**Lent Resources for Home**

What is Lent?

Lent is the 40 days that lead up to Easter. It is a season of preparation. We are preparing ourselves, and our community, to receive the mystery of Easter: Jesus’ rising from death. There are lots of ways to prepare. Some people prepare by giving things up; others prepare by doing something new and different for the 40 days. Whatever you choose to do, the reason we do it is to feel closer to God and to God’s infinite love.

As we begin Lent this year, we are also approaching the one-year anniversary of the pandemic and social distancing. This Lent there may be a lot of grief that needs to get processed before the promise of new Easter light can enter our hearts. There also may be surprising moments of hope this Lent.

I pray that God’s Spirit be poured out upon your household this Lent. That you may be led during this season in ways that deepen the love you share for one another, and lead you to give that love away to your neighborhood, the community of Davis, and beyond. Amen.

Rev. Alex+

**Making Prayer Beads**

Prayer beads are a simple prayer tool that can help teenagers (and adults) pray by giving our hands something to do. Having something to fidget with, to touch and feel, to count or handle can help our very distracted brains calm down and focus. Over time and with repeated use, the individual beads themselves become imbued with the prayers of our heart.

Materials needed:

-beads (a variety of colors and shapes are nice),

-Thread/fishing line/yarn that you can thread the beads through.

Instructions:

-Gather as a family and invite everyone to make their own prayer beads.

-Prayer beads can be as long or as short as you like. They can be the size to go on your wrist like a bracelet…or they can be very long. Whatever you and your children decide.

-Invite people to choose whatever beads are most appealing to them.

-As you are selecting beads and threading them, here are some things you could talk about:

“What is prayer? Is it just words? Can we pray in other ways?”

“how do you think these beads could help you/us to pray?”

“what are times in our day when we could use our prayer beads? Are there stressful zoom calls that we could use these during?”

“What prayers do we want to say right now as we make these?”

-If you or your child are unsure of how you use prayer beads here are some options:

-Some people simply feel and touch each bead, one at a time, while they pray. They aren’t too focused on the beads themselves; the beads simply are a tactile sensation that calms the mind and aids focus (like a fidget spinner…but for prayer).

-Some people make a pattern in their beads, like 3 blue beads and then one green bead…all the way around. Then they pray one prayer on the blue beads, and they pray a different kind of prayer on the green beads.

-When you have strung all your beads, simply tie it together into a loop. You’re done!

**Lent Practice: Loving Our Neighbors**

A traditional Lenten practice is “almsgiving” – the practice of taking care of our neighbors who do not have enough. Especially in this time of COVID it is important to practice paying attention to the needs of our neighbors and finding ways to reach out and care for them.

As a family, decide on a local charity or nonprofit you would like to support. This could be STEAC, Davis Community Meals and Housing, The Sacramento Poor People’s Campaign who visited our youth group… Decide as a family on one you all feel is important and is doing good work to help our neighbors in the Sacramento area.

Then agree as a family that you will donate a certain amount of stuff or money a week or every day during Lent. For example, if you pick a food pantry you could say “we’ll each contribute one can of food a day/week.” Research and reach out to whatever organization you pick to find out what they could use.

Place a collection box somewhere in a prominent place in your home. Check in about it once a week. This will be more meaningful if your teenager selects what is going into the box. That might mean they need to take a special trip to the grocery store…or that they need to help select something from a few options after the groceries have already arrived at your house.

A variation on this: you could actually walk around your literal neighborhood and talk to some of your actual neighbors. What do they need during these 40 days? Is there anyway you can help them?

**COVID Anniversary Grief Ritual**

You may consider having some sort of ritual to help your family process the grief that may be coming up with the arrival of the one-year anniversary. Consider using around March 15th as a good time for that anniversary…that was about when we had our last TYGMOS in-person gathering, the last time we were physically at church together. And I know that schools followed a week or so after that. Pick a date in that two week stretch that would work for your family to gather.

This does not need to be focused on church if that’s not really present…I could imagine with the children the biggest grief will be around school and their friends.

Begin by gathering everyone, and saying something along these lines:

*It’s now been about a year since there was in-person school, since we have been able to go to church, since we have been able to see family members & friends…*

*Anniversaries such as these often bring up feelings of sadness, anger, confusion, difficulty focusing, being distracted or just minds going blank. These are normal and healthy feelings you and I have been having. What we are going through is very hard, and it causes us all a lot of stress/anger/sadness/confusion/pick your word.*

*We’re going to do an activity as a family to help us name, share, and express these feelings to one another and to God. Sharing how we are feeling with those we love, including God, is really helpful in healing and feeling better.*

Then here are the instructions for the ritual as I (Alex) explain them, but please adapt to your children and their ages.

-Begin by taking a large sheet of paper you can write up. The bigger the better.

-On that sheet of paper, draw a person at the center…this can be a stick figure. Label it “me.”

-Then draw a medium sized circle around the person. This is the person’s 6 ft of social distancing. In terms of the ritual, have enough space that you can write both inside the bubble and outside of it.

-Once this is drawn, begin just popcorn style naming things we are sad, angry, confused, and just have grief about relating to COVID, the pandemic, social distancing.

Those things people are grieving because they can’t go to them…such as school, friends, church, restaurants, etc.…write them outside the bubble.

Those things people are grieving because they can’t get away from them…such as feeling lonely, anxious, depressed, etc.…they would be inside the bubble.

Allow people to name whatever they are grieving/missing/longing for/feel sad or upset about. Crying is okay…including for adults. Getting upset is expected. This is a chance to process and share. Silence is also okay, and is not something to avoid or fill up.

While getting specific isn’t necessary, often sharing something specific will illicit deeper processing of grief. For example, “I miss school.” “what do you miss about school?” “My friends.” “Who do you miss?” “Sarah.”

-Continue for as long as seems appropriate. You might just do this in 10 minutes, no tears or anything, and done. You might do this for a full hour. Whatever might be best for your family.

-When you are done, put the piece of paper away (you can either save it or dispose of it later). Conclude with sharing something you love about the people in the room. Go around, and at minimum share something you are grateful for about one another or about your family in general.

**Honor the Triduum**

Holy Week is the week leading up to Easter, it will be March 28th – April 7th this year. The Triduum are the three most holy days of the Christian calendar: Maundy Thursday (April 4th), Good Friday (5th), and Easter Vigil (6th).

Make plans with your family to gather in the evening on each of those days, and to simply read the appropriate passages from scripture. I would suggest:

Maundy Thursday – John 13:1-17 or Matthew 26:17-30

Good Friday – Matthew 27:1-2, 11-50

Easter Vigil – John 20:1-18

After reading the appointed passage of scripture each night, just spend 15 minutes talking about it as a family.

What stands out? What are you feeling?

What do you think Jesus/Peter/Pontius Pilate/Others were feeling?

What does it mean to us to remember these events till today?

What does this piece of scripture say to us this day?