



I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people.—Jeremiah 31: 33b

2006 At-Home Lent Resource

Lent 2006 – Lectionary Cycle B

by Elsie Rempel



Formation



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I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people.—Jeremiah 31: 33b

Introduction

By Elsie Rempel

During the season of Lent, God's children reflect on the life and death of Christ in ways that set us apart from a society that celebrates Easter with chocolate bunnies and chicks. We prepare in ways that remind us of the great gift of redeeming forgiveness that God wants to write on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33). God's imprint on our hearts is there, it cannot be erased.

This year, our Lent materials hope to rekindle intimate relationships with God, whose love stays with us and pursues us through the outstretched arms of Jesus. As we become aware of the intensity of this love, we respond with newfound love and thankfulness to Jesus for stretching out his arms to save us.

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*, prepared for us by the Central Plains Conference (Minnesota, South and North Dakota). 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 thoughts. To use this booklet for daily worship times, repeat the litany for each day of the week, and read the daily scripture recommendations. The activities correspond loosely to the scripture selections listed there.

Pondering Questions:

The pondering questions are designed to help each household member hear God speak 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. The collection of recommended worship items listed below can help you make a holy space in your home and your hearts for God during the season of Lent. Adapt them to suit your home.

Worship items:

1. Cloth: A festive cloth to cover a worship area. A simple or brocaded purple cloth would reflect both the royalty of Christ, our Lord, and the attitude of repentance, which dominates the season.
2. Poster: Create a poster of a heart with a pen on it.
3. Candles: Set one larger white Christ candle in the center and place six candles in transparent candleholders around it. Heart shaped tea lights or purple candles, representing repentance, could reinforce the theme.
4. Family Lent Journal: in which you can write a weekly response.
5. CD-*Can't keep Quiet*, by Bryan Moyer Suderman, www.smalltallmusic.com, with new songs to help you worship.
6. A Bible and this booklet. For families with younger children, you may want to read from the *International Children's Bible*, the *New International Reader's Version*, *The Adventure Bible*, or the *NIV Beginners Bible*.
7. Hymnal: A Worship Book (HWB) and Sing the Journey (SJ). For families that sing.

Getting Ready for Lent

February 28, 2006

Shrove Tuesday

Shrove comes from the old word, shrive, which means to hear a person confess their sins and receive forgiveness. On Shrove Tuesday, it was traditional to make pancakes to use up the eggs, fat and sugar that were in the house, because people used to give up eating these foods for Lent.

Invite another family from your church for a pancake supper, unless your congregation already hosts such an event.

Decorate your dining area together, using balloons and cloth or paper banners to give it a Mardi Gras look.

Write words of praise, such as Alleluia, New Life, Joy, Love Wins, onto the banners.

Promise to encourage each other on your Lent journey this year.

Send half of the banners home with the invited family.

Write on our hearts

March 1, 2006

Ash Wednesday

Take down the celebration banners from your Shrove Tuesday supper. Fold them up carefully and bury them, or store them in a dark place until Easter morning.

Discuss how Lent helps us look at ourselves and to choose activities that renew, or strengthen, our faith in God. Lent helps us walk with Jesus and remember his journey to the cross and the resurrection.

Pick some food or activity, from your normal family routine, that you would like to replace with faith building activities during Lent.

Read God's Word: Psalm 51: 1 - 17

Write a letter, in which you tell God about your family Lent plan for the next 40 days and thank God for writing on your hearts with love and truth. Your plan could be something like taking the time for daily devotions with this booklet during the time of a TV show you enjoy watching, or visiting lonely neighbours. Perhaps there are foods you will give up eating so you can donate the saved money to a mission project.

Brainstorm freely and respect the ideas of your children. If children are too young to understand metaphors, substitute the language of writing on your hearts; thank God for being near and loving like a hug. Create a small amount of ashes and use them to 'sign' your fingerprints on the letter.

Burn up the letter, in a safe manner, as a way of sending it to God. Watch the smoke rise and disperse.

Call the family with whom you shared Shrove Tuesday and tell them about your plan.

Set up your Lent Worship Centre, using the suggestions in this booklet.

Everlasting covenant and love

March 5, 2006



Lent 1

Call to worship:

One: Come beloved children of God, come worship the Lord.

All: We worship the Lord who loves us with an everlasting love.

One: Help us know your loving ways, God. As we light this first candle of Lent, help us see your love so it can lead us today. Amen.

Listening to God's Word:

Read Genesis 9: 8 - 17

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

1. When have you made a fresh start?
2. If God made us to bring joy and love to each other, I wonder why people are sometimes so greedy and violent?
3. I wonder how the love of God protects and preserves us today?

Song of the week:

Hymnal: A Worship Book (HWB) 161, *We give thanks unto you or Thank you*, by Bryan Moyer Suderman (CD-*Can't Keep Quiet*, www.smalltallmusic.com)

Closing prayer:

One: Hear the promise of God: "Never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." So let us go, trusting God's unfailing promise to protect and love us.

All: May God's love bless us and shine through us even after we blow out this first Lent candle. Amen.

Activities to choose from:

1. Read Genesis 9:8-17, Psalm 25:1-10, Mark 1:9-15, 16-20, 35-39 and I Peter 3:18-22.
2. Make a large outline drawing of a rainbow with 6 stripes to serve as a backdrop for your family's worship centre. Let each colour remind you of the weeks of Lent. Colour the first stripe violet. Violet reflects our willingness to let God clean our souls, and dominates the Lent season.
3. Start your own family Lent scrapbook with stories of God's love from the Bible and from your family's experiences.
4. Notice acts of loving faithfulness among family and friends, and post them as little raindrop signs under the rainbow.
5. Look for signs of God's creative love outside or on houseplants and make a list of the things you notice.
6. Create your own play or puppet play about God's rainbow promise to Noah's family.
7. Find and enjoy a picture book about faithful love. One possibility is *Love you forever*, by Robert Munsch, and Sheila McGraw, ©1986, A Firefly Book, Toronto.

Longing for fruitfulness

March 12, 2006



Lent 2

Call to worship

One: Come beloved children of God, come worship the Lord.

All: We worship the Lord who satisfies our longings, whose promises never fail.

One: As we light this second Lent candle, merciful God, make our lives fruitful and help us tell others what we learn about you.

Listening to God's Word:

Read Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

1. I wonder how Abraham and Sarah felt when they became parents at such a late age?
2. What promises of God do you have a hard time believing?
3. Toward what unexpected new life might God be leading you?

Song of the Week:

SJ 29: *You are all we have, or Beloved Child*, by Bryan Moyer Suderman (CD-*Can't Keep Quiet*, www.smalltallmusic.com)

Closing prayer:

One: Hear the promise of God: "I will make you exceedingly fruitful." Help us grow strong in our faith, believing that God is able to do what God has promised.

All: May your peace go with us and help us trust your promises, even after we blow out these Lent candles. Amen.

Activities to choose from:

1. This week also read these passages from God's word: Genesis 18:1-15, Psalm 22:23-31, Mark 8:31-38, Mark 9:2-10, Romans 4:13-25, Galatians 5:16-18, 22-26.
2. Paint the second stripe of your rainbow blue. Use it to think of Sarah and her baby Isaac, and for all babies as signs of God's promises to us.
3. In your Lent scrapbook, make a family tree of the people who passed on the faith to several generations of your family. If you are the first generation of your family to belong to God's family, imagine what your faith family tree could look like in the future.
4. Make a fruit poster that shows ways God helps us to be fruitful (see Galatians 5). Then pick one of these fruits and practice growing it all week.
5. Start some tomato plants indoors so you can enjoy their fruitfulness later.
6. Take a fruit basket to someone who needs encouragement, comfort, or compassion this week.
7. Give each person in your family a smooth stone. Hold it and think of God's faithfulness to each of you. Use them to build a little stone altar in your worship centre.

An illuminating word

March 19, 2006



Lent 3

Call to worship:

One: Come, beloved children of God, come worship the Lord.

All: The Lord illumines the good way we should live. We worship the Lord who teaches us true wisdom.

One: Wise and loving God, open our eyes to understand your way as we light this third Lent candle and worship you today. Amen.

Listening to God's Word:

Read Exodus 20: 1 - 11

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

1. I wonder how rules can revise us and make our hearts rejoice?
2. I wonder why God's ways confuse smart people?
3. I wonder how God's wisdom can brighten my life?

Song of the Week:

HWB 315 *This is a story full of love*, SJ 104 *God moves in a mysterious way* or *Groove With God*, by Bryan Moyer Suderman (CD-*Can't Keep Quiet*, www.smalltallmusic.com)

Closing prayer:

One: God, we live in a world of many choices. Thank you for loving us enough to give us these guiding words to help us make good and wise choices. Forgive us when we disobey your will for our lives.

All: May your loving wisdom help us make wise, loving choices even after we blow out these Lent candles. Amen.

Activities to choose from:

1. This week read these passages from God's word: Exodus 20:12-17, Psalm 19, John 2:13-23, I Corinthians 1:18-25, Proverbs 2:1-11, Proverbs 17:1-17.
2. Colour the third stripe of your rainbow green for the creative growth that is possible among us when we live according to God's good commands.
3. Look for and then list signs of God's love and wisdom from the Commandments in your Lent scrapbook.
4. Talk about how rules can help your family get along with each other and help you love and honour God.
5. Make up and/or play a cooperative game with fair rules.
6. Give a gift of gratitude to someone who helps you make good choices.

Facing our fears, receiving God's riches

March 26, 2006



Lent 4

Call to worship:

One: Come, beloved children of God, come worship the Lord.

All: We worship the Lord, who calls us and restores us through faith in the crucified Christ.

One: Healing God, who keeps on restoring us, have mercy on us as we light this fourth Lent candle and worship you today.
Amen.

Listening to God's Word:

Read Numbers 21: 4 - 9

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

1. I wonder why the Israelites complained so much.
2. I wonder how being sorry and looking up at the snake for healing fit together.
3. I wonder how God responds to my complaints.

Song of the Week:

HWB 143 *Amazing Grace* or *You Can Shine*, Bryan Moyer Suderman (CD-*Can't keep Quiet*, www.smalltallmusic.com)

Closing prayer:

One: God, sometimes we are not satisfied and keep trying to get more and more. Help us know your kind of abundance and to trust you to provide for all our needs.

**All: May your healing presence work within us and satisfy us even after we blow out these Lent candles.
Amen.**

Activities to choose from:

1. This week read these passages from God's word: Psalm 107:1-3 and 17-22, John 3:1-13, John 3:14-21. Luke 10:30-35, Ephesians 2:1-10, Psalm 78:1-10.
2. Colour the fourth stripe of your rainbow yellow to reflect the joy that comes from trusting in God's satisfying love.
3. In your Lent scrapbook, make two lists on a chart shaped like a T. On one side, list the things about which you tend to complain. On the other side list the things for which you are really thankful.
4. Beginning with the oldest in your family, tell stories about times when you complained a lot or did something wrong, but your parents, employer or friends still accepted you graciously.
5. Paint pictures of your least and most favourite foods. Would you have liked eating Manna everyday?
6. Create a skit or a story about complainers who get a positive attitude adjustment after they get sick.
7. Pick a problem about which you like to complain and ask God to help you with it. See what happens to your attitude as you learn to trust God to solve the problem.

Restoring what is broken

April 2, 2006



Lent 5

Call to worship:

One: Come, beloved children of God, come worship the Lord.

All: We worship the Lord who forgives our sins and restores the joy of salvation.

One: Restoring God, clean our hearts so they reflect the light of your love as we light this fifth Lent candle and worship you today. Amen.

Listening to God's Word:

Read Jeremiah 31:31-34

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

1. I wonder what is it like when God's law gets written on our hearts.
2. I wonder how God cleans our sins and chooses us as partners.
3. I wonder what it will be like once everyone knows and loves God.

Song of the Week:

HWB 483 *O God who gives us life and breath* or *Tell me what you wish for*, Bryan Moyer Suderman (CD-*Can't Keep Quiet*, www.smalltallmusic.com)

Closing prayer

One: God, we are lost and scattered without you. Have mercy on us, teach us wisdom and help us be your people.

**All: As we blow out these candles, prepare us to serve and glorify Christ in the world.
Amen.**

Activities to choose from:

1. This week read these passages from God's word: Psalm 51:1-12, John 12:20-33, Hebrews 5:5-10, Psalm 119:9-16, II Kings 22:1-10, 11-13 and 18-19.
2. Colour the fifth stripe of your rainbow orange to remind you of God's renewing sunshine and new chances for a righteous world.
3. Make a big but broken heart in your scrapbook. When you catch someone else showing love, repair the heart by sticking little hearts over the rip in the big one. See how full your big heart will get this week.
4. Make decorated posters for your bedroom that say, "God picks and sends me."
5. Share God's love with a lonely person by doing something loving with them.
6. Share a story of how God renewed a loving spirit in you when you were struggling.
7. Plant some barley (or other seeds) in a dish of soft moist soil and wait to see how God gives growth in receptive soil. Think about your heart as soil.

Awaiting our exalted Saviour (Passion week)

April 9, 2006



Lent 6

Call to worship:

One: Come, Beloved children of God, come worship the Lord.

**All: We give thanks to the Lord, whose love saves us.
Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!**

One: We praise your name above every other name as we light this sixth Advent candle. Amen.

Listening to God's Word:

Read Mark 11:1-11

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

1. What would Jesus have heard, seen, smelled during the Palm Sunday parade?
2. I wonder how it felt to be part of that first Passion week?
3. I wonder how the colours of your rainbow reflect the many feelings of Passion week?

Song of the Week:

HWB 239 *Ride on, ride on in majesty*, SJ 9 *Come, now is the time to worship*, or *You're Not Alone*, Bryan Moyer Suderman (CD-*Can't Keep Quiet*, www.smalltallmusic.com)

Closing prayer:

One: Jesus, when we fear for the future, shine upon us in love and mercy. Your passion shows us how "All who humble themselves will be exalted".

**All: As we blow out these candles, may the humble attitude of Jesus go with us and be in us throughout this holy week.
Amen.**

Activities to choose from:

1. This week read these passages from God's word: John 12:1-11, 20-36, John 13: 21-32, Thursday: John 13:1-17, Friday: John 18:1-19:42, Saturday: Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16, Sunday: Mark 16:1-8.
2. Colour the final stripe of your rainbow red and think of how suffering completes the rainbow of promise and God's plan for saving the world.
3. Record your feelings and questions about this week in your scrapbook. Make the outline of a plain cross. Under it write Jesus' words: "Forgive them Father, for they don't know what they are doing." Then add a symbol to each arm of the cross for something you could let go of for Jesus, something you want to pray about, a kind deed that shows people have the same attitude as Jesus, and a symbol that shows your love for Jesus.
4. Enact a Palm Sunday parade in your house or in your neighbourhood with some friends.
5. Put your Palm branches in a safe place to dry or make some out of construction paper, so they can remind you of your donkey-riding Jesus in the sad times of this week.
6. On Maundy Thursday or on Good Friday, use your Lent candles and the litany on the following pages to help you understand why Jesus had to die and why God raised him back to life.
7. When you decorate Easter eggs, think about the new life that God gave Jesus and offers to us.
8. Bake pretzels to remind your family of Jesus' humble attitude and prayer. Share them with a neighbour or friend.

Maundy Thursday or Good Friday

April 13 or 14, 2006

(Maundy comes from the Latin, "dies mandatum" which means "the day of the new commandment". This Friday is considered "good" because not even death can overwhelm God's love and grace.)

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. Add a metal bowl in which you can burn up your confession slips.
5. Write personal confessions on slips of paper before beginning the litany. (Keep them for the middle of the litany).
6. Have family or household members take turns snuffing out the candles.
7. Have family or household members take turns reading the "One" parts.

Maundy Thursday or Good Friday 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:

Sing HWB #257 *Were you there*, while you burn up your confessions, lighting them with the still-burning Christ candle.

Option: stop here on Thursday and continue on Easter morning.

Litany

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.

One: 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)*

All: Jesus gives us joy in sharing with those who have less.

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 or play a favourite Easter carol before you disperse.

Easter Sunday Prayer of Thanks

April 16, 2006



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 your own observations)

Thank you for continuing to live in and around us.

Thank you that your love is stronger than death.

Amen.

Song:

Can't Keep Quiet, Bryan Moyer Suderman (CD-*Can't keep Quiet*, www.smalltallmusic.com)

Notes:

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



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