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To Tipton Biggs ...

... my cousin and our family's historian. A.L.L.



To Timothy Douglas Van Beek ...

... Rejoice that you are part of God's family. P.V.W.



Thanks

Judith Harris Chase ...

... for illustration



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God's Family Tree: Tracing the Story of Salvation

A Resource for Lent and Easter

Anna L. Liechty and Phyllis Vos Wezeman



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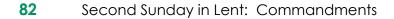




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Introduction

God's Family Tree: Tracing the Story of Salvation offers a thematic approach for communicating the message of Lent and Easter. God's Family Tree uses the varied trees found in the Old Testament and the New Testament as a focal point for telling the stories of God's people as they struggle to find faith and hope for life.

Beginning with the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil" and the arrival of sin through Adam and Eve, the series traces the sequence of God's plan for our redemption to "Calvary's Tree" and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Each week the story unfolds as a different tree is featured and a new symbol makes the Biblical characters and lessons memorable and meaningful. Through their participation, people of all ages will experience the message of salvation and trace God's action in human history directly to their own branch of the "family tree."

Themes and Scripture passages for Ash Wednesday, the six weeks of Lent, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday include:

| DAY | THEME | SCRIPTURE | TREE | SYMBOL | PEOPLE |
|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Ash Wednesday | Choices | Genesis 3:16 | Good and Evil | Apple | Adam and Eve |
| First Sunday | Covenant | Genesis 6:14 | Gopher | Ark | Noah |
| Second Sunday | Command- ments | Exodus 25:10 | Acacia | Ark of the Covenant | Moses |
| Third Sunday | Connection | Isaiah 11:1 | Branch | Stump of Jesse | David |
| Fourth Sunday | Challenge | Amos 7:14 | Sycamore | Fig | Amos |
| Fifth Sunday | Compassion | Luke 2:7 | Evergreen | Manger | Holy Family |
| Palm Sunday | Contrasts | John 12:13 | Palm | Palm Branch | Crowd |
| Holy Thursday | Contentment | Matthew 26:30 | Olive | Olive Branch | Disciples |
| Good Friday | Convictions | Matthew 27:29 | Lotus | Crown of Thorns | Roman Soldiers |
| Easter Sunday | Celebration | Matthew 28:5-6 | Dogwood | Dogwood Blossom | Jesus |





















Worship • •

Overview

Components

Altar or Worship Center Arrangement

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Music

Scripture

Sermons

Symbols

Worship Resources

Supplies

Advance Preparation

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Ash Wednesday: Choices

First Sunday in Lent: Covenant

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Third Sunday in Lent: Connection

Fourth Sunday in Lent: Challenge

Fifth Sunday in Lent: Compassion

Sixth Sunday in Lent (Palm Sunday/Passion Sunday): Contrasts

Holy Thursday: Contentment

Good Friday: Convictions

Easter Sunday: Celebration





















Overview

God's Family Tree: Tracing the Story of Salvation provides the focus for a wide variety of seasonal experiences including: creating visuals, decorating worship centers, offering family devotions, providing special holiday services, preaching homilies, reading Scripture, sharing children's messages, singing songs, and making visual and concrete the story of salvation. In addition to weekly worship helps, the book includes family devotions and activities for the six Sundays and the special days of Lent and Easter.

In order to use the thematic approach offered in God's Family Tree, the committee or people coordinating the Lent and Easter programming and decorating must adapt the elements provided to best fit the individual parish's needs. Any or all of the following components may be used to enhance the preparation for and the celebration of the resurrection of Christ.

Components

Altar or Worship Center Arrangement

A visual display should be created as a focal point for worship during Lent and Easter. One idea would be to use a branch placed on a table or a tree secured in a stand and to hang each week's symbol, and possibly word, on it. Symbols may be made from felt, paper, or wood, or actual objects could be used. Considerations must be given to the dimensions of the sanctuary when determining size and placement of the display.

Banner(s)

Instructions are offered for creating a banner or banners for the special days and Sundays of the seasons of Lent and Easter. Each visual helps to reinforce the theme for the day and serves as a reminder of the unfolding story of salvation. Complete instructions for constructing the banner(s) can be found in the Enhancements section of this resource.

Children's Messages

Ten children's messages are included, one each for the six Sundays of Lent, plus the four special days of Ash Wednesday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter. The messages may be given as a part of the morning Mass, used as a segment of Children's Liturgy of the Word, or offered as devotions for religious education classes or mid-week programs. If the Ash Wednesday sermonette is not used, be sure to incorporate the introduction to the "tree" theme and the explanation for the season into the message for the First Sunday in Lent.

Each children's message outline contains several sections. They include:

Theme

Conveys the central theme of the story as it relates to the week's Lent or Easter message.

Scripture

Lists the Scripture reading that focuses on the theme of the week.

Tree

Specifies the tree associated with the Scripture passage and the theme of the week.

Symbol

Suggests the symbol connected with the tree and the theme.

People

Names the Biblical people who are the focus of the Scripture passage and the children's message.

Teaching Tool

Gives information and instructions, if necessary, for the teaching tool that serves as the visual during the children's message.

Children's Message

Offers a suggested script for the children's homily or message.

Prayer

Provides a prayer to conclude the children's time.

Music

Suggestions for songs and hymns are included to complement the lesson and the theme for each worship experience. The message of the weekly story and visual symbol will be reinforced through the lyrics. In addition to congregational singing, the music may be included as special choral numbers or solos by adults or children, as organ interludes, or as instrumental performances.

Suggestions include:

Ash Wednesday

- "God Spoke" (Charlotte Gaus)
- "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus"
- "The Tree Song" (Ken Medema)

First Sunday in Lent

- "Arky, Arky"
- "Great Is Thy Faithfulness"
- "He's Got Everything under Control"

Second Sunday in Lent

"I Am the Lord Your God" (John A. Dalles in Hymn Stories for Children: The

Ten Commandments. Wezeman, Phyllis Vos and Anna L. Liechty. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1996.)

"The God of Abraham Praise"

"Trust and Obey"

Third Sunday in Lent

"Lo, How a Rose E're Blooming"

"O Jesus, I Have Promised"

"Trust and Obey"

Fourth Sunday in Lent

"Take My Life"

"They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love"

"What Does the Lord Require of You" (Strathdees)

Fifth Sunday in Lent

"Amen"

"Away in a Manger"

"Jesus Loves Me"

Sixth Sunday in Lent (Palm Sunday/Passion Sunday)

"All Glory, Laud, and Honor"

"Ho-ho-ho Hosanna"

"Hosanna, Loud Hosanna"

Holy Thursday

"Be Still My Soul"

"I've Got Peace Like a River"

"Open My Eyes That I May See"

Good Friday

"For God So Loved the World"

"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"

"Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow"

Easter Sunday

"Alleluia"

"Every Morning Is Easter Morning" (Avery and Marsh)

"The Trees of the Field"

Scripture

Scripture lessons for the Sundays and special days of Lent and Easter are taken from Old Testament and New Testament passages. All themes correlate with, but are not based on, the Lectionary passages for Years A, B, and C. They include:

Ash Wednesday: Choices Scripture: Genesis 3:16 First Sunday in Lent: Covenant Scripture: Genesis 6:14

Second Sunday in Lent: Commandments

Scripture: Exodus 25:10

Third Sunday in Lent: Connection

Scripture: Isaiah 11:1

Fourth Sunday in Lent: Challenge

Scripture: Amos 7:14

Fifth Sunday in Lent: Compassion

Luke 2:7

Sixth Sunday in Lent (Palm Sunday/Passion Sunday): Contrasts

John 12:13

Holy Thursday: Contentment

Matthew 26:30

Good Friday: Convictions

Matthew 27:29

Easter Sunday: Celebration

Matthew 28:5-6

Homilies/Messages

Each theme may be used as a springboard for developing a message appropriate to each week's emphasis. Themes include:

Ash Wednesday: Choices

Theme: God's gift of freedom means people must make choices. In Lent

we acknowledge that too often our choices do not honor God.

First Sunday in Lent: Covenant

Theme: God's promise is that he will not abandon us to sin, but will

provide us with a means of salvation.

Second Sunday in Lent: Commandments

Theme: God's law is a gift to protect us from the harm of sin, if we carry

the Word with us.

Third Sunday in Lent: Connection

Theme: God's power continues through the generations who trust

God's promise.

Fourth Sunday in Lent: Challenge

Theme: God's challenge is for us to accept correction and discipline in order that our lives may produce the fruit of repentance and justice.

Fifth Sunday in Lent: Compassion

Theme: In love and mercy, God sent us a Savior, both human and divine,

to save us from our sin and to offer us eternal life.

Sixth Sunday in Lent (Palm Sunday/Passion Sunday): Contrasts

Theme: God's plans are not always what we expect.

Holy Thursday: Contentment

Theme: God's peace comes when we let go of our will and choose

God's will instead.

Good Friday: Convictions

Theme: God's goodness can overcome all evil, even when it

seems impossible.

Easter Sunday: Celebration

Theme: God's promise is fulfilled in Christ's resurrection.

Symbols

To make the theme of salvation visible and concrete, a symbol associated with each tree may be added to a worship center arrangement each week. Symbol patterns are provided in the Enhancements section of this resource. Cut from foam core, poster board, wood, or other materials, figures may be small enough to place on a table or they may be large enough to stand on the floor. They include:

Ash Wednesday: Choices

Symbol: Apple

First Sunday in Lent: Covenant

Symbol: Ark

Second Sunday in Lent: Commandments

Symbol: Ark of the Covenant

Third Sunday in Lent: Connection

Symbol: Stump of Jesse

Fourth Sunday in Lent: Challenge

Symbol: Fig

Fifth Sunday in Lent: Compassion

Symbol: Manger

Sixth Sunday in Lent (Palm Sunday/Passion Sunday): Contrasts

Symbol: Palm Branch

Holy Thursday: Contentment Symbol: Olive Branch

Good Friday: Convictions
Symbol: Crown of Thorns

Easter Sunday: Celebration Symbol: Dogwood Blossom

Teaching Tools

In addition to the weekly symbol associated with the theme for Ash Wednesday, the six weeks of Lent, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday, an additional teaching tool may be part of the presentation of the Children's Message. They include:

Ash Wednesday

Cross made of twigs

First Sunday in Lent Wooden ark

Second Sunday in Lent None

Third Sunday in Lent None

Fourth Sunday in Lent Pruning shears

Fifth Sunday in Lent None

Sixth Sunday in Lent (Palm Sunday/Passion Sunday)
None

Holy Thursday Olive Oil Olives

Good Friday
Thorn Branch

Easter Sunday
Dogwood Blossoms or Branch, real or silk

Worship Resources

To heighten the Lent and Easter theme, Calls To Worship and Benedictions are provided for each week's worship experience.

Supplies

To create the visual display, to prepare the components of God's Family Tree: Tracing the Story of Salvation, and to share the messages, the coordinator must assemble the following materials:

- banner(s)
- Bible
- branch and symbols for worship center arrangement
- enhancements for worship center arrangement
- music for selected anthems, hymns, and songs
- teaching tools for children's messages

Advance Preparation

Banners

Construct individual banners for each symbol or prepare one large banner background containing the shape of a tree and add the appropriate symbol to it before or during each worship service. Refer to the Enhancements section of this resource for banner making instructions.

Worship Center Arrangement

Choose an area to serve as the focal point for a seasonal worship center arrangement. Cover an altar, display area, or table with purple cloth for the season of Lent and with white fabric for Easter Sunday.

As a basic display, place a branch on the covered surface and hang each week's symbol on the limbs. Refer to the Enhancements section of this resource for ideas on constructing the symbols.

Other possibilities for the worship center arrangement include:

- depicting the trees with drawings or photographs
- displaying the theme words during the worship services
- exhibiting drawings or pictures of the Biblical people named in the stories
- placing a real or artificial tree in the front of the sanctuary and hanging the symbols on it
- setting objects representing the symbols in the worship center arrangement

Enhance the worship center arrangement by adding a Bible, hymnbook, or candles to the display. Use boxes or crates to create varied levels to highlight the visual arrangement.

Leadership

Coordination of God's Family Tree: Tracing the Story of Salvation can be done by one person, or duties may be assigned to staff such as pastors, religious education directors, and music directors, or to volunteers serving on pastoral councils, seasonal task forces, or worship committees.

Worship

Whoever assumes responsibility must see that leadership is provided for:

- coordinating decorations
- creating visual displays
- facilitating special events
- leading special worship services
- reading Scripture
- selecting music
- sharing children's messages

Enhancements

God's Family Tree: Tracing the Story of Salvation may be used as a worship theme for Lent and Holy Week, or may be used extensively to provide the framework for coordinating congregational life during these seasons. The theme may be enhanced beyond worship applications to include education, nurture, and outreach opportunities.

Worship



First Sunday in Lent • Covenant

Theme

God's promise is that he will not abandon us to sin, but will provide us with a means of salvation.

Scripture

Genesis 6:14

Tree

Gopher

Symbol

Ark

Person

Noah

Music

"Arky, Arky"

"Great Is Thy Faithfulness"

"He's Got Everything under Control"

Call to Worship

One

As Lent begins, we are reminded that God calls us to live in a covenant relationship.

ALL

LIKE NOAH, WE NEED GOD'S LOVING PROTECTION TO GUIDE US THROUGH THE FLOODS OF LIFE.

One

God's salvation comes to those who say "yes" to God.

ALL

WE REJOICE THAT WE ARE A COVENANT PEOPLE, JOURNEYING TOGETHER IN THE SHELTER OF GOD'S PROMISE.

Children's Message

Teaching Tools

Ark Symbol

Wooden ark

Suggestions for Dialogue and Discussion

[If possible, hold up or display a wooden ark.]

Worship

This shape of a boat is very recognizable. Who knows what this type of boat is called?

[Wait for someone to suggest "ark."]

Does anyone know what kind of wood the ark was made from? The tree that provided the wood for the ark is mentioned only one time in the Bible when God told Noah to build the ark out of gopher wood. Have you ever seen a gopher tree? I haven't either, but scholars say that it was very much like a pine tree. During Lent, we are tracing God's family tree and using trees to guide our thoughts in preparation for Easter.

This week's story is about our ancestor Noah and the great flood. The Bible tells us that the ark was built of gopher wood. Gopher wood was a type of wood that had lots of sticky tar and resin in it that helped make the wood float and helped keep the water out. With a big boat full of animals, that was probably a very good thing! God had given Noah specific instructions about how to build this boat because God wanted to save Noah, his family, and the world's animals. You see, sin was destroying God's creation. The only person still faithful to God was Noah. So God made a covenant—or a promise—with Noah to protect Noah and his family during the flood. As a matter of fact, God is still in the boat-building business.

Did you know that the main part of the church is called the "nave" which comes from the Latin word *navis* which means "ship"? Early church buildings were supposed to be designed in the shape of a ship, so that the congregation gathered in what symbolized the "hold" or main part of the ship. We are still God's covenant people. God promises to save us, just like God saved Noah and his family.

The ark made of gopher wood reminds us that we are all in the same boat!

[Place or refer to the ark in the worship display.]

We need God's love and protection on life's journey. Problems can surround us like flood waters, but like Noah, we can rely on God to lift us up and keep us afloat. Even when we can't see how or where to land, we can trust in God to bring us safely through and grant us a new beginning.

Our worship symbols remind us that as we travel through the days and weeks of Lent we can choose to be God's covenant people.

[Point to the symbols in the worship display.]

Like Noah of old, we can say "yes" to God's promise of salvation. We can "get on board" with God!







Prayer

[Invite the children to repeat each phrase of the prayer.]

Good morning, God. Thank you for the covenant You made with Noah. We accept your promise to save us. Amen.

Benediction

During Lent, we are reminded that God calls us to live in a covenant relationship. We rejoice that God's plan is to guide us through the floods of life. We depart to share the Good News of God's salvation with others. Say "yes" to God's offer to live in partnership now and forever.

Visuals

On the First Sunday in Lent, add the symbol of an ark to a worship center arrangement. As an addition, or an alternative, create a banner to highlight the symbol of the week or add the ark to one large banner background containing the shape of a tree.



Education •

Overview

Lent

Easter

Learning Activities

Tree-themed Crafts

Pageant

"Retracing Our Roots: God's Story of Salvation"





















Education • • •

Overview • Lent and Easter

Calendars help to provide the structure for all aspects of our lives, and the church is no exception. Just like the secular calendar reminds us of Valentine hearts or Thanksgiving turkeys, the church calendar invites us to explore the story of salvation as we experience the festivals of faith. The Church Year coordinates the message of five basic seasons —Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Ordinary Time. Throughout this cycle we experience the life and ministry of Jesus, and the empowering of his church to carry on the work God began in creation. Those stories become part of the rhythm of our lives—anticipated, celebrated, savored, and shared by all God's people. Rather than treasured fragments of disconnected text, the Bible becomes the woven fabric of a seamless garment, with each season flowing meaningfully to the next, completing the cycle, yet leading us to begin again the wonderful journey of faithful discipleship. To understand the focus and flavor of the ChurchYear, the following material provides an overview of the seasons of Lent and Easter.

Lent

Like Advent, Lent is a season of preparation. Historically in the church, it was the time set aside for new converts to prepare for baptism or for backslidden Christians to do penance and be restored. The forty days prior to Easter were dedicated to fasting, prayer, and self-examination; however, Sundays were to be treated as "little Easters" when the fast and penance could be set aside to celebrate Jesus' victory. Hence, there are really forty-six days in Lent because Sundays are not counted.

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the time of preparation. In some churches, last year's palms are burned and mixed with oil and the mixture placed on the foreheads of the faithful as a sign of humility. Passion Sunday is designated one week before Easter to remember specifically the extreme suffering that Jesus experienced on the cross. The Sunday before Easter is also designated as Palm Sunday to commemorate Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem and the beginning of Holy Week with the events that led up to the crucifixion. Holy Thursday calls for a celebration of the institution of the Sacrament of Communion that stems from the Passover Seder Jesus shared with his disciples. Good Friday is a paradoxical celebration of Jesus' death: while the suffering of crucifixion can hardly be called good, the gift of salvation through Christ's sacrifice is Good News for the Christian. The waiting of Lent is finally over with the arrival of Easter Sunday and the joy of Resurrection.

Scriptures studied during Lent present the forty days of Jesus' wandering in the desert after his baptism, being tested, and preparing for ministry. During this time as well, the church reads the Transfiguration story, accounts of Jesus' • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • Education

encounters with religious leaders, and passages that relate Jesus' awareness of his mission and its consequences. The Christian's challenge to spend forty days in reflection and spiritual discipline seems to parallel the message of the season.

The color for Lent is again purple, a color reminding us of the darkness of our sin and the royalty of Jesus. On Good Friday the color is black until Easter Sunday to symbolize mourning. Often an early sunrise service (Easter Vigil) marks the transition from darkness to light, replacing black with white.

Easter

The season of Easter begins with the Sunday of the celebration of the resurrection, which changes each year based on the cycles of the moon. Easter Sunday is the first Sunday after the first full moon after the ver nal equinox that occurs around March 21. So Easter can be as early as March 22 and as late as April 25. Some scholars say the day for Easter was set to assure the light of the moon for pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem. Obviously, the first Easter was established based on the Jewish celebration of the Passover. The Orthodox churches continue to use Passover as the determining date for Easter services with their Palm Sunday occurring the first Sunday after Passover begins.

On the first Easter morning, God made a difference for human beings forever. God raised Jesus from death to new life. Easter is a season of hope that invites God's people to rejoice that because Jesus lives, we, too, will live—eternally. Easter reminds us that we can experience God's renewal now and forever when we believe in Christ's resurrection.

Easter is more than a special day in the Church Year. It is actually a season of fifty days in which we celebrate the joy of the new day Christ's resurrection brings to the world. But even more, as we proclaim God's plan of hope and salvation for all people, we discover that Easter is a way of life. During the season of Easter, Christians celebrate the resurrection and tell the stories of Jesus' appearances to the disciples. Ascension Day occurs during this season, forty days after Easter Sunday, and celebrates Jesus' return to Heaven to reign at the right hand of God. The promise of the gift of the Spirit and the challenge to "go into all the world" are a part of the Easter season as well.

The color for Easter is white, the color reserved for the holiest festivals of the Church Year.

Education •••••••••••

Learning Activities • Tree-themed Crafts

The seasons of Lent and Easter are aptly represented by trees changing from bare branches to blossom-covered boughs. Tree-themed activities are a natural way to celebrate the growth cycle in God's creation as well as to rejoice in the new life of the resurrection story.

Use any or all of the following suggestions to enhance the activities related to God's Family Tree: Tracing the Story of Salvation.

Drawing and Painting

Winter and Spring Trees

Materials

- Crayons
- Glue
- Paint
- Paint brushes
- Paper
- Tissue paper, green (Optional)

Method

Observe trees from a window or "up close and personal." Notice the size and texture of the trunk, the shape of the limbs, and the differences in the types of trees. Look at artwork featuring trees.

Paint or draw the tree trunk, then move from the thick part of the branches—upward and outward—to the tiniest twigs.

If using crayon, press hard and blend colors to add interest. For paintings, mix black and brown paint for a suitable tree color.

Turn the "winter" tree to a "spring" tree by adding tiny tissue paper buds. Roll little bits of green art tissue into tiny balls and glue to the tips of the branches. As the season progresses, add colorful blossoms with tissue puffs or paint.

Brayer Painting

Materials

- Black print ink or fingerpaint, black
- Brayers
- Crayons (Optional)
- Evergreen branches
- Leaves
- Newspaper

- Paper
- Trays
- Twigs

Method

Choose leaves with prominent vein structure, branches of evergreen trees, or twigs that are flat.

Cover the work surface with newspaper. Apply a small amount of black print ink, or fingerpaint, onto a tray. Spread ink by rolling a brayer back and forth until the ink is in a thin layer.

Place natural items under a thin piece of paper such as newsprint or copy paper. Roll the brayer into the ink, then over the paper. Be sure to place the leaves vein side up. The image will show up as the brayer presses over the leaves and the branches.

Try several arrangements and different kinds of paper. If blackprinting supplies are not available, use the broad side of unwrapped crayons. Rub the crayon over paper-covered objects for an interesting print or crayon "rubbing."

Oriental Branch with Blossoms Scroll

Materials

- Cardboard or paper strips
- Containers for paint, small
- Paper—long panels of newsprint, construction paper, or wallpaper
- Scissors
- Sponges
- Stapler
- Staples
- String or yarn
- Tempera paints—pastel colors, white, yellow, and black
- Toothpicks
- Trays
- Twigs

Method

Many Oriental cultures feature lovely paintings on panels or scrolls of silk. Nature is very often the theme for these paintings.

Spread the pastel and white paint over the sponges. Pour black and yellow colors into small containers. Dip the end of a twig into black paint, then paint the branch shape by pushing the twig from the bottom of the paper upwards. This method of painting produces broken lines with thick and thin places.

Education •••••••••••

Easter Pageant: "Retracing Our Roots • God's Story of Salvation"

[Eight children, carrying costume pieces or props, gather outside of the church building. They encounter a Gardener who is preparing to plant a tree.]

Child One

She's out of her tree if she thinks I'm dressing up in bark and leaves and stuff for this play!

ΑII

Yeah!

Child Two

Who ever heard of an Easter play based on trees, anyway?

ΑII

Yeah!

Child Three

If she thinks I'm wearing brown leotards, she's barking up the wrong tree!

ΑII

Yeah!

Child Four

Then how come you guys showed up today?

Child Five

My parents told me I could be a tree at church or I could be "grounded" at home.

ΑII

Yeah! Me, too.

Gardener

Say, kids, sounds like you're really out on a limb over all of this! I've got tree problems of my own. Can you stop and help me for a bit?

Child Six

What three problems do you have?

Gardener

Hmm? Oh. Not three problems, tree problems. I need someone to help me plant this new tree in the church lawn.

[Hands children a spade, a stake, a watering can, and other planting tools.]

Nurture

Family Devotions

Overview

Ash Wednesday: Choices

First Sunday in Lent: Covenant

Second Sunday in Lent: Commandments

Third Sunday in Lent: Connection

Fourth Sunday in Lent: Challenge

Fifth Sunday in Lent: Compassion

Sixth Sunday in Lent (Palm Sunday/Passion Sunday): Contrasts

Holy Thursday: Contentment

Good Friday: Convictions

Easter Sunday: Celebration





















Overview

God's Family Tree: Tracing the Story of Salvation offers a thematic approach for communicating the message of Lent and Easter. God's Family Tree uses the varied trees found in the Old Testament and the New Testament as a focal point for telling the stories of God's people as they struggle to find faith and hope for life. Beginning with the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil" and the arrival of sin through Adam and Eve, the series traces the sequence of God's plan for our redemption to "Calvary's Tree" and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Each week the story unfolds as a different tree is featured and a new symbol makes the Biblical characters and lessons memorable and meaningful.

God's Family Tree: Tracing the Story of Salvation invites families to share in the preparation for Easter by using a series of Lenten devotions at home as the focus for weekly activities. Family worship suggestions are provided for devotions including Scripture, music, story, and prayer. Six ideas for living out the message complete each week's preparation, building toward Easter Sunday and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

God's Family Tree is based on adding a weekly symbol to represent the theme. Families could devise the symbols from a variety of sources such as ornaments, pictures, stickers, and toys; or the simple illustrations provided could be traced, decorated, cut out, and the shapes used to add a personal touch to a family's worship center. Creativity is encouraged.

God's Family Tree challenges family members to use Lent as an opportunity to experience the message of salvation and to trace God's action in human history directly to their own branch of the "family tree."



Nurture

First Sunday in Lent • Covenant

Tree

Gopher

Symbol

Ark

Read

Genesis 6:14

Say

God's promise is that he will not abandon us to sin, but will provide us with a means of salvation.

Sing

"Great Is Thy Faithfulness"

Say

During Lent, the Ark made of gopher wood reminds us that God has a plan to save us. Before the Great Flood came to earth, God gave Noah instructions about how to build a boat out of gopher wood that would float and keep out the water. Because Noah followed God's instructions, Noah and his family were saved. God made a covenant with Noah that water would not destroy the earth again. This First Sunday in Lent we remember that God instructs us to get on the Ark that is Christ's church. Together we can weather the floods of life and trust in God's promise to save us.

Pray

Dear God, Thank you for the covenant you made with Noah. We accept your promise to save us. Amen.

Do This Week

- Bake ark-shaped cookies and share them with others.
- Discuss the sacrifices that Noah must have made to live aboard the ark; select
 a sacrifice your family can make during Lent to remember the importance of a
 life of faith.
- Draw the sequence of events in the Noah story, with a special emphasis on the importance of trees—as a source of lumber, being covered with water, budding after the flood subsided, signaling Noah when it was safe to disembark.
- Make a "tree" from a branch as a display for the symbols for Lent and use it as the focal point for family devotions.
- Read the story of Noah and the Ark and discuss the importance of covenant relationships in a family, a family of faith, and with God.
- Research gopher wood in a Bible dictionary or encyclopedia and discover what made it such good building material.



Enhancements • • • •

Banners

Illustrations/Patterns

Ash Wednesday: Choices

Symbol: Apple

First Sunday in Lent: Covenant

Symbol: Ark

Second Sunday in Lent: Commandments

Symbol: Ark of the Covenant

Third Sunday in Lent: Connection

Symbol: Stump of Jesse

Fourth Sunday in Lent: Challenge

Symbol: Fig

Fifth Sunday in Lent: Compassion

Symbol: Manger

Sixth Sunday in Lent (Palm Sunday/Passion Sunday): Contrasts

Symbol: Palm Branch

Holy Thursday: Contentment

Symbol: Olive Branch

Good Friday: Convictions

Symbol: Crown of Thorns

Easter Sunday: Celebration

Symbol: Dogwood Blossom

Visuals





















Enhancements

Banners

Banners provide an effective way to enhance seasonal themes. They can be constructed from a variety of materials. Fabric will add warmth to architectural space and last for many years; paper allows for quick, inexpensive designs.

Consider where the banner will hang to determine the size, shape, and color. Be sure that banner lettering and symbols are large enough to be seen from a distance and that colors do not clash with surrounding decor.

This seasonal banner follows the "tree" theme developed in God's Family Tree: Tracing the Story of Salvation, with a symbol added each Sunday and special day of Lent and Easter.

Materials needed include:

- · Copy machine;
- Dressmaker's chalk;
- Fabric, felt, or paper for symbols and tree;
- Fabric or paper for banner background -- at least 3 feet by 5 feet;
- Glue or bonding material;
- Iron;
- Paint (Optional);
- Paper;
- Pencils:
- Pins or Velcro® dots (Optional);
- Rod or cord for hanging banner;
- Scissors:
- Sewing machine;
- Symbol patterns;
- Thread.

Before the first worship service, prepare the background material for the banner by hemming the edges and forming a casing for the rod. Hems and rod pockets can be stitched, glued, or ironed in place with fusible web. Follow instructions on fusible product for bonding two pieces of fabric.

Position a large, bare-branched tree in the center of the banner. Fashion the tree by drawing or tracing the desired shape onto brown or black fabric. Cut out the tree, then sew, glue, or bond it to the background. Another effective method is to paint the tree with fabric paints on tightly woven yardgoods such as trigger or canvas. Follow the directions on the fabric paints for the best results.

Prepare the symbol patterns by photocopying the designs provided then enlarging or reducing them as needed. Be sure that the symbols are large enough to be seen from a distance. Patterns may be cut from fabric, felt, or paper, then assembled to create each symbol. For easy handling, glue the symbol to a circle or square of fabric as a base. Designs may be painted, as well.

Enhancements • • • •

Each week add a new symbol to the tree branches. Attach the symbols by gluing them directly onto the banner. Use pins or self-stick Velcro® dots for temporary placement.

Display the banner on a specially constructed banner stand or hang it where it will enhance the worship environment. Be sure that symbols can be added easily throughout the seasons.

Variations

Paint the tree design on a large, clear glass window. Add symbols each week. Check craft stores for new products to make stained glass windows or to create vinyl art pieces that cling to windows. Consider using this design for bulletin board displays or for small, individual banners made from paper. Adjust the patterns accordingly.



• • • Enhancements

Illustrations/Patterns

Tree

Use the symbol illustrations in conjunction with the thematic approach of God's Family Tree: Tracing the Story of Salvation.

Tree Design



Enhancements

Illustrations/Patterns

First Sunday in Lent • Covenant

Symbol

Ark

