

Holy Week Bags

Here are some ideas to help our church family observe Holy Week while we are physically apart. We hope they will be a blessing — and perhaps a new tradition — for your family!

Monday-Wednesday

Items you'll need: A Paper Butterfly

We invite you to use the paper butterfly to write your prayers to God. What are the burdens you are carrying? Who do you pray for today? Write them on the butterfly. Use your butterfly as a stencil to make several more. Find a jar or vase to use as a “cocoon” for your butterflies, and collect them there throughout the week.

For Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, we've offered a simple scripture reading and prayer:

Monday

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 42:1-4

God of steadfast love,
light of the blind and liberator of the oppressed,
we see your holy purpose in the tender compassion
of Jesus,
who calls us into living friendship with you.
May we, who take shelter in the shadow of your
wings,
be filled with the grace of his tender caring;
may we, who stumble in selfish darkness,
see your glory in the light of his self-giving.
We ask this through him whose suffering is
victorious,
Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Tuesday

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Almighty God,
Your name is glorified
even in the anguish of your Son's death.
Grant us the courage
to receive your anointed servant
who embodies a wisdom and love
that is foolishness to the world.
empower us in witness
so that all the world may recognize
in the scandal of the cross the mystery of
reconciliation. Amen.

Wednesday

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 50:4-9a

Troubled God,
in every generation
you call your people to contend
against the brutality of sin and betrayal.
Keep us steadfast even in our fear and uncertainty,
that we may follow where Jesus has led the way.
Amen.

Maundy Thursday

Note: a podcast is provided at fumcaustin.org for this day.

Footwashing

Items you'll need: Washcloth

Jesus did a number of things to prepare his disciples for his coming death and resurrection. On Maundy Thursday we remember the washing of feet. Use the washcloth as a reminder of the towel Jesus tied around his waist as he knelt down to wash his disciples' feet. Fill a large basin or a bathtub with enough water to cover your feet. While your feet soak in the water, read the story of Jesus washing feet.

John 13:1-17, 34-35

Reflect:

How are you receiving this story differently in a time where washing and keeping clean are such a concern?

Jesus' commandment to his disciples was to love one another. How do we respond to this commandment differently in this time? How do we keep from neglecting it?

Remember Jesus' Last Supper

Items you'll need: At Home Liturgy for Maundy Thursday

This at-home liturgy allows individuals and families to embody worship by baking bread (or any baked good) and then reflecting and praying around the table. This liturgy is very family-friendly (prompts for children included), but also meaningful for individuals who live alone.

Liturgy by Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

Stripping of the Icons

Materials (Not in your bag): Bible or Prayer Book, storage box or bin, dark cloth, cleaning supplies

Stripping of the altar (removing all ornaments, linens, candles, plants, flowers, etc.) is an ancient custom of the Church. Congregations mark the way Christ's life was stripped from him by stripping the altar of all signs of life and beauty during a special service. This almost-bare worship space reminds us of the bareness of life without the hope of Christ that we have through His resurrection. This beautiful and powerful ceremony can also be practiced in the home, as our homes are also places of worship.

Read Psalm 22 together (or just the first two verses, if attention spans are short).

Explain the ancient custom of stripping and washing the altar, what it symbolizes, and how your family will now do a similar stripping in your home – focusing on icons and symbols of your faith.

Send your family through the house to gather all icons and religious symbols that can be easily moved (crosses, statues, candles, prayer beads, etc.). Ask everyone to work silently as a sign of respect for the task. Pack these items away in the storage bins; Use the dark cloth to drape any other items that are too large or permanent to pack away (wall art, door wreaths, Easter Tree and so forth.); Finally, remove all items from your dining or kitchen table and together wash the table thoroughly.; Leave the table bare until Easter morning.

After all the icons have been packed away or covered, and the table has been washed, take a moment to notice how your home looks and feels. Help kids make the connection between a home without these beautiful and meaningful items and a life without Christ. Saturday night, after everyone is in bed, do your best to unpack and uncover all of the religious items, so that when the family wakes up on Easter morning there will be more than just Easter baskets to celebrate!

Credit: Jerusalem Jackson Greer

Maundy Thursday at Home: Stripping the Table

<https://buildfaith.org/maundy-thursday-at-home/amp/>

Good Friday

Note: A podcast is provided at fumcaustin.org for this service

Items you'll need: seven tea light candles; you may also want a cross to place nearby.

Use these candles in your observance of Good Friday, the day of Jesus' death. A Tenebrae service is, literally, a service of shadows or darkness. You can read the scripture readings throughout the day or all at once, pausing for prayer and meditation after each reading, then extinguishing a candle.

The Service of Shadows

*On this Good Friday,
we contemplate the good news of the cross:
how Christ our Lord stretched out his arms
to embrace a world of suffering and sin;
how Christ our Lord stretched out his arms
to save us.*

The Shadow of Betrayal

Read Matthew 26:20-25

that we have betrayed and denied You,
forgotten and doubted You.

The Shadow of the Agony of Spirit and Arrest

Read Matthew 26:36-50

When our faith is tested, we wonder where You are.

When we see injustice in the world, we often stand by,
we turn our backs, we ignore the cries of others.

The Shadow of Denial

Read Matthew 26:69-75

The Shadow of Accusation
Read Matthew 27:11-14, 20-29

We confess that again and again we deny You
and betray You with our silence
when we fail to proclaim Your Good News,
when we fail to live out Your teachings
and love our neighbor as ourselves.

The Shadow of Crucifixion and Humiliation

Read Matthew 27:31-43

Forgive us, O God, and help us to truly repent.

The Shadow of Death

Read Matthew 27:45-54

Help us to remember Your sacrifice,
Your love,
and to know Your forgiveness.

The Shadow of Burial

Read Matthew 27:57-60

In the name of the One who lived,
who was crucified,
and who lives again,
Jesus the Messiah,
we pray.
Amen.

--Mindi Welton-Mitchell

Prayer of Confession

We confess to You, our Lord and Savior,

Holy Saturday

Matthew 27:62-66

The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead,' and the last deception would be worse than the first." Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can." So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.

Items you'll need: A Rock

While a rock this size wouldn't do much to close up a cave like the one in which Jesus was buried, this rock is a reminder of that great big stone that sealed Jesus' grave shut. Rocks can be heavy, heavy things--we are reminded of the heavy things we are carrying in this season. Rocks are hard things--we are reminded of the hard things in our lives right now. Today is a day to sit with the heavy, hard things--to sit with Jesus in the tomb, and to wait. Even now, we wait in eager expectation for Easter, but the waiting reminds us that God waits with us when things are heavy and hard--God will wait with us, for as long as it takes. Place your rock somewhere you can see it throughout today, and be reminded of God's patience, and God's ability to overcome.

Saturday Night, or Early Easter Morning

Items you'll need: Fishing Line and Sticky Squares (You'll also need your paper butterflies with your prayers written on them)

Prepare your butterflies to fly on Easter morning! Fold each paper butterfly down the middle. Place a glue dot (you could also use hot glue or tape) in the middle, and stick it to the fishing line. You can get several onto your fishing line. Then attach the line to a stick, or anything stick-like (a wooden spoon? A broom?). Now your butterflies are ready to fly--just wave the stick...or take off running! You could also hang them up in your home!

Easter Sunday

1 Corinthians 5:17 So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

Items you'll need: Playdoh

Resurrection for Jesus means resurrection for all the world! God is making a new creation, everywhere we look, even when it's hard to see. Use your playdoh to form a new creation--something that symbolizes new life!