

Living Faith @



Dear Faith-Shapers,

We have arrived at the season of Lent. The forty days began on Ash Wednesday and ends next month on Maundy Thursday. These forty days allow reflection and preparation for the celebrations of Easter. During Lent, many Christians observe a period of fasting, repentance, moderation, self-denial, and spiritual discipline. This time can serve as a time of renewed focus on how we pray and what we pray for. The dust of the cross of ashes marked on our foreheads denotes our journey.



During this dusty journey of time, we ask God to make our hearts clean and, in returning to our baptismal call, we can be turned again into the flow of righteousness and make our words and actions reflect God's redeeming work. I pray your pilgrimage has productive results.

Student Pastor Sue Cirra

Lent starts this year at the end of February and, with Palm Sunday being the first Sunday of April, that puts the whole month of March in the season of Lent. The good news is that means spring is a little bit closer. Spring means warmer weather and the chance to go outside and play. It also means that we have more days of inside play ahead. So, there is a need to gather the kids, grandkids, or some friends and make some crafty items, color some pictures, put together some puzzles or whatever fits the ages of your kids. Most of all spend time with them - even read a book. They grow up so fast! Take time to be there and show them the love of Jesus during this time of Lent.

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Quality time with kids during Lent ...

Here are some craft ideas -

- Make an animal from their handprint. My grandson likes penguins. Start by tracing around their hand.

With fingers positioned down, color eyes, nose, and legs/arms. We left the belly white to be more real. Then we laughed because of how funny it looked!



There are other animals you can make, too. Owls, monkeys, chicken, polar bear, and others if you use your imagination. Have fun!

Another craft that we did together was a family of snowmen. This is another simple one because he is three and I am artistically challenged. First, decide how many are in the family. Draw 5 circles for the adult snowdad and snowmom. Then the number of circles needed for the height you want the snowchildren to be. We made 1 with 4 and 1 with 2 circles. Then we colored eyes, hair, buttons, hats, mittens - oh, we made a cool looking family of snowpeople. And, once



more we laughed and laughed! Yes, we do have good times. We also read books. And, we put puzzles together. The boys like to hang out

here with grandma and grandpa. Crafts, books, and puzzles. Such fun!

Ashes on Ash Wednesday - Why?

It can be difficult for adults to figure out why we wear ashes on our foreheads at the beginning of Lent. So, how is a child supposed to understand unless you explain. Plus, it helps to understand yourself before you try to explain.

1. The ashes are to remind people of their sinfulness. By receiving ashes, people admit they are sinners in need of salvation. The ashes serve as a tangible and visible sign of our failure to love God as much as God loves us.

2. The ashes remind people of their mortality. Ashes serve as a reminder that the price of sin is death. Man cannot escape death. People don't like to think or talk about death - it is an uncomfortable topic. We need the ashes to remind us God created us from dust and that one day we will return to dust. In this way, we are reminded to remember that we are mortal and that God alone is sovereign and reigns for all eternity.

3. The ashes remind people that they have been redeemed - they tell us the good news of the Gospel!

The ashes are in the shape of a cross to remind us that Jesus was crucified on a cross for us. Then, Jesus conquered death through His resurrection. Jesus was resurrected for us, created in us new life, which allows us to live forever in God's presence. Through the cross of Christ, the power of death has been destroyed. Through the cross there is life. I hope you were able to worship on Ash Wednesday and are walking the dusty path of Lent towards Easter.