

LENT WREATH LITURGY
FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY OF FAITH



 Presbyterian Church
of Aotearoa New Zealand

Introduction:

Inspired by the formational and educational aspects of the Advent wreath practice, I developed a Lent wreath practice. This liturgy is designed to be used within the context of worship by the gathered family of faith. However, it could easily be adapted and used at home as an individual family. This liturgy intentionally includes a variety of voices both young and old – encouraging the whole family of faith to gather around the story of deliverance and new life experienced through the life of Jesus Christ. The refrain that is woven throughout the weeks of Lent and into Easter morning is a simple one taken from the *Jesus Storybook Bible*: "*Since God loves us with a Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love – Heaven has broken through!*"¹ We gather around this truth as we light the Lent Wreath and pray together as a family of faith.

Materials:

- Crown of thorns for Lent wreath
- Christ candle (white)
- Wooden bowl to hold Christ candle
- 5-6 stick candles (white)
- 5-6 stick candle holders
- Purple underlay
- White underlay
- Flowers gathered for 'Crown of Life' Easter wreath



'Crown of Thorns' Lent Wreath



'Crown of Life' Easter Wreath

A Kids Friendly Resource, www.kidsfriendly.org.nz

¹ Excerpt from 'The Jesus Storybook Bible', p.200

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www.kidsfriendly.org.nz

This document is intended as a resource for the Church. The information it contains is not prescriptive. The Book of Order and its subordinate standards contain the Church's official rules and directions. Any perceived conflict between the information contained in this resource and the Church's Book of Order and subordinate standards is entirely unintentional.

First Sunday of Lent

1) *Light 1st candle in 'Crown of Thorns' Lent Wreath*

2) *After candle is lit, adult to read aloud:*

In our world we are tempted to think that our Heavenly Father has not given us all that we need. In essence, this was the temptation that led to original sin. May we be delivered from the temptation to turn our heads to anyone other than Almighty God.



'Crown of Thorns' Lent Wreath

As we journey through Lent, may we believe *without a doubt* that God *has* provided for all our needs. No matter how desolate the landscape of our lives may look, God *has* made a Way through Jesus Christ – through his death on the cross and resurrection.

(looking to child) Ask 'What does this mean?'

3) *Child answers and says aloud (slowly):*

"Since God loves us with a Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love – Heaven has broken through!"²

4) *Child and Adult lead congregation in prayer – (saying slowly...)*

Let us pray together:

Heavenly Father,

Throughout these forty days,

***unseal* within us the wellspring of your grace,**

***cleanse* our hearts of all that is not holy,**

and cause your *gift* of new life to flourish once again.

AMEN.

² Excerpt from 'The Jesus Storybook Bible', p.200

Second Sunday of Lent

1) *Light 1st & 2nd candles in the 'Crown of Thorns' Lent Wreath*

2) *After candles are lit, adult to read aloud:*

In a life without God we are tempted to believe that we know the best way *for* our lives. Yet, when we have an encounter with Jesus – it is always a *life-giving* encounter. With Jesus, our own plans can melt away and become replaced with God's will and God's way.

As we continue on our journey through Lent, may we believe *without a doubt* that God has made a life-giving way out of no-way. May we follow Jesus each step of the way to the cross and beyond. And may we be challenged to bring both our faith and our questions to Jesus as we walk alongside him. No matter how many questions we have about his will and his way, God *has* made a Way through Jesus Christ – through his death on the cross and resurrection we have a future, a future with hope.

(looking to child) Ask 'What does this mean?'

3) *Child answers and says aloud:*

"Since God loves us with a Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love – Heaven has broken through!"³

4) *Adult & Child lead congregation in prayer - (saying slowly...)*

Let us pray together:

Heavenly Father,

Throughout these forty days,

***unseal* within us the wellspring of your grace,**

***cleanse* our hearts of all that is not holy,**

and cause your *gift* of new life to flourish once again.

AMEN.

³ Excerpt from 'The Jesus Storybook Bible', p.200

Third Sunday of Lent

1) *Light 1st, 2nd, & 3rd candles in the 'Crown of Thorns' Lent Wreath*

2) *After candles are lit, adult to read aloud:*

In the Exodus story, we read of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness and lifting up their complaints to God...of being hungry, of being thirsty, of feeling abandoned. If we are honest about our daily walk with God, we admit that we, too, are often like the Israelites. We too often lose faith in God's goodness and in God's providence. For the Israelites, God continued to provide for their needs...sending bread from heaven and making water spring forth from a rock. In the same way, no matter what the wilderness may look like in our lives – a great loss that we are living through, a deep sadness that we are walking through, or unanswered questions that we are having to live with – God is faithful, God continues to provide for our needs and will never, ever abandon us.

(looking to child) Ask 'What does this mean?'

3) *Child answers and says aloud:*

"Since God loves us with a Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love – Heaven has broken through!"⁴

4) *Adult & Child lead congregation in prayer - (...saying slowly)*

Let us pray together:

Heavenly Father,

Throughout these forty days,

***unseal* within us the wellspring of your grace,**

***cleanse* our hearts of all that is not holy,**

and cause your *gift* of new life to flourish once again.

AMEN.

⁴ Excerpt from 'The Jesus Storybook Bible', p.200

Fourth Sunday of Lent

1) *Light 1st, 2nd, 3rd, & 4th candles in the 'Crown of Thorns' Lent Wreath*

2) *After candles are lit, adult to read aloud:*

The journey to Easter can be a time to find what is missing in our lives; a time to deliberately seek what has been tossed away, misplaced, or ignored so that our lives can once again reflect the Gospel which Jesus encouraged us to live. It is a time to deeply consider the purpose and gift of God's Son, remember what he held dear, and to recognize *anew* how he re-found all of us through his death and resurrection.

(looking to child) Ask 'What does this mean?'

3) *Child answers and says aloud:*

"Since God loves us with a Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love – Heaven has broken through!"⁵

4) *Adult & Child lead prayer - (...saying slowly)*

Let us pray together:

Heavenly Father,

Throughout these forty days,

***unseal* within us the wellspring of your grace,**

***cleanse* our hearts of all that is not holy,**

and cause your *gift* of new life to flourish once again.

AMEN.

⁵ Excerpt from 'The Jesus Storybook Bible', p.200

Fifth Sunday of Lent

1) *Light 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, & 5th candles in the 'Crown of Thorns' Lent Wreath*

2) *After candles are lit, adult to read aloud:*

With each week of Lent, we journey closer to the truth found at the foot of the cross and at the entrance to the empty tomb. With each step on our journey, may we believe - without a doubt - that God is still the God who brings sight to the blind, causes the lame to walk, sets prisoners free, restores the outcast, and brings the dead back to life!

We think of those situations in our lives that we feel are "too far gone" or those places that feel dead or lifeless within us that are in need of resurrection. May we be encouraged with a newness of belief in the power of Jesus Christ – who overcame death so we could have life with him!

(looking to child) Ask 'What does this mean?'

3) *Child answers and says aloud:*

"Since God loves us with a Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love – Heaven has broken through!"⁶

4) *Adult & Child lead prayer - (...saying slowly)*

Let us pray together:

Heavenly Father,

Throughout these forty days,

***unseal* within us the wellspring of your grace,**

***cleanse* our hearts of all that is not holy,**

and cause your *gift* of new life to flourish once again.

AMEN.

⁶ Excerpt from 'The Jesus Storybook Bible', p.200

***NOTE ABOUT Sixth Sunday of Lent/PALM SUNDAY...**

We did not light the candles in the wreath on this Sunday, namely because our attention was more focused on acting out Jesus' entry into Jerusalem & waving palm branches. Both practically and theologically, we thought this made the most sense in the flow of things.

A sixth small candle could be added to the outside of the wreath and used on this Sunday – especially if your congregation focuses more on the Passion.

***NOTE ABOUT GOOD FRIDAY...**

We lit all of the candles (except the Christ candle) in the 'Crown of Thorns' wreath at the beginning of our Good Friday service.

Throughout the service – as the Passion story was read – we paused to snuff out one candle at a time (i.e. – with some of the 'Stations of the cross'). This continued intermittently until the last candle was put out as the verses of Christ's death was read...even with or immediately following the "It is finished" statement. This is a very similar idea to what happens in a Tenebrae service.

We did incorporate taking the 'Crown of Thorns' used in our Lent wreath and placing it on the cross during the service. This helps to connect the journey we've already been on during Lent straight to our focus: the cross.

Easter Sunday

(NOTE: as noted above, the crown of thorns was removed on Good Friday from the wreath and placed on the cross (the crown of thorns has now been removed from the cross & replaced with a white cloth which the older children processed in with at the beginning of the service and draped it over the cross). The Lent wreath will now be adorned with flowers & greenery – emphasizing the resurrection! The wreath is now a 'Crown of Life' (see image)



'Crown of Life' Easter Wreath

1) Children and others are invited to bring flowers and greenery to the front to decorate the space around the Christ candle.

2) Light 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and Christ candle in the 'Crown of Life' wreath

3) After candles are lit, adult to read aloud:

We no longer look for Jesus among the dead, for he is alive and has become the Lord of life! On Easter we give thanks because God reversed the judgment on us by raising Jesus from the dead. By grace we are born again into the new humanity of Jesus Christ. We are called to new life for God and for neighbours.⁷ Jesus' death and resurrection has set us free to walk in newness of life!

(To the congregation)...Family of God, what does this mean?

4) Led by the child, the whole congregation answers:

**"Since God loves us with a Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love – Heaven has broken through!"⁸
Alleluia! Jesus Christ is risen! Jesus Christ is risen indeed!**

5) Adult to invite other words of praise to be said aloud by child and others in the congregation (i.e. – spontaneous – however, some suggestions are: 'yay', 'praise God', 'God is good', 'God is great', 'woo-hoo'!)

6) Child and adult lead congregation in prayer - (...saying slowly)

**Jesus, through your resurrection you lifted us up,
And filled us with rejoicing!
Through your salvation you enrich us with your gifts.
Renew our lives and fill our hearts with joy.
Through your victory over death, we pray to you, AMEN.**

⁷ The Companion to the Book of Common Worship, p. 107-108, Geneva Press, 2003.

⁸ Excerpt from 'The Jesus Storybook Bible', p.200