

Lent in a Bag

This bag contains 6 small items to be used as symbols to focus individual, family or group meditations and conversations during the Season of Lent. There is no assigned order, although if you want your bulb to bloom by Easter, plan on using it earlier! Questions intended to start conversation, ideas for experiential moments, and scripture verses are noted. Use whatever version of the scripture stories you like, whether from a traditional Bible translation, a children's Bible, or Godly Play.

Suggestions for using the contents of this bag:

- Choose one night of the week and invite those around your table to pick one of the symbols as a starting point for whole-table conversation.
- For individual devotion (daily or weekly), choose one of the symbols for reflection as you make your way through the season of Lent. How does your interpretation of the symbol change over time?
- Use each symbol as a conversation starter during weekly Lenten suppers or small group gatherings with your congregation.

Week 1: Sand

Just between his baptism and the beginning of his adult ministry, Jesus went into the wilderness for 40 days, 'to be tested'. What constitutes wilderness in your life? What have you learned there? What might you learn there?

Read the story of Jesus wandering in the desert. (Luke 4: 1-11) Open the sand and touch it.

Week 2: Paperwhite Bulb

Watching a bulb grow reminds us of the miracle of hope and transformation that is the promise of Easter. The bulb changes, decaying as it transforms into a new life that we can't even really imagine when we plant it. Where is hope in your life? Where is mystery? What transformation do you hope for during the season of Lent?

Talk about change. What things can you think of that change? Read the Parable of the Mustard Seed and the Parable of the Leavened Bread. (Matthew 13: 31-32, 33)

Directions for growing your bulb. Directions are from about.gardening.com. Select a container that is 3 - 4" deep and has no drainage holes. Spread 1 - 2" of stones, marbles or gravel along the bottom of the container. Position your paper white bulb(s), pointed end up, on top of the stone layer. Add more stones to cover the bulbs up to their shoulders. The pointed tips should still be showing. Add water so that the level just reaches the base of the bulbs. (Allowing the bottom of the bulb to sit in water will stimulate growth;

covering the entire bulb with water will cause rot.) The bulbs don't need light at this point. Keep them on the cool side, about 65 degrees. Check your bulbs daily to see if they need more water. When the roots develop, move the container to a sunny window. The sunnier the better, but try not too warm or they'll get leggy. Once the plants flower, they will last longer if moved out of direct sunlight, to a cool spot with indirect or diffused light.

Week 3: Rock

While in the wilderness, Jesus was invited to transform stone into bread. Though he resisted the temptation there and then, he became justly renowned for feeding people who were hungry for food, or for love, or for a word of encouragement, or for simple acceptance. Might there be a stony place in you that needs transforming? Some attitude or habit that, with a little attention, might even become a gift for you and others?"

Read the story of Zacchaeus. (Luke 19:1-10) Jesus transforms us and helps us make better choices. Is there a place in your life you could make better choices?

Week 4: Shell

Historically, the season of Lent provided a time in which converts to the faith were prepared for the sacrament of Holy Baptism. Jesus began his ministry after his baptism. As someone who has been or will be baptized, what is your ministry? How are you living out the promises made in the Baptismal Covenant?

Read the story of Jesus' baptism. (Luke 3: 21-22) Share memories of your child's or your own baptism.

Week 5: Human Figure

Because Jesus was, as we confess, fully human, he gets us, understands us from inside our skin, and knows from experience that we're each capable of great things, Godly things. And no matter what we do, he keeps on inviting us to join us in his work which has become our own. As you enter this Lent, what might you plan to do over these 40 days so that the Easter you will more closely reflect you and the Christ who lives in and through you?

Read the story of Jesus washing the disciple's feet. (John 13: 1-17) How can we live like Jesus?

Week 6: Candle

Lent begins in the dimness of late winter and ends with the burst of bright spring. Jesus is, according to John's gospel, 'Light of the world' and that Light, directing his attention to his disciples and through them to us, insists: 'You are the light of the world. Don't be hiding under some bushel basket.' So where do you shine? How do you keep your light lit?

Sing "This little light of mine." How do you let your light shine?