



coming back to life
DEVOTIONS AND ACTIVITIES FOR LENT



introduction

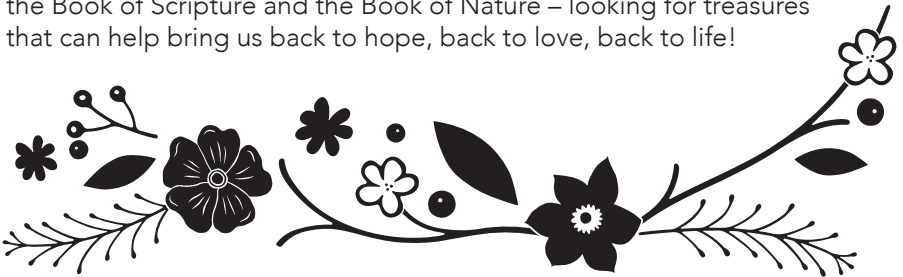
During winter, much of the world goes to sleep. And in spring, a truly amazing thing happens, no less amazing because it happens every year: The world comes back to life!

How do living things know it's time to wake up? It turns out that one of the key signals is light: as the days get longer and longer, many creatures sense that spring is coming, and begin to rise again.

That's where the word "Lent" comes from: an old English word for "lengthen," referring to the longer days. 40 days for waking up and getting ready for Easter, a festival of new life celebrating Jesus' resurrection and the new world that's on the way.

This booklet is full of ideas and activities that can help us wake up, too, along with all God's creatures, preparing our hearts, minds, and communities for Easter's big celebration. Each week, biblical texts and creation's wonders inspire practices you can try yourself, with your family or friends, or with your congregation.

So grab your favorite Bible and some candles (tealights work nicely!), and over the next 40 days, week by week, we'll explore two great books – the Book of Scripture and the Book of Nature – looking for treasures that can help bring us back to hope, back to love, back to life!



HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

The season of Lent and Easter is an ancient, beautiful, coming-back-to-life poem we can live inside for 40 days (and beyond). With this in mind, in this booklet, each week you'll find a simple service you can do at your kitchen or dining room table: passages of Scripture, a reflection, an interactive prayer, and some options for activities during the week.

And here's an idea: Inspired by the ancient practice of a Tenebrae service ("tenebrae" means "shadows"), we'll start each service with eight lit candles (tealights, for example) and progressively extinguish one more each week, until on Good Friday, we'll extinguish them all. Each time we put out a candle, we'll name a "shadow" we want to remember, recording it on an index card (leave the other side blank; we'll use it during Holy Week), which we can arrange on the table, folded in half like little tents, here and there among the candles.

And on Easter morning, we'll re-light all the candles and add the transformed "shadow" cards, along with some flowers, chocolate, colorful eggs – anything that helps us welcome the good news of Easter with hope and joy!

What you'll need:

- Eight candles (tealights, perhaps?)
- Eight index cards (any color – or lots of colors)
- A pen or marker
- A Bible (in hand or online)
- This booklet
- Flowers, candy, etc. for Easter Sunday



ash wednesday

light

Light eight candles.

read

MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-21

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. + Matthew 6:21

GENESIS 1:1-2

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was without form and void, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while the spirit of God swept over the face of the waters.

reflect

In this passage from Matthew, Jesus warns us that living life isn't just about what we do – it's also about why and how we do it. For example, we can give a gift, or pray a prayer, or participate in a church service – all in order to brag about it, or impress others, or feel like we're better than they are. Or, we can give gifts in a kind way, pray in a humble way, and participate in a graceful way.

So as we look ahead to these 40 days of Lent, ending with the joy and resurrection of Easter, we can lean on God's creative Spirit to help us become more kind, more humble, more graceful as we go. For God's Spirit – always sweeping over everything, helping new life to rise from the ashes – makes all things new!

shadows

Extinguish one of the eight candles. Over the weeks ahead, we'll gradually extinguish all eight as a way of remembering the ashes and shadows in the world, the people and places that need the new life



of God’s resurrection. As you put out this week’s candle, name one “shadow” you want to remember this week (for example, “Families who don’t have enough food,” or “Anyone feeling hopeless,” or “Communities devastated by war”) – and include it in the simple prayer below. Record it on an index card, folded in half like a tent, so you can arrange it with the candles in the weeks ahead.

WAKE UP CALL

After a forest fire, everything looks dead and dreary, covered in ashes. And yet: in time, a new forest can rise out of the ashes, coming back to life. How? Some trees have the amazing ability to resprout new growth from their charred trunks, or from their root systems underground. Sometimes there are buried, dormant seeds that “wake up” after a fire. There are even some trees that use fire as a trigger for dispersing their seeds! And in the meantime, as all those trees grow, grasses and shrubs move into the area, over time helping to restore the soil for forests of the future. Even the ashes themselves help enrich the ground. From ashes, new life can rise!



pray

God of life and new beginnings, of ashes and renewal, help us to notice the ways creation is waking up – and wake us up, too. Help us to be more kind, more humble, and more graceful. And this week, we pray a special prayer for [this week’s “shadow”]; please help them, and help us to help them. In Jesus name, Amen.

activities

- What are the early signs of spring where you live? Think snowdrops, crocuses, birdsong, frog songs, buds, blossoms, and more. For more ideas, ask around, or do an internet search. Make a list of local things you’ve seen so far, and what to look for in the days and weeks ahead. Post the list on your fridge – and check things off as you spot them.

- Take an adventure walk to look for signs of spring. Set a goal of checking off at least three items on your list!
- Conversation Starter: What's a goal you'd like to set for this Lent, one way you'd like to "wake up and come alive"? Becoming more kind? More patient? More humble? More generous, forgiving, thoughtful, graceful?
- Bake something that "rises" this week, like bread or muffins. God brings new life from ashes, just like yeast helps bread to rise.

first sunday of lent

light

Light eight candles, arranged with Ash Wednesday's "shadow" card, folded in half like a tent, so we can see and remember it.



read

LUKE 4:1-13

Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" + Luke 4:4

GENESIS 1:3-5

Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

reflect

In this story from Luke, Jesus is given three tests, each one tempting him to turn away from trusting God, and instead trust himself alone. When we feel anxious or afraid, we're likewise tempted to trust ourselves alone for nourishment, for strength, and for safety – but Jesus encourages us to take

a different, more humble path. We should work hard and stay safe and trust ourselves, of course, but at the same time remember that God (not our effort alone) is the source of every blessing, like the Sun showering us with light and energy.

Think of how hibernating animals curl up in their dens, sleeping through the cold and darkness of winter, trusting deep down that spring will come again. They don't rush or worry – they simply wait, resting in the rhythm of creation.

WAKE UP CALL



Why does the world come back to life in spring? The answer is: "Let there be light!" As Earth orbits the Sun, its 23.5-degree tilt means we're sometimes leaning toward the Sun and sometimes away. Spring begins the "tilting toward" phase, bringing longer days and more direct sunlight, which warms the Earth. Many living things sense these changes, especially the lengthening daylight, as a signal that spring is coming – and it's time to wake up!

shadows

Extinguish two of the eight candles. As you put out the first, name the shadow you chose on Ash Wednesday. For the second, name a new shadow (for example, "Anyone who feels afraid," "People who are sick," or a struggling community in the news). Include both in the prayer below, and write the new one on a new index card, folded in half like a tent, to remember in the weeks ahead.



pray

God from whom all blessings flow, help us to trust in you, and therefore to be calm and courageous, even when – especially when – we face challenges. And this week, we pray a special prayer for [the two shadow cards]; please help them, and help us to help them. In Jesus name, Amen.

activities

- On the next clear night, go outside and have a good long look at the stars, and think about our orbit around our very own star, the Sun. Hot chocolate helps!
- Build a model of the solar system using fruit and a lamp or flashlight, to help visualize how Earth's tilt toward the Sun lengthens the day and starts the spring. And just for fun: if Earth were the size of an orange, the Sun would be a sphere about as tall as a two-story house!
- Conversation Starter: When do you feel most anxious or afraid? When does your trust in God feel most "tested"? Everybody feels this way sometimes – even Jesus!
- Start a "Wake Up, World!" Easter mural, using a large piece of paper or poster board, and adding one element at a time each week. This week, start with the Sun and Earth.
- Practice a simple breathing exercise to calm anxiety: Breathe in slowly while thinking, "God is with me," and breathe out while thinking, "I am safe."
- Each day this week, step outside or sit by a window to feel the sunlight on your face. Take a moment to give thanks for the new day, each one a little longer than the last.

second sunday of lent



light

Light eight candles, illuminating the two shadow cards.

read

LUKE 13:31-35

"How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" + Luke 13:34

GENESIS 1:6-8

And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

WAKE UP CALL

As the days grow longer in spring, chickens truly come to life! Hens lay more eggs, roosters crow more frequently, and the whole flock becomes more active, foraging and exploring their surroundings. Chickens are remarkably in tune with the seasons because their reproductive cycles are influenced by light – longer days signal good conditions for raising chicks.

And here's a fun fact: hens can "talk" to their chicks before they even hatch, clucking softly to them while they're still in the egg – and the chicks chirp back!



reflect

In this story from Luke, Jesus compares himself to a mother hen, gathering together her chicks under her wings, nurturing and protecting them. From the chicks' point of view, her wings are like a sheltering Sky, a dome of love and care. That's what God is like: a loving mother hen.

And yet, in Jerusalem – and everywhere else, too – we often reject prophets (think of Martin Luther King, Jr., for example), afraid of the changes they are calling for. In the same way, Jesus is rejected – but as we'll see in the story of the cross, he still longs to shelter everyone, friends and enemies alike.

shadows

Extinguish three of the eight candles. As you put out the first two, say the shadows you already named, and choose a new one for the third (for example, "Anyone who feels lonely," or "Victims of injustice," or "People who don't have a place to live") – and include them in the simple prayer below. Record the third shadow on a new card.



pray

God of love, help us to care for each other, like mother hens, sheltering everyone. And this week, we pray a special prayer for [the three shadow cards]; please help them, and help us to help them. In Jesus name, Amen.

activities

- If you have any chickens nearby, pay them a friendly visit – and remember, like all birds, they're descendants of dinosaurs!
- Conversation Starter: Who in your life has been like a mother hen, offering shelter and care?
- On your "Wake Up, World!" Easter mural, add a rooster crowing loud and clear, and a hen looking for some bugs to eat.
- Pick one of your three shadow cards and think of a way to actively help this week. For example, if you're praying for people who are lonely, call or visit someone who might need company. If it's for those who are hungry, gather some food to donate.
- Download a "rooster crowing" alarm sound this week and use it in the mornings to remember to wake up to God's love all around us.
- If you eat eggs, save some half-shells, rinse them out, fill them with soil, and plant some small seeds like grass or herbs.



third sunday of lent

light

Light eight candles, illuminating the three shadow cards.

read

LUKE 13:1-9

"He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'" + Luke 13:8-9

WAKE UP CALL

Plants come back to life each spring in lots of ways. Wildflowers – like snowdrops, crocuses, violets, and phlox – appear on the ground; tree flowers appear up above on bare branches, sometimes before the tree's leaves begin to grow. And remember, where there's blossoms, there are often pollinators, too (since they work together!): bees and hummingbirds and wasps and lots of others.

And what about that signature of spring, all those shades of green? Green grass, green stems, green leaves: it's all chlorophyll, the pigment responsible for absorbing sunlight, capturing that "Let there be light" energy and using it to turn water and carbon dioxide into sugar. That's called, "photosynthesis," and it sets the whole carnival in motion: the plants use the sugar for energy, and also to create nectar (for pollinators) and fruit (for other animals, so they'll eat the fruit and spread the plants' seeds), and that attracts insects and caterpillars and birds and countless others. The green gets it all going!



GENESIS 1:11-13

Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so... And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

reflect

In this story from Luke, Jesus tells a parable suggesting that each person, and each community, is like a tree made to "bear fruit" in the form of love and justice, kindness and fairness. Jesus compares the situation to a farmer who plants a fruit tree, and then, when it fails to bear any fruit, prepares to cut it down. But the gardener intervenes, and requests one more year; with some tender loving care, the tree may yet bear fruit. It's not too late! God always gives us one more chance to be kind and fair.

shadows

Extinguish four of the eight candles. As you put out the first three, say the shadows you already named, and choose a new one for the fourth (for example, "Animal species going extinct," or "People without good drinking water," or "Kids who get picked on at school") – and include them in the simple prayer below. Record the fourth shadow on a new card.



pray

God of mercy, thank you for always giving us another chance to be kind and fair to each other. Help us to do it! And this week, we pray a special prayer for [the four shadow cards]; please help them, and help us to help them. In Jesus name, Amen.

activities

- Go on a Springtime Treasure Hunt: strive to find three new blossoms (look down on the ground and up in the trees!), three new animals (birds, insects, you name it!), and as many shades of green as you can find (emerald, pea-green, forest green, lime green, olive green, and more!).

- Conversation Starter #1: What does genuine kindness look like? What's one of the kindest things you've seen someone else do? Is "kind" the same as "nice"? Or is it different?
- On your "Wake Up, World!" Easter mural, add a tree, a flower, and plenty of green!
- Try boiling a bag of spinach to create natural green dye. Use it to color eggs, paper, or fabric, celebrating the green energy of spring and God's gift of light.
- Prepare snacks inspired by pollinators, such as honey on toast or a fruit smoothie. Discuss how bees, butterflies, and birds contribute to the food we enjoy every day.
- At bedtime this week, have each family member pray for something they noticed in creation that day – a blooming plant, a buzzing bee, a beautiful shade of green.

fourth sunday of lent

light

Light eight candles, illuminating the four shadow cards.



read

LUKE 15:1-3, 11B-32

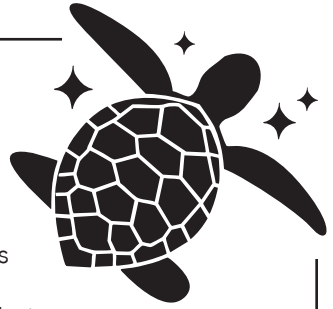
"But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; was lost and has been found." + Luke 15:32

GENESIS 1:14-19

And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky... And it was so. God made the two great lights – the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night – and the stars... And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

WAKE UP CALL

Many sea turtles nest during the spring: a female will come ashore at night, dig out a nest in the sand, lay her eggs in the nest, and then cover it with sand. The eggs hatch about a month or two later, also at night. How do those little hatchlings find their way to the sea? It turns out that one important method they use is to “follow the light” – that is, the light of the Moon and stars, reflecting off the surface of the ocean. And they’re not alone: lots of animals use the Moon and stars for navigation, from frogs to seals to dung beetles – even humpback whales!



But wait, there’s more: Male sea turtles will spend their life at sea, but female turtles, once they’re ready to lay their eggs, will return to the beach where they were born. How do they find their way back? Get this: while they’re still in the nest before hatching, or during that first journey out to sea, they imprint on the signature of Earth’s magnetic field at that particular beach, and then use that memory to return as adults, so the cycle can begin again.

reflect

In this story from Luke, Jesus tells a parable about two brothers and their gracious, generous father. When the younger brother comes home after running away, making lots of mistakes, and wasting money – the father welcomes him with open arms, and holds a party to celebrate his return. The older brother, who’s stayed home and followed the rules, is angry and envious: *Why should the rule-breaker get a party?* The father responds by inviting the older brother to come and join the celebration. Jesus told this story to religious leaders who, like the story’s older brother, were angry that Jesus was welcoming new people who had made mistakes in their lives so far.

Parables allow us to imagine ourselves into the story, and ask questions: How are we like the younger sibling? What new growth do we need? And how are we like the older sibling? What’s keeping us from forgiving and celebrating?

shadows

Extinguish five of the eight candles. As you put out the first four, say the shadows you already named, and choose a new one for the fifth (for example, "Anyone feeling angry," or "People in prison," or "Communities without enough money") – and include them in the simple prayer below. Record the fifth shadow on a new card.



pray

God of joy and welcome, help us to grow, and forgive, and celebrate each other until we're all as beautiful as the stars in the sky. And this week, we pray a special prayer for [the five shadow cards]; please help them, and help us to help them. In Jesus name, Amen.



activities

- Can you navigate by the stars? See if you can find the North Star (Polaris). Hint: you can use the Big Dipper (Ursa Major) to find it; look it up! That way, on clear nights, you'll always know which way is north.
- Conversation Starter: What helps you find your way "home" when you feel lost or uncertain?
- On your "Wake Up, World!" Easter mural, add the Moon and stars (the Big Dipper, perhaps?), and a sea turtle or two!
- Make some homemade cards with star and Moon designs, and write encouraging messages on them. Give them to friends, family, and neighbors as a little way to spread God's hope and joy.
- Identify a local or global organization that helps protect sea turtles. Make a donation and learn as a family about how you can support their work.
- Say a nighttime prayer for nesting sea turtles before going to bed this week.



fifth sunday of lent

light

Light eight candles, illuminating the five shadow cards.

read

JOHN 12:1-8

Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial." + John 12:7

GENESIS 1:20-23

And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky" ... And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.



WAKE UP CALL

The stillness of winter comes alive each spring, thanks to one of the most astonishing events on Earth: the migration of 3.5 billion birds, streaming over our heads and singing in the trees. Birds of prey migrate by day, using "thermals" – giant columns of rising warm air – to circle up and up and up into the sky, then glide down to the North, and then catch another thermal to ride up and up and up. Songbirds migrate by night, navigating by the stars (and also avoiding all those birds of prey!), flying over our homes – billions of birds! – while we sleep. On active nights, there are so many birds migrating that if you look at the full Moon through binoculars, you can see the birds pass by, silhouetted by the Moon's silvery light.



reflect

In this story from John, we're getting close to Jesus' death – but only Lazarus' sister, Mary, seems aware of it. She softly anoints Jesus' feet with expensive perfume, as if preparing his body for burial. Judas scolds her for not selling the perfume and donating the money to the poor, but Jesus defends her: she has understood what Judas and the others have missed. Jesus is about to be killed, and his body should be treated with tenderness and honor. And perhaps Mary glimpsed even more: not just the coming death, but the coming resurrection, too, the rising into new life, like birds soaring across the springtime sky!

shadows

Extinguish six of the eight candles. As you put out the first five, say the shadows you already named, and choose a new one for the sixth (for example, "Anyone feeling sad," or "All who have experienced violence," or "People mourning the death of a loved one") – and include them in the simple prayer below. Record the sixth shadow on a new card.



pray

God of tenderness, help us to care for each other, and for your creation. And this week, we pray a special prayer for [the six shadow cards]; please help them, and help us to help them. In Jesus name, Amen.

activities

- Let's go birding! Take a pad of paper and pencil (and some binoculars if you can), and write down the birds you see or hear in a nearby park, forest, or wetland. Then bring the list home and look up how far the migrators have traveled!
- Conversation Starter: How do you want your body to be treated when you die? Have you ever experienced someone close to you dying? What was it like?
- On your "Wake Up, World!" Easter mural, add a few of your favorite birds!

- Using a bird migration tracker app, learn how many birds are passing over your area every night this week. Share a prayer for their safety, and reflect on the amazing journeys happening all around us.
- Watch the five-minute short film, "Nightsongs" (find it by searching "SALT Nightsongs").
- Make some bird-inspired snacks this week, like "birdseed" trail mix (nuts, seeds, and dried fruit) or cookies shaped like nests with eggs.

palm sunday

light

Light eight candles, illuminating the six shadow cards.

read

LUKE 19:28-40

"Jesus answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.'" + Luke 19:40

GENESIS 1:24-25

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind and the cattle of every kind and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

reflect

In this story from Luke, Palm Sunday is a day of joy and celebration. Out in the streets of Jerusalem, Jesus brings to life an ancient prophecy, in which a triumphant, peaceful king, "humble and riding on a donkey," arrives in the holy city (Zechariah 9:9). Large crowds join in the fun, waving palm branches and shouting "Hosanna!" (which means, "Save us!") – it's almost



as though creation itself were celebrating, quivering with warmth and joy, waking us up from our long torpor. As Jesus puts it, if the crowds were to fall silent, "the stones would shout out!"

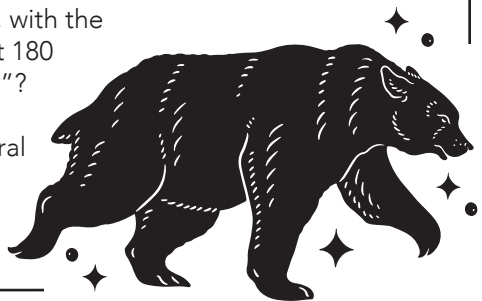
shadows

Since this is a day of celebration beginning Holy Week, leave all eight candles lit. Take each of the six shadow cards, turn them over, and write a prayer of remedy on the back of each card. For example, for a "Families without enough food" shadow card, write on the back, "Food for all families"; or on "Anyone feeling sad," write "Comfort and joy." Arrange these six "remedy" cards, like tents, among the eight lit candles. *Hosanna, hosanna in the highest!*

WAKE UP CALL

Lots of animals hibernate (or enter a similar state, called "torpor") over the winter, going underground or into a den until the foods of spring return. Bears, bats, turtles, frogs, ground squirrels, snakes and more all use versions of this strategy, slowing down their bodies' processes in a kind of very, very deep sleep. A bear's heart, for example, can slow down to 8 beats per minute (compare that to your heart, which beats between 60-110 beats per minute), and a wood frog can actually freeze solid all winter, and still come back to life!

But how do they wake up? For bears, the key signal is temperature: once it's warm enough, they'll wake up, come out, and start looking for a spring snack. But other animals burrow deep underground, sealed away from external signals like temperature and day-length. Take a woodchuck, for instance: the shorter days and cooler temperatures of autumn start a chemical clock in their brains, with the "alarm" set to go off in about 180 days. And what is that "alarm"? Shivering! The internal clock signals the woodchuck's central nervous system to shiver, creating heat, and waking her up.





pray

God of life and joy, wake us up from our torpor and hibernation, and fill us with your Spirit. And this week, we pray a special prayer for [the six “remedy prayers”]; please help these things to happen, and help us to help them happen. In Jesus name, Amen.

activities

- Palm Sunday gets its name from an ancient tradition of waving branches as a sign of celebration and gratitude. So go outside, find some greenery in a park or forest, and wave it around with some serious joy. Silly, happy, corny, fun – it’s all good!
- Conversation Starter: What in your life are you most thankful for, or joyful about? And what in the wider world are you most thankful/joyful about right now?
- On your “Wake Up, World!” Easter mural, add a bear, a bat, a frog – or all three!

maundy thursday

light

Light eight candles, illuminating the six shadow cards (with the shadow side facing out, and our Palm Sunday prayers on the “inside” of the tents).

read

JOHN 13:1-35

Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. + John 13:5



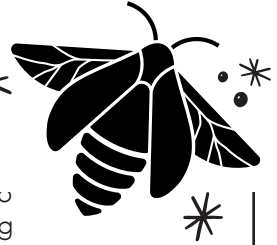
GENESIS 1:27, 30-31

So God created humans in the divine image, in the divine image God created them; male and female God created them... And it was so. God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

WAKE UP CALL

All winter long, and into the early spring, firefly larvae live underground, some for as long as two years. Then, typically in the late spring, the rising temperature and longer days stimulate the larvae to pupate: each constructs an underground chamber, analogous to a caterpillar forming a chrysalis to become a butterfly. After metamorphosis within the chamber, the adult fireflies emerge and fly, flashing their courtship lanterns in dialogue with each other, a dance that lights up late spring and early summer evenings.

But here's the thing: the larvae glow in the dark, too, as they move through the soil underground – and so do the pupae, as metamorphosis changes everything. Even now, under our feet, glowing fireflies-to-be are waking up, shining in the underground world, and growing wings. And when late spring comes around, they'll emerge and fly – and the sky will sparkle with their love and light!



reflect

As we saw two weeks ago, Lazarus' sister, Mary, has just anointed Jesus' feet with perfume – and now Jesus turns to his disciples with a similar act of loving service. By washing their feet, he shows them what he means when he commands them to "love one another, as I have loved you" (that's why we call this Thursday "Maundy," from an old word for "mandate" or command). It's like he's lighting a lantern in the dark, so we can glimpse the new world God is bringing back to life: children of God, created in the image of God, serving one another with gentleness and grace.

shadows

Extinguish seven of the eight candles. As you put out the first six, say the shadows you already named, and choose a new one for the seventh (for example, "People who are afraid," or "Anyone who feels worthless" or "Animals who are suffering") – and include them in the simple prayer below. Record the seventh shadow on a new card.



pray

God of gentleness, help us to care for each other in simple, clear ways, loving others as you have loved us. And this week, we pray a special prayer for [the seven shadow cards]; please help them, and help us to help them. In Jesus name, Amen.

activities

- Inspired by Jesus' foot-washing, do something simple, gentle, and physical to express your love for a friend or family member. Ask them what they'd most enjoy: a back massage, a foot massage, a back scratch, a head scratch, a hug, cuddling while watching a movie... Gentle touch is life-giving!
- Conversation Starter: If you really believed that every person is created in God's image (even people you don't like), would it change how you think about them, or interact with them?
- On your "Wake Up, World!" Easter mural, add some fireflies, and a human being or two!
- Write simple love notes to each member of your family. Hide them somewhere they'll be sure to find them, like under their pillow or on their dinner chair.



good friday

light

Light eight candles, illuminating the seven shadow cards (with the shadow side facing out, and our Palm Sunday prayers on the “inside” of the tents).

read

JOHN 18:1 – 19:42

When Jesus had received the wine, he said, “It is finished.” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. + John 19:30

GENESIS 1:1-2

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was without form and void, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while the spirit of God swept over the face of the waters.

WAKE UP CALL

Creation is waking up this spring – but creation is also hurting, and needs us to wake up and step into our God-given roles as caregivers. So today, instead of celebrating how the living world inspires us, let’s reflect on how creation – including humans but not limited to us – is too often wounded and hurt. How the planet is overheating, for example, or how many animal species are nearing extinction, or how forest fires and extreme weather events hurt the whole neighborhood – and what we can do to help.



reflect

Good Friday is a day of sadness tinged with a kind of hidden hope. In John's story, we see this hope in the courage Jesus shows as he faces the hardest moment of his life, saying "It is finished" just before he dies. His words suggest that even in the midst of chaos and violence, something greater is unfolding – God's creative Spirit is at work, bringing new life even in the face of suffering and death.

shadows

Extinguish all eight candles. As you put out the first seven, say the shadows you already named, and choose a new one for the eighth (for example, "People who are hurt," or "Anyone who hates or hurts someone else" or "All those suffering because of extreme weather") – and include them in the simple prayer below. Record the eighth shadow on a new card.



pray

God of sorrows, help us to comfort each other. Bring us back to life. And this week, we pray a special prayer for [the eight shadow cards]; please help them, and help us to help them. In Jesus name, Amen.

activities

- Gather up some sticks or twigs and create a simple cross. Write words of hope and healing on small pieces of paper and tie them to the cross with string or yarn.
- Sit quietly and watch how the wind moves through trees. Talk about how God's Spirit is always present, even when we can't see it.
- Open a window, listen for some bird song, and then sing along. Try something simple like, "This Little Light of Mine."

easter sunday

light

Light eight candles, arranged with the eight cards, now flipped over so the Palm Sunday prayers are facing out (and add similar "remedies" to the Maundy Thursday and Good Friday shadow cards), along with a few more candles, some flowers, candy, artwork, favorite treats – anything that helps us welcome the good news of Easter with hope and joy!

read

LUKE 24:1-12

"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen." + Luke 24:5

GENESIS 2:1-3

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all their multitude. On the sixth day God finished the work, and rested on the seventh day from all the work that God had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work done in creation.

reflect

Jesus is risen – alleluia! The 40 days of Lent draw to a close – and the season of Eastertide begins, a 50-day Sabbath, a festival of life and light.

The days are getting longer; the roosters are crowing; the hens are foraging and laying eggs; the flowers and trees are blooming and greening; the sea turtles are hatching, following the stars to the sea;



the birds are coming back, singing of their long journeys; the bears are emerging from their dens, blinking their eyes in the sun; and the fireflies are on their way, glowing beneath our feet, and soon lighting up the evening skies.

The world is coming back to life, waking up and getting moving. So for God's sake, let's do the same, with spring in our step: back to hope, back to love, back to life!



notes



events

