



Lent, just as much as Advent, is a time of waiting and preparing. Children can learn about and come to appreciate this important season of the Christian year, and with a bit of creativity you can but mark the days of Lent in your home.

For families, it can be a time to be more attentive to the words of Jesus and to each other. A time to try harder to put Christ's teachings into practice with a concentrated effort put toward spiritual growth, rebirth and renewal. It is a 40-day journey with Jesus and can mean **doing something** as well as **giving up something**. It is hoped that the following ideas inspire you as you lead your children through this season of Lent.

Actions

Come to Messiah for FLIP programming on Wednesday evenings. Participate in the weekly soup dinners, intergenerational service projects and/or lenten worship services.

Use Color

Use purple fabric, a purple plastic table covering, or tissue paper over a door to 'decorate' for the season. Let children tape paper crosses each time they have a prayer to lift up.

Practice the 3 C's - Give 3 compliments a day each to your spouse, your child or to someone else. Keep track on your calendar or in your journal. Encourage your children to do the same.

Blessing - Parents, bless your children by making the sign of the cross on their forehead before they go to bed at night or when they leave for school each day. Read a spiritual book, or take part in a bible study that inspires you to grow spiritually as an individual, as a parent or as a family.

Spring Cleaning- Engage your child in renewing a corner of the home:

- Paint a room or clean out closets.
- Give unused furniture, toys and clothes to the poor, filling 40 bags in 40 days.
- Hold a garage sale and donate the profits (i.e. ELCA World Hunger Campaign).

Stress the importance of quiet time and prayer time. Have a quiet time each week/daily (no TV, iPods, music, or cell phones) Use this time to begin a new family prayer practice or devotion time.

Help your children to choose a positive action for each day of Lent.

Write a letter or call someone who is lonely or shut-in each week of Lent.

Engage the family in writing a daily/weekly thank you to someone who has helped them.

Arts and Crafts

Paper Chain - As a family, make a paper chain for Lent in purple tones. Each link is to represent one day. Mark Good Friday in black and end with a white loop for Easter. Make Sundays a different shade of purple to make them easier to find. Each weekend, or when time permits, as a family write on the week's links your prayers for the days ahead.

Clay Pot - Shatter an inexpensive clay pot and give each family member a piece to keep during Lent as a reminder that we are like clay in God's hands. During Lent, we can allow God to shape us into new vessels through new action and/or fasting. On Easter, as a family, create a mosaic (something new) with the shattered pieces.

Mosaic-Cross - Cut out a large cardboard cross and many squares of colored paper. During Lent, whenever a family member does a good deed or makes a sacrifice, he or she glues a square to the cross. Try to cover the cross by Easter.

Make Easter Eggs - Eggs remind us of the new life that is present for all of us in the Resurrection of Jesus. Explain the history of Easter Eggs to your children as you complete this wonderful family activity together.



A history of Easter Eggs:

In ancient times eggs were a symbol of spring and fertility. During the Middle-Ages, the eating of eggs was prohibited during Lent. On Easter morning, Christians would give eggs to one another to celebrate the breaking of the Lenten fast. The egg became the symbol of the tomb from which Christ emerged, calling us all to resurrection and new life. When you dye Easter eggs, think about what the colors mean: red- Jesus' blood, purple- being sorry for sin, green- new life, and yellow-resurrection.

Meal Time

Plan a simple meal each week around tortillas and beans or rice and beans. Let everyone at your table share an idea for helping hungry people. Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Fast so others may feast.

Read Matthew 25:31-46. Then, as a family, discuss giving up some food each week of Lent. Encourage your children to give the savings to Messiah's ELCA World Hunger through their Sunday School/FL!P special Lent offering - 'Gods Global Barnyard'.

Make Pretzels

Pretzels have their origin in early Christian Lenten practices as fat, eggs, and milk were often forbidden/fasted from during Lent. A special bread was made with dough consisting of only flour, salt, and water. These little breads were shaped in the form of arms crossed in prayer. Choose one night in Lent to make pretzels.

Fasting

Fasting during Lent has always been a popular religious practice and is derived from Jesus' 40 days and nights spent wandering the desert before he began his ministry in earnest. Fasting can be about food, but it can also be about letting go of a bad habit or the over dependence on an item or activity.

Some examples:

Fast from fast food, sugar, or soft drinks

Fast from buying anything that is unnecessary during Lent.

Fast from Facebook or other social media/smartphone activity.

Fast from Television or a certain genre of programming.

Use Lent to help your children tackle challenging behaviors.

Have them give up “whining,” arguing,” “not listening,” or “interrupting people who are on the phone.”

Remove something from your calendar and spend that time with your Family, scheduling a Family Night each week to enrich your family life and connection with one another. Here are some ideas:

Read a long chapter book together, maybe a junior version of a classic.

Read a selection of bible stories from a children’s storybook bible each week.

Watch a movie or play a simple board game.



Worship

Attend a Lenten or Holy Week Worship service as a family. See flyer or visit the Church website for details.

Participate in the dramatic and creative retellings of classic bible stories that recount God's promises to us at the Easter Vigil. Connect with Pastoral Intern Ben for details.

The Children and Family Ministries team of teachers and volunteers wishes you Many Blessings this Lenten and Easter Season!