

Dear Faith Shapers,

Even though Lent doesn't start until March 6, I wanted to get you to start thinking and be prepared for the season of Lent.

I hope these resources help you to have a meaningful Lenten journey as a family (or congregation).

I also included a few things as we think about Valentine's Day and loving not only the ones close to us, but all of our neighbors that we are called to love.

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Lent



What is Lent All About?

(you can find this on the synod website as well)

Lent is a 40-day liturgical season that begins on Ash Wednesday and concludes on Easter. Sundays are not included in the 40-day count because every Sunday is a joyful celebration of Jesus' resurrection. Though not biblical, Lent has long been a tradition in the Christian Church, and it is thought that the tradition of the 40 days recalls the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness fasting and being tempted by Satan (Matthew 4:1-11), the 40 days and nights Noah and his family spent on the ark and the 40 years of Israel's wandering in the wilderness. Focused on the Easter promise of new life and renewed faith, Lent invites us to look honestly at ourselves as we seek to be strengthened in the call to be Christ's disciples. Lent is considered a time of penance, discipline, almsgiving (sharing what we have), prayer (for ourselves and others), and fasting (special resolve to work on greater faithfulness).

Ash Wednesday (March 6) is the first day of Lent. On this day, Christians focus on their complete sinfulness and the necessity of Christ's suffering and death to insure their salvation. Ashes are referred to many times in the Old Testament as signs of sorrow, mourning, humility, and repentance, and on Ash Wednesday they are used to remind people of their mortality; that "you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). We use ashes during Ash Wednesday worship in a ritual called the Imposition of Ashes. In this custom, ashes are mixed with a small amount of oil and applied to the forehead of each worshipper.

This information is prepared for you by the
Northeastern Iowa Synod-Home Life Network
for use by families and local congregations.

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Walking through Lent with Kids

While you journey through this Lenten season, may some of the below activities help your children come understand it's meaning and importance in their faith walk.

1. Learn a new prayer or table grace during Lent. Or set up a prayer wall for Lent. Have kids add prayers each day.
2. Use a visual countdown or calendar. There are some available on our Facebook page: Northeastern Iowa Synod-Home Life Network or on Pinterest.
3. Give away unused/extra toys or clothes. Take your children with you when you donate them. It is a simple way to show almsgiving to small kids.
4. Make pretzels. Early Christians used to pray with their arms crossed and touching their shoulders. Pretzels are a symbol of that prayer.
5. Cover a cross with a purple cloth or light a purple candle each week for Lent.
6. Fast as a family. Give something up together during Lent. Here are some ideas of things to give up: movies, TV, video games, meat, desserts, candy, gossip, soda pop, complaining, or snacks.
7. Keep children connected to what the Church is doing during Lent by participating fully as a family. Go to Lent services and Lenten suppers, join in a Lenten Bible study or devotion, and attend Sunday worship together.
8. Use the Lenten Passport from the synod website (Under Ideas & Resources, then Liturgical resources). You'll need to change the dates, but a great resource to walk with kids throughout the entire season.

A Valentine's Day Service Project

(taken from Feb. 2014 Faith at Home)

Encourage your kids to show their love for God by serving someone else. They could complete a simple service project like making a meal, shoveling snow, or cleaning for someone who could use help. Have the kids make a valentine for the person and include the words: "We love because God first loved us" or "We are valentines of God."



Hearts full of God's Love: 8 Day Countdown to Valentines Day

Cut out 8 hearts on cardstock paper. On the hearts write out the following:

1. Be Mine: John 3:16
2. All Mine: John 10:27-30
3. True Love: Jeremiah 31:3
4. Love Me: Luke 10:27
5. I'm Sure: John 14:1-3
6. Sweet Talk: Psalm 119:103
7. Be Good: John 14:15
8. Call Me: Jeremiah 33:3

Each morning hide one of the hearts in the house. When the kids wake up, tell them that they are going on a treasure hunt for God's love. Then let them search for that day's heart. Once they find it, place it on the fridge, dining room table, or somewhere in the house where you'll be able to see all the hearts displayed. Then look up the verse in the Bible and talk about what that verse means for them.

