lives of biblical characters who meet Jesus and are transformed. These stories challenge us to expand our vision and see what God is doing in our own lives and communities.

This resource for the home is adapted from the congregational resource for Lent, which is available in the Mennonite Church Resource: *Leader: Equipping the Missional Congregation* – Winter 2004/05. I have added an Easter prayer, which is based on material in the spring issue of *Leader*.

Use the resource whenever and however it fits into your home's routines and life stage realities. If your family has younger children, feel free to simplify, shorten and paraphrase the prayers and pondering questions. To use this booklet for daily worship times, repeat the litany for each day of the week, moving through the listed daily scripture passages. The activities ideas arise from the theme, the scripture selections and the various ways that we engage in learning and worshipping.

Pondering Questions:

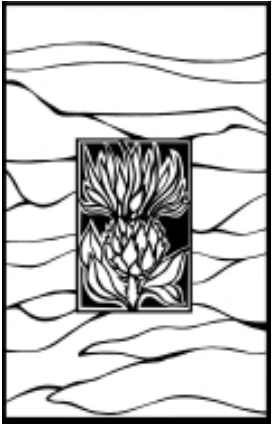
The pondering questions are designed to allow God to speak to each household member in a personal way. Enjoy a short time of silence after each question and feel free to share or ponder these thoughts in your heart.

You may want to add our recommended worship items to your home's worship corner. The collection listed below can help you make a holy space in your home and your hearts for God during the season of Lent. Feel free to adapt them to suit your home.

Worship items:

1. **Cloth:** Neutral shades of sand or graduated shades of gray to purple to cover your worship area would reflect Lent's wilderness experience of repentance, confession and receiving grace. For Easter Morning, a celebratory white or yellow could replace this.
2. **Sand Scene:** A large, clear glass jar, into which sand and small rocks of different colours will be poured each time you worship together, will create a scene of hills and barren deserts. (Aquarium sand would create dramatic effects, but you can also create a scene with different grains and legumes that could be cooked up as a soup after Easter.) Rocks around the base of the jar will add to the wilderness scene. Rearrange them to create an empty tomb scene for Easter morning.
3. **Candles:** These are not essential visuals this year, but you may want to light a large white Christ candle near the Bible and place six small candles (tea lights work well) around the jar of sand. This will help younger children measure the progression of our repentant preparation for Easter. Purple candles symbolize repentance, but are often hard to find. Gluing a purple paper or cloth sleeve around the base of white candles provides the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of the colours.
4. **A Bible and this booklet.** Families with younger children may want to read from the *International Children's Bible*, the *New International Reader's Bible*, *The Adventure Bible*, the *NIV Beginner's Bible* or from Eugene Peterson's paraphrase, *The Message*.

HWB: *Hymnal: A Worship Book*



Watch!

A Child who Obeys

Lent 1

Call to worship:

(Readers can read this in phrases that the others echo.)

Leader: Blessing, forgiveness and never-ending love surround those who trust in the Lord.

Sand pourer: Encouraged by your never-ending love and forgiveness, we face our poor choices and admit that they sometimes get us and others into trouble. Help us God, to trust and to obey your word.

Candle lighter: We want to trust you, God. (As we light this first candle of Lent), help us see things as you see them. Help us see what you are doing and what you would like us to do in our homes, across the street and around your world.

Listening to God's Word:

Reflect daily on 'how God sees' in these passages. Psalm 32: 1-7, 8-11, Genesis 2: 15-17, 3: 1-7, Matthew 4: 1-11, Revelation 22: 6-9, Romans 5: 12-19.

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

1. What colour is the forgiveness in today's story?
2. What feelings, ideas or images do you get from today's Bible text?
3. What signs of God's marvelous, forgiving love did you see at work today?

Songs of the week:

HWB 78: *Ehane he'ama (Father God, you are holy)*, HWB 16: *God is here among us*, or a suitable chorus.

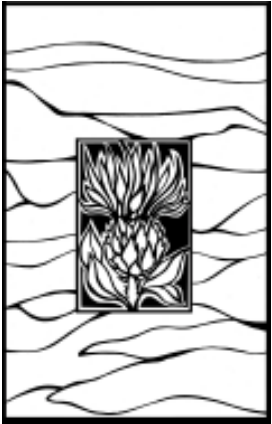
Closing prayer:

Dear God, we know that you are doing marvelous things every-day, but many times, we don't notice. Please help us to see the people around us as you see them.

Candle snuffer: May God's love help us see as God sees (even as we blow out this first Lent candle). Amen.

Activities to choose from:

1. Create a Lent poster, with words or pictures of how God is obeyed in this week's Bible texts.
2. Use a real or imaginary magnifying glass to look for signs of God's way among family and friends. Report on your findings at family worship time.
3. Look for signs of living God's way in nature.
4. Create your own skit or puppet play about the good things that happen when people obey God.
5. Squint until things look fuzzy, or take your glasses off, and look for a safety pin that someone has hidden in the room. Then relax your squint or put your glasses on and look again. Compare that to learning to see the good things God is doing among us.
6. Visit the MC Canada Lent resources link to read stories from Burkina Faso where Witness workers describe what happens when people see their language in writing or pictures for the first time.
<http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/resources/seasonal/>
7. Find and enjoy a picture book about seeing.



Look! A Family that Blesses all Families

Lent 2

Call to worship:

(Readers can speak this in phrases that the others echo.)

Leader: Promise and blessing come from the Lord who made heaven and earth.

Sand pourer: Encouraged by your boundless grace, we face our shortcomings and our lack of faith. Forgive us God, and help us believe in you and your Son.

Candle lighter: We want to believe in you, God. (As we light this second candle of Lent), help us remember that you hear us and give us all we ask when we ask according to your will. May your will be done in our homes, across the street and around your world.

Listening to God's Word:

This week, reflect on how God blesses others through these passages from God's word: Genesis 12: 1-4a, Psalm 121:1-4, 5-8, John 3: 1-9, 10-17, Romans 4: 1-5, (Older Readers: Romans 4: 13-17), (Younger Readers: Genesis 28: 10-17).

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

1. I wonder how God blessed others through the people who wrote or were in today's Bible text?
2. What blessing is God giving you to share with others?
3. Why is it sometimes so hard to follow Jesus and believe God's promises?

Songs of the Week:

HWB 395: *Here I am Lord, or God's Love is for Everybody: Songs for Small and Tall CD, Track 14, When you Learn to Follow Jesus*, by Bryan Moyer Suderman & friends, Mennonite Church Canada, Winnipeg, 2002.

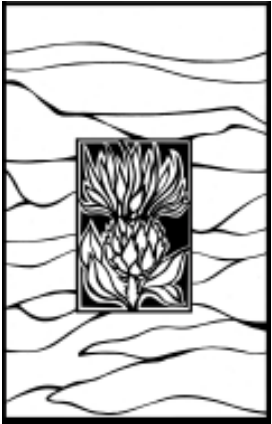
Closing prayer:

We thank you for blessing us so that we can be a blessing. Help us to discover and follow your specific call for each of our lives.

Candle snuffer: May the God of peace equip us with everything good for doing God's will, and may God work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, (even as we blow out these Lent candles). Amen.

Activities to choose from:

1. Use a Bible Atlas to find the places each of the Bible characters you read about lived.
2. Ask people in your congregation for their stories of answering God's call in their lives. Were any of them asked to go into the unknown?
3. Make a "Wanted" poster that shows the ways God wants to bless the world through us. (If you need some ideas, check in Matthew 5: 1-13 and Micah 6:8).
4. Act out some of the strange things that people who follow Jesus do in the song, *When you Learn to Follow Jesus (you will act a little strange)*.
5. Make a picture of a blessing tree with pictures or names of people who have helped others experience the goodness of God. Look for examples among family members, neighbours and people in the public life of your community.
6. Plant some multiplier onions or tiger lilies so you can enjoy the way their goodness multiplies. (Start indoors in a pot on a sunny window ledge if it's too cold outside.)
7. Share a specific blessing with someone you love and help them in this way all week.



Imagine! A Secret Spring within You.

Lent 3

Call to worship:

(Leader can speak this in phrases that the others echo.)

Leader: Come to the living waters with thanksgiving and song. Let us make a joyful sound to the rock of our salvation.

Sand pourer: Oh Lord, we admit that we feel impatient when our problems aren't solved. Even when life is hard, we will try not to harden our hearts against you. Help us God, to trust you patiently.

Candle lighter: God knows how we are and has compassion on us when we are tempted to doubt, blame and despair. (As we light this third candle of Lent), help us discover your refreshment, hope and opportunity in our homes, across our streets and around your world.

Listening to God's Word:

This week, reflect on how God is like a spring of life in these passages from the Bible: Exodus 17: 1-7, Psalm 95, John 4: 5-15, 16-26, 27-30, 31-42, Romans 5: 1-11.

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

1. I wonder if people can worship while they quarrel.
2. I wonder why Jesus compares doing God's will to food.
3. How does God's living water gush up inside of you?

Song of the Week:

HWB 55: *Cantemos al Señor (Let's sing unto the Lord)* or the chorus *I've got a river of life flowing out of me.*

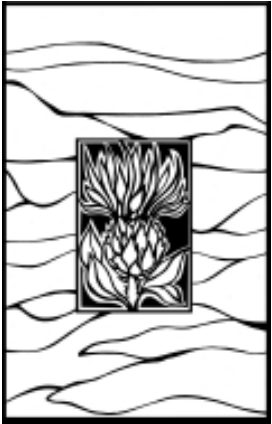
Closing prayer:

Dear God, we thank you that your Holy Spirit pours love into our hearts. Help us to share the good things you do for us with others.

Candle snuffer: May God's Spirit of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, helping us to trust and obey God (even as we blow out this third Lent candle). Amen.

Activities to choose from:

1. Compare a quarrel in your household with those of the Israelites in the wilderness of sin. How did you and they find the refreshment and solutions you needed?
2. Act out a problem where the characters have a hardened heart and a loving heart. How was the problem-solving of the loving heart characters refreshing/life giving?
3. Draw a picture that shows how you feel when others don't want to talk to you.
4. Pretend you are the woman at the well. Write a secret thank-you note to Jesus for talking with you.
5. Look for a fountain or spring in your neighbourhood. Watch it for a while, just thinking about how it is like God's Spirit in us.
6. Give a cool drink of water to a thirsty person this week.
7. Find out about and support the way MCC School Well projects in Laos bring new hope and joy, <http://www.mennonitecc.ca/respond/projects/water.html>.



Come and See! A God who Sheds Light!

Lent 4

Call to worship:

(Leader can speak this in phrases that the others echo.)

Leader: Those who love their brothers and sisters live in God's light.

Sand pourer: We often stumble around, struggling to find a sense of purpose and direction. Invited by your light of truth, we confess that we are often blind but that you can help us see. Help us God, to live as children of the Light.

Candle lighter: We want to belong to the light, God. As we light this fourth candle of Lent, anoint our eyes to see in a new way. Help us see things as you see them, whether they are in our homes, across the street or around your world.

Listening to God's Word:

This week read about how God sheds light in: 1. Samuel 16: 1-13, Psalm 23, John 9: 1-12, 13-23, 24-34, 35-41, and Ephesians 5: 8-14.

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

1. I wonder why God chose David.
2. I wonder how the blind man felt after Jesus healed his sight, when people were arguing about his healing.
3. How can we tell we are living in the light?

Songs of the Week:

HWB 519: *Shepherd me, O God* or 401 *This little light of mine*, or the traditional version as in *God's Love is for Everybody: Songs for Small and Tall CD*, track 15, by Bryan Moyer Suderman & friends, Mennonite Church Canada, Winnipeg, 2002.

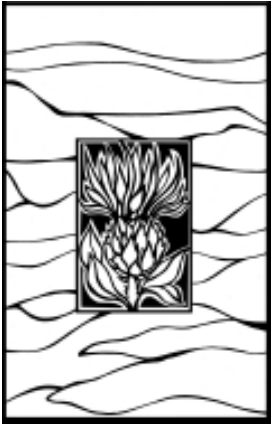
Closing prayer:

Dear God, we know your son Jesus is the Light of the World. Please help us live in that light and see the people around us as you see them.

Candle snuffer: May the Light of the world shine in and through our hearts and lives (even after we blow out this fourth Lent candle). Amen.

Activities to choose from:

1. Play hide and seek in the dark. Let the "seeker" have a flashlight to help find the "hidiers".
2. Place some cucumber slices on your eyes for a few minutes and imagine how the blind man felt when Jesus healed his eyes using mud.
3. Make two lists on a chart shaped like a T. On one side, list ways of being blind. On the other side, list ways of seeing. Use the Bible texts and your own experience.
4. Connect with the KidsPak Lent project and open your eyes to what life is like for the bannock eaters at <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/resources/kidspak/>.
5. Discuss the leadership qualities God saw in David. Do you know people with those qualities?
6. What makes people popular in your school? How does that compare with the attitudes God desires in us?
7. Use a flashlight to shed light on what needs cleaning up in your room and think about how God's light can help us clean up our lives. Then have fun cleaning!



Awaken! God Breathes Release

Lent 5

Call to worship:

(Leader can speak this in phrases that the others echo.)

Leader: Our hope is in the Lord, for it is God who will redeem us from the depths of despair and death.

Sand pourer: Encouraged by your patient understanding, we face our fears of sickness and death and admit that we are afraid of suffering. Help us God, to obey and trust your redeeming power.

Candle lighter: Our hope is in you, God. (As we light this fifth candle of Lent), help us trust in your life-giving breath. Free us to see how you can replace anger and disappointment with hope in our homes, across the street and around your world.

Listening to God's Word:

This week, reflect on how God breathes life in these passages from the Bible: Ezekiel 37: 1-10, 11-14, Psalm 130, John 11: 1-16, 17-37, 38-45, (older Readers) Romans 8: 6-11, (younger readers) Luke 8: 40-42 and 49-56.

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

1. I wonder how it felt to see the dead return to life.
2. I wonder how God decides when to do such miracles?
3. Imagine how great God is to be stronger than death.

Songs of the Week:

HWB 614 *In the bulb there is a flower* or HWB 46 *I sing the mighty power of God*

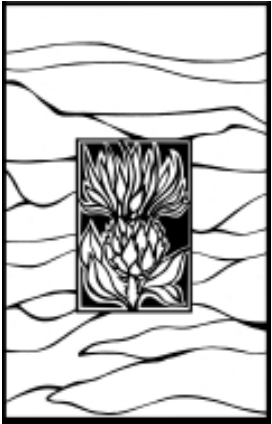
Closing prayer:

Dear God, we thank you for the marvelous way you offer life and meaning to many people everyday. Please restore discouraged spirits and help us all to be a living witness to the abundant life you offer.

Candle snuffer: May God's abundant life be seen in us even after we blow out this fifth Lent candle. Amen.

Activities to choose from:

1. Make a poster of before and after pictures of the people in this week's Bible texts.
2. Take a "before" picture of your (window) garden, plant something, and draw a picture of what it will look like in a month.
3. Tell stories of how God has brought new meaning and energy to you when you were discouraged or hopeless. Look for stories of hope in a recent copy of *Canadian Mennonite*.
4. Make decorated posters for your bedroom that say, "The Lord has great power to redeem." (from Psalm 130:7)
5. Write a thank-you note to God for giving you hope when you last felt hopeless.
6. Share God's life-giving hope with a discouraged person by giving them a fragrant plant.
7. Plant some barley (or other grains) in a dish of moist soil and wait for the seeds to spring to new life in time for Easter.



Take Notice!

Another Humble Entrance

Palm Sunday

Call to worship:

(Leader can speak this in phrases that the others echo.)

Leader: Things are not always as they appear. Our Lord, who stooped to earth and suffered, is now exalted in heaven and on earth. Help us trust in your victory, Lord.

Sand pourer: Encouraged by your humility, we face our desires for praise and admit that our fear of rejection tempts us to deny you. Help us God, to accept the cross and to obey humbly, like Jesus did.

Candle lighter: We want to be faithful, God. (As we light this last candle of Lent), help us understand things as you see them. Help us see through the suffering to your victory, and to claim your resurrected life in our homes, across the street and around your world .

Listening to God's Word:

This week read these passages from God's word: Matthew 21:1-11, Psalm 118: 1-2 and 19-29, Isaiah 50: 4-9a, Matthew 26: 1-6, 26: 69-75, Thursday: Matthew 26: 20-35, Friday: Matthew 27: 27-54, Saturday: Phillipians 2: 5-11, Easter Sunday: Matthew 28: 1-20.

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

1. What would Jesus have seen, smelled, heard, felt during the Palm Sunday parade?

2. How do you think Jesus friends felt during this week?
3. What important things are we willing to sacrifice and suffer for?

Songs of the Week:

HWB 237 *All glory, laud, and honor, Holy, holy, holy, Lord* by Steve Bell, Deep Calls to Deep, ©1993 Signpost Music; HWB 439 *I want Jesus to walk with me.*

Closing prayer:

Dear God, we know that you do marvelous things, even when you suffer. When it is hard to be faithful, help us to stay and not run away. Please help us to see these hard times as you see them.

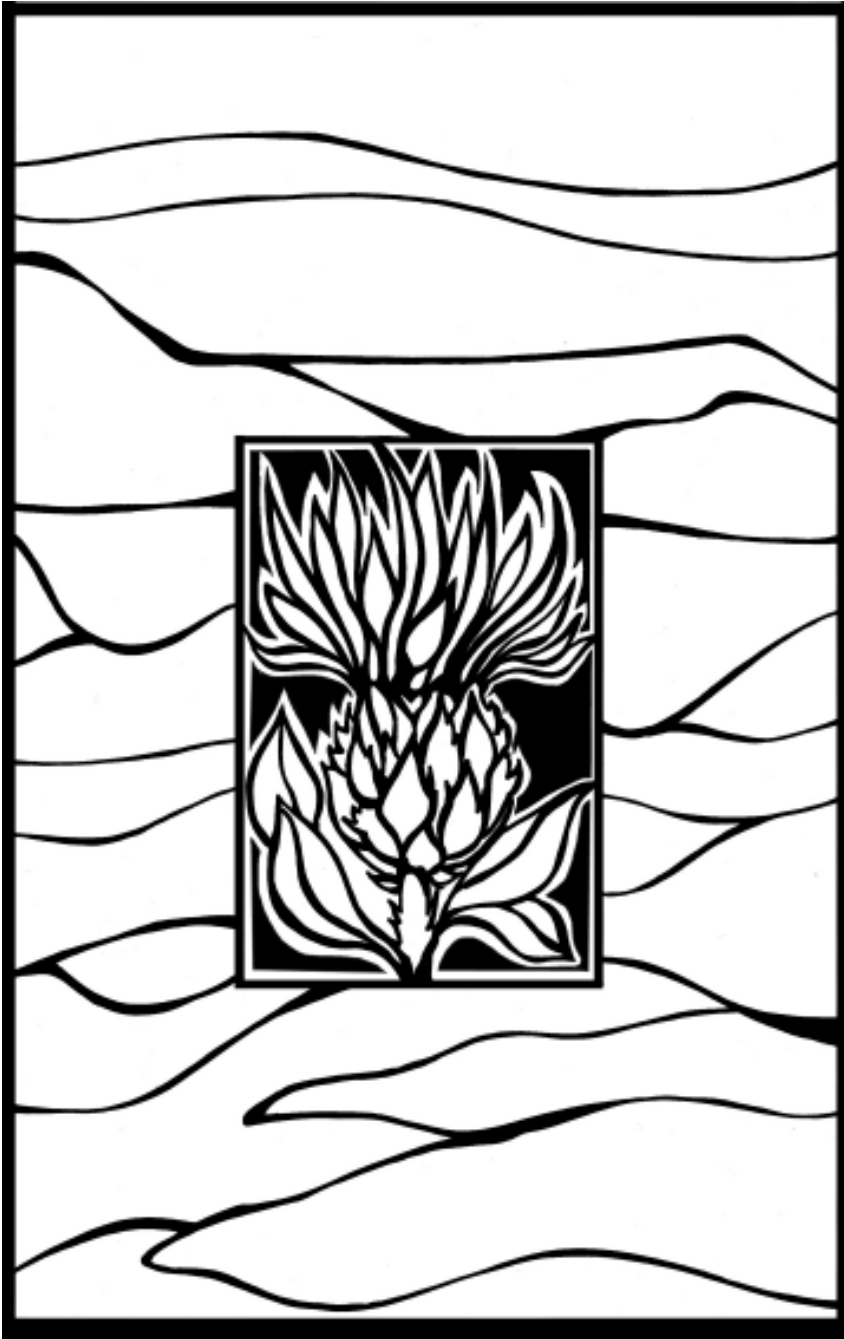
Candle snuffer: As we blow out these candles, we want to live through the holy week with you, God, seeing as you see, believing in your good and forgiving purposes. Amen.

Activities to choose from:

1. Reverse the words in *I want Jesus to walk with me*, to "Jesus wants me to walk with him" and sing it as a prayer for this holy week.
2. Enact a Palm Sunday parade in your house or in your neighbourhood with some friends.
3. Find an optical illusion in a library book or on the internet. Look at it during the sad times of this week to remind yourself that things are not always as they first appear.
4. Make the outline of a plain cross (15 cm x 10 cm, 3 cm wide) on a hill. Cut it out. On the hill, write: "God's steadfast love endures forever." Then add symbols to the four arms of the cross for ways you could walk with Jesus, things you want to pray about, kind deeds that reveal God's never-ending love, and symbols that show your love for Jesus. Decorate the other side as beautifully as you can to show your joy that God's steadfast love raised Jesus back to life.
5. On Maundy Thursday or Good Friday, use your Lent candles and the litany on the following page to help you understand why Jesus had to die and why God raised him back to life.
6. When you decorate your Easter eggs, think about the new life that God gave Jesus and offers to us.
7. Bake pretzels to remind your family of Jesus' simplicity and as a reminder to pray. Share them with a neighbour or friend.
8. On Easter Sunday, give voice to your Easter joy by using the attached Easter Prayer, or by writing your own prayer of thanks.

Maundy Thursday Litany

1. Make a copy of the litany page for each reading participant.
2. Prepare for this service with some quiet worship music and silence.
3. Light all the Lent candles and the Christ candle.
4. Write personal confessions on slips of paper before beginning the litany. (Keep them for the middle of the litany).
5. Add a metal bowl in which you can burn up your confession slips.
6. Have family or household members take turns snuffing out the candles.
7. Have family or household members take turns reading the "One" parts (depending on their ages).



Maundy Thursday Litany

- One:** When we hate or are unkind to each other, the world becomes a darker place. **(Snuff out candle #1)**
- All:** Jesus taught us to love each other.
- One:** When we are grabby and want everything for ourselves, the world becomes a darker place. **(Snuff out candle #2)**
- All:** Jesus taught us to share with others.
- One:** When we are afraid, the world seems dark and frightening. **(Snuff out candle #3)**
- All:** Jesus' love is stronger than our fears. He is the light of the world.
- One:** When we are jealous of others, and are angry because they have things we want for ourselves, the world becomes a darker place. **(Snuff out candle #4)**
- All:** Jesus taught us to be content with what we have and to look out for the good of others.
- One:** When we are deceitful and don't tell the truth, the world becomes a darker place. **(Snuff out candle #5)**
- All:** Jesus said, "Let your yes be yes and your no be no." He expects us to be honest.
- One:** Because of people's hatred, greed, selfishness, jealousy and dishonesty, Jesus died on the cross. **(Snuff out candle #6)**
- All:** To Jesus' friends the world seemed like a very dark place.
- One:** Before he died, Jesus said, "Forgive them Father, for they don't know what they are doing."

Sing "Were you there" while you burn up your confessions, lighting them with the still-burning Christ candle.

- One:** Jesus did not stay dead. God's love is stronger than all our sins, and on that first Easter, God raised Jesus from the dead. Because Jesus loved people enough to suffer and die and still forgive, we, too, can be forgiven. Jesus' death can free us from the bad things we have done. It can also give us the strength to forgive others when they hurt us. Christ's love can be reflected in and shine through us. When we are kind and loving to each other, the world becomes a brighter place. **(Relight candle #1)**
- All:** Jesus' love shines through our loving deeds and words.
- One:** When we share and find joy in sharing with those who have less, the world becomes a brighter place. **(Relight candle #2)**
- One:** When we trust in God's care for us and are freed from fear, the world becomes a brighter place. **(Relight candle #3)**
- All:** Jesus wants us to trust him with our fears and worries so we can live freely.
- One:** When we are content with what we have, and are happy for others when they get something special, the world becomes a brighter place. **(Relight candle #4)**
- All:** Jesus wants us to trust him to supply us with what we need.
- One:** When we are honest with ourselves and others, the world becomes a safer and brighter place. **(Relight candle #5)**
- All:** Jesus said, "I am the truth." He will help us be truthful, too.
- One:** When we are loving, unselfish, trusting, content and honest, Jesus lives in our lives and the world becomes a brighter place. **(Relight candle #6)**
- All:** Because Jesus lives and wants to live in our hearts, God's light and love shine through us and brighten up the world. We thank God for the wonderful gifts of forgiveness and love which we can enjoy and share because Jesus died for us.

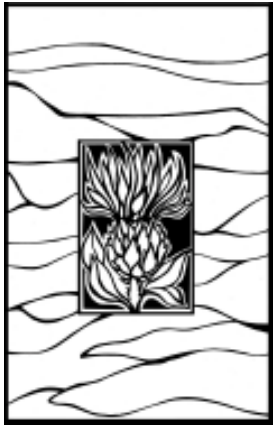
(You may want to add your own spontaneous prayers here.)

Sing: Sing your favourite Easter Carol before you disperse.

Easter Sunday

Prayer of Thanks

Dear God and Father of our living Lord Jesus Christ,
we praise you for the power of your forgiving, life-giving love.
We thank you for raising Jesus from the dead.
We thank you for the wonderful gifts of forgiveness and salvation
that we can enjoy because of Jesus.
We thank you for the Bible, which has helped us see
how God's love transformed the lives of Jesus' first followers.
We thank you for inviting us to follow you, too, and for the way
your love transforms our own lives and communities.
We see your love at work in..... *(Add own observations)*
Thank you for continuing to live in and around us.
Thank you that your love is stronger than death.
Amen.



Notes:

*jot down insights or moments that made your At-Home Lent
Worship memorable:*



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