### 2018 EDITION







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Born in Evanston, Illinois.



## Welcome to An Illustrated Lent for Families

This is our third year of providing families with a resource for engaging their children in faith formation at home during Lent. Our Illustrated Lent for Families and Illustrated Advent for Families have been used by thousands of families around the world, and we're excited to share with you this new version for 2018.

There are certain seasons of the church year, like Lent and Advent, that are great opportunities to say, "Hey kids -we're going to try something new for the next few weeks." These seasons invite us to be intentional about connecting more closely with God. Lent, in particular, challenges us to examine our lives through some spiritual practices, like prayer and fasting, as a means to prepare ourselves for the fullness of the resurrection of Jesus at Easter.

It can be challenging to find meaningful ways to engage your family in faith formation. It can even feel awkward at times. We don't always know what to do, and sometimes we have a difficult time finding the words to share our own faith with others.

We hope that by providing you with these resources, you can take some time to slow down, engage in great conversations, try new things, and have fun with your family as you take this Lenten journey with us.

#### THE DEVOTIONS

This year's Lenten devotions are based on the Gospel passages from the Revised Common Lectionary scripture readings (Year B) and are written so they can be used by both children and adults. We believe you'll find questions and discussion topics in each devotion that will work for your children, no matter the age. At the same time, we invite you to feel free to tweak the content and questions to work for your family. Don't feel like you need to do all the activities for it to be a meaningful experience for you and your family. Each devotion consists of the below elements, and we invite you to take a look at the devotions and see what you think will work best for your family.

Scripture: The Gospel passages come from the Revised Common Lectionary (Year B) for Lent.

**Reflection**: A brief reflection is offered for each of the scripture texts. It might make sense for you to read this section with your family, or you may just want to read it for yourself and see what questions or themes will resonate best for your family.

Discussion and Coloring Sheet: This is a chance for some discussion for your family. Since we love coloring here at Illustrated Children's Ministry, we find that often some of the best conversations happen while coloring and doing something creative together as a family. We suggest discussing the questions offered while coloring the week's coloring sheet, which ties in with both the weekly scripture and activity.

Family Activity: The activity provided each week invites your family into an act of fasting that is aligned with the week's scripture reading. Each activity is written to allow for your act of fasting to both challenge your family and be incorporated simply into your week. As with all our suggestions for spiritual formation, please feel free to adjust for your family so that it works within your daily lives and also opens you up to mindfully participating in the opportunity for spiritual formation.

**Prayer**: Finally, each week's devotion ends with a short prayer that you can say, or invite your children to repeat after you. This is a simple ritual to end your family's weekly devotion time and can also be used as a prayer throughout the week.

#### SUGGESTED SCHEDULE

We encourage you to find time each week that you can set aside to gather together for the family devotion that works best with your family's schedule. Obviously, that will be different for each family, but if you are looking for a suggested schedule for Lent 2018, here is one possibility:

Ash Wednesday: February 14th\*

• Week 1: February 18th

• Week 2: February 25th

• Week 3: March 4th

• Week 4: March 11th

• Week 5: March 18th

• Week 6: March 25th

Week 7: April 1st

\* New this year, Illustrated Children's Ministry offers you an Ash Wednesday resource in addition to the Sunday devotions. We invite you to use this resource in your home on the evening of Wednesday, February, 14th if you are unable to attend a service or are not a part of a faith tradition that offers an Ash Wednesday service. Or you may combine this activity with your first Sunday devotion. However you choose to use this resource, we hope it is yet another opportunity to draw closer to God in this season of intentional reflection.

As you use these resources in your ministry or your home, we would love to hear what was helpful and meaningful and what suggestions or comments you have for us. We desire to create quality resources for children's faith formation, and we appreciate your comments and feedback. You can always reach us at icm@illustratedchildrensministry.com or find us on the following social networks:

Facebook Page: <u>facebook.com/IllustratedCM</u>

Facebook Group: <u>facebook.com/groups/Illustratedcm</u>

Pinterest: <u>pinterest.com/IllustratedCM</u>
Twitter: <u>twitter.com/IllustratedCM</u>
Instagram: <u>instagram.com/IllustratedCM</u>

It is our hope and prayer that these devotions help your family spend some quality time together, coloring, creating art, listening to the story of Jesus, and participating in spiritual practices as you journey through Lent together.

Blessings,

Adam Walker Cleaveland and the ICM Team





### · ASH WEDNESDAY ·

### Ash Wednesday & Valentine's Day

#### BACKGROUND

This year we find ourselves with an interesting timing of the rhythms and seasons of the Christian Church calendar. The Advent season was very late in the calendar year, and our Lenten season is very early. We even find that St. Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday must share their days together! How much more can we be thankful that God that can handle both of these days in one!

Ash Wednesday is the day in the church year where we mark the beginning of the season of Lent. During this season, we are all invited to reflect on the things in our lives that may be causing us to be distant from God and distant from others. Beginning around the 11th century, the Ash Wednesday service became a way for Christians to physically mark and remember the beginning of the season.

Historically, during the service, ashes are prepared from the palm fronds used during the Palm Sunday of the prior year as a way to point toward the Gospel message of the upcoming Easter. The ashes are mixed with oil and placed with the sign of the cross on the foreheads of the service participants and the words, "From dust you have come and to dust you will return," are shared with each person. This can be a startling statement to hear. However, the purpose is not to alarm but to remind us that we have been created by God and that it is God who holds us in life and in death.



Perhaps it is because of our increasingly virtual world, Ash Wednesday and the season of Lent become powerful opportunities to reconnect with our families, friends, our faith communities, and most importantly our Creator. The scent of the oil, the scratch of the ashes, and the sound of song and Word all provide us with different ways to feel and understand the significance of the season.

#### ASH WEDNESDAY ACTIVITY

Supplies needed: Labyrinth sheet, ashes or black paint, and the scripture reading listed on the next page

For this activity, we will be using a labyrinth you can find on the page following the prayer. Christians have used labyrinths as a means to have a multi-sensory expression of prayer and contemplation. Labyrinths look like a maze but are different from a maze in the sense that it is not meant to be confusing, but rather to provide space and time to reflect and pray while traveling the path. We will be using our labyrinth as a way for families of all ages to participate in this activity.

Please gather around a table or other flat surface in your home. Place the labyrinth in the middle of the table or surface. Near to the paper, have prepared ashes or black paint available for use.

Designate one or more readers of the scripture passage Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21. Invite each person in your group to use their finger to "journey through the labyrinth." If your group has more than 4, invite two participants to journey the labyrinth together. Start by placing one finger at the beginning of the labyrinth and when the reader begins to read the scripture, trace your finger slowly through.

When each participant reaches the center of the labyrinth, the participant will then dip their thumb into the ashes or paint and make the sign of the cross in the middle of the labyrinth. Together all will say the refrain: From dust you came and from dust you will return. Pause between each of the four breaks after the refrains as the participant finishes tracing their finger through the rest of the labyrinth. When you finish your journeys, you may complete the activity with the prayer following the scripture passage. Please keep or display the labyrinth in a visible location throughout the season. We will return to it on Good Friday.

### SCRIPTURE & LABURINTH REFRAIN: MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-21

#### Concerning Almsgiving

Reader: Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for

then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. So whenever you give

alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the

synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in

secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Refrain

Together: From dust you came and to dust you will return.

### **Concerning Prayer**

Reader: And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand

and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in

secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Refrain

Together: From dust you came and to dust you will return.

#### Concerning Fasting

Reader: And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they

disfigure their faces so as to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father

who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Refrain

Together: From dust you came and to dust you will return.

#### **Concerning Treasures**

Reader: Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust

consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be

also.

Refrain

Together: From dust you came and to dust you will return.

### PRAYER

Dear God of our whole selves,

As we journey through this season of Lent,

teach us how to give,

so that we can joyfully respond when you call us to serve.

Teach us how to pray,

so that we can be closer to you in all that we do throughout the day.

Teach us how to let go,

so nothing can stand in the way of our connection with you.

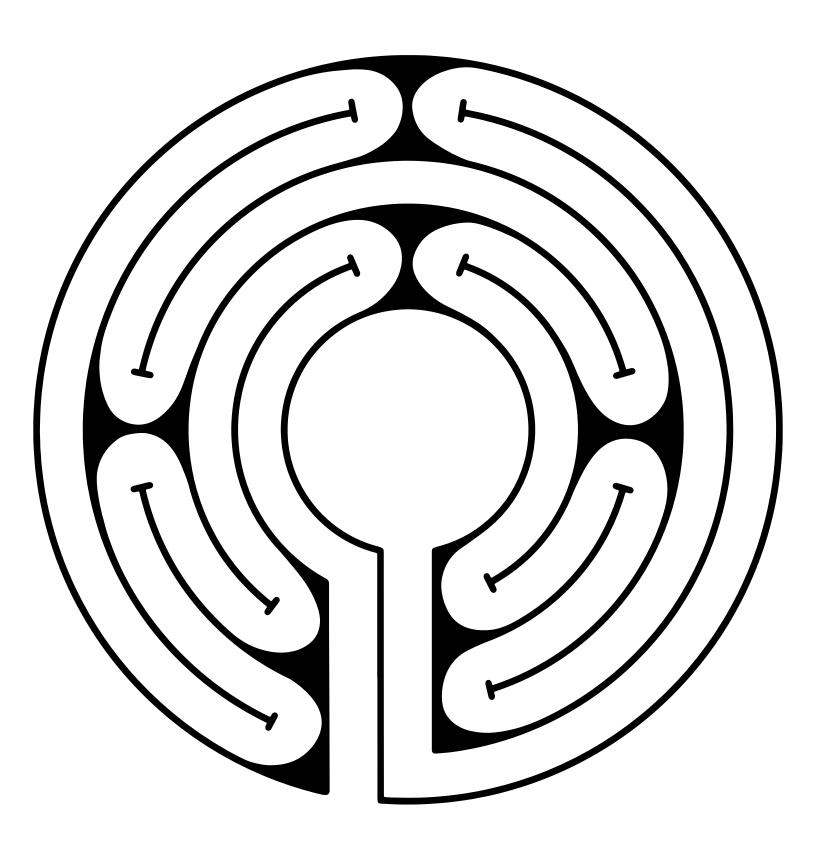
Teach us how to prepare,

so we can be ready to receive your love, wisdom, and blessing.

Help us to remember that in all ways we belong to you,

# ASH WEDNESDAY

journey through the labyrinth



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### • WF.F.K 1 •

### Preparation

### SCRIPTURE: Mark 1:9-15

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

### REFLECTION

In our first Sunday of Lent, we find ourselves in the Gospel of Mark. The writer of Mark is known to pack a lot of action in a small amount of writing. Mark 1:9-15 is a good example of this. In seven short verses, Jesus is baptized, spends forty days in the wilderness, and begins his Galilean ministry. Because the text shares a lot, there is a lot we can learn from it.

At the beginning of the text, we witness the baptism of Jesus by John. In this moment, Jesus is given the public identity of God's Son, the Beloved. But what happens right after being given this new identity? Jesus disappears from public life for forty days and lives in the wilderness where he is tested. It is only after that time that he returns and begins to share the good news of the Gospel. Jesus was given a new identity, but that also came with a time of preparation.

When we read this passage, hopefully, we can identify with what Jesus experienced. When we receive a new identity, a new stage, or a new chapter in life, it takes time and preparation to live into that new identity. If you have done something like prepare for a race or an exam, you don't go from walking to running 5 miles in a week. Nor would you take a test on materials that you had just received that day. Hopefully, it is helpful to see that Jesus also made time to practice, prepare, and persevere, all of which preceded his living into the

identity that he had already been given by God. The season of Lent mirror's Jesus' time in the wilderness so that we might have an opportunity to repent and turn away from the things that hold us back from living into our identity in Christ and prepare ourselves to live into and share our identity and hope with others.

### DISCUSSION

- What do you think it means to repent and believe in Jesus' Good News?
- Have you ever had to prepare for something big in your life (a project at school, a new job, a new school, a new sport or activity, a big test)? What are some things you had to do to prepare? What are some things you had to give up to be ready?
- In what ways can you prepare yourself to live into the identity that you are a beloved child of God? Do you have a word or phrase that has become a part of you during your life that has been negative or painful/hurtful? How has that kept you from your identity of one who is loved and is called to love?

### **ACTIVITY**

Supplies needed: a glass or clear plastic bowl, small stones (preferably from your yard or neighborhood, but you could also find some at a local dollar store), water

First, fill the bowl three-quarters of the way full of clear water. Place the bowl in the middle of a table or another place where you can sit or stand around the bowl. Take a moment to go around the table and touch your hand to the water. Take some time to share memories of participating in or witnessing a baptism. If you have not had this experience, talk about what it might have been like for Jesus to be baptized. What would have the water been like? How would it have felt?

This week, your act of fasting is to practice mindfully living into your identity of one who is loved and is called to love others. Invite everyone to choose a stone from the ones you have gathered. Think of that word or phrase you discussed earlier which has become a part of you during your life that has been negative or painful. Hold the stone in your hand when you think of this. Then take that stone and place it in the bowl and say, "I am no longer\_\_\_\_\_\_. I am a beloved child of God." For younger participants, they can simply say "I am a beloved child of God." Each morning or evening (or time of day that works for your family or group) this week, gather around the bowl. Take another stone and repeat the phrase "I am no longer\_\_\_\_\_. I am a beloved child of God."

### PRAYER

To the One who calls us by name,

Thank you...

For being a God who wants to know us

For being a God who desires to claim us

For being a God who gives us new identities

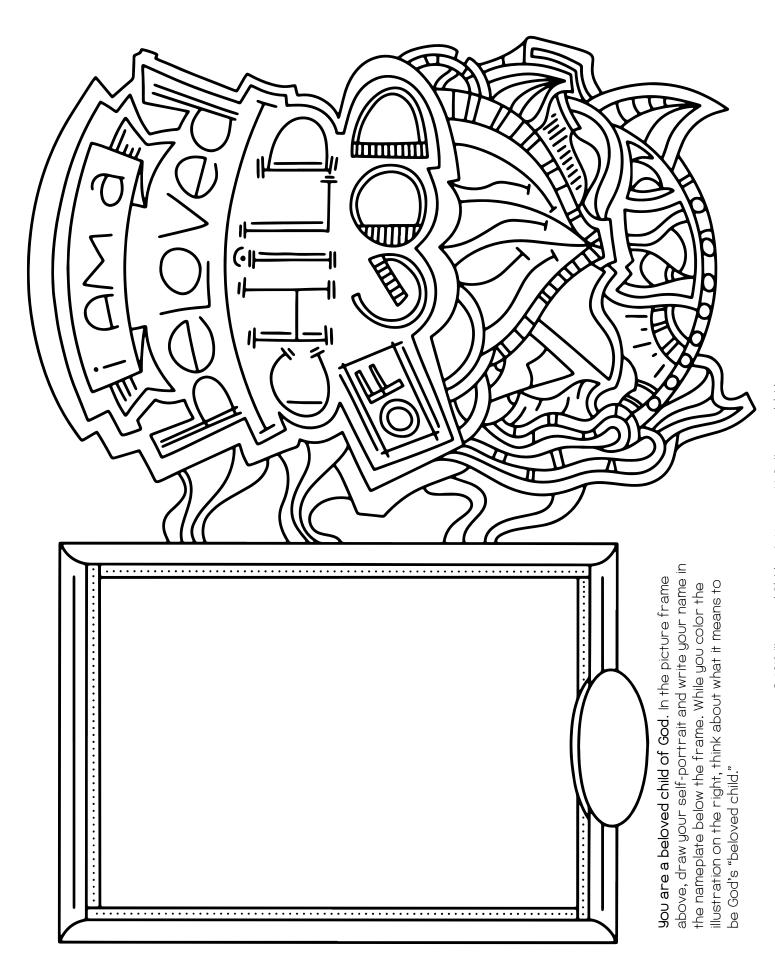
For being a God who is close to us during time of trial

For being a God who guides us in our growth

Beloved God, who calls us Beloved,

help us believe and live as your children.

In your name we pray,



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### • WEEK 2 •

### From Fear to Love

This past week, we practiced the discipline of living into our identity as beloved children of God. What was it like to claim that identity intentionally? How did it change your focus for the week? This week, we will be focusing on shifting our human tendency to respond to difficulties with fear instead of love.

### SCRIPTURE: Mark 8:31-33

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him (criticize him). But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

### REFLECTION

It's often easy to criticize Jesus' disciples in the Bible. They so often seem to "miss the point" or "just don't get it." How did those who were closest to Jesus in his earthly life not understand Jesus and his mission?

In today's passage, we get a particularly good example of the disciples missing the point. Jesus begins to talk about his death and resurrection, and from the sound of it, he is telling everyone in earshot about it. Put yourselves in the disciples' shoes at this point. The disciples gave up a lot to follow Jesus. They put their careers on hold, spent time away from their families, and put themselves at social risk. They believed Jesus and trusted that Jesus' path was one of hope, life, and freedom from Roman rulers. They were operating with the understanding that to follow Jesus meant that they were on the "correct path." And now, Jesus was talking about being rejected and dying. Not a message of hope and victory they expected. In light of this, it makes sense that the disciples wouldn't be excited about Jesus' troubling words.

The disciples went from being sure about Jesus' message to feeling insecure. Maybe Jesus needed a reminder. Peter musters up the nerve to whisper, "Jesus, are you sure you should be talking about dying? Surely this isn't Good News."

How often do we do the same in our relationship with Christ? We want to trust God. We want to respond to the love of Christ with open hearts and dedicated spirits, but then difficult things happen. We get word of a loved ones' illness. Evil seems to dominate the media. We continue to struggle with letting go of something or someone who is harmful to our lives. And what do we do? We object. We try to figure it out our own way. We forget that the way of Jesus isn't always a smooth and easy path. Perhaps we aren't so different than the disciples in that way. The human way of life is to respond to difference or difficulty with fear. The path of Jesus is to respond to fear with love and trust in the promise that Jesus will walk with us, especially in difficult or uncertain times.

#### DISCUSSION

- What do you think Jesus meant by human things instead of divine things?
- When you feel afraid, what are some things you have done to let go of the fear? What hasn't worked? What has worked?
- When someone says the word fear, what are some thoughts, feelings, or images that come to mind? What does fear look like? What does fear feel like?
- What is something or someone you fear? What would responding with love look like?

### **ACTIVITY**

Supplies needed: Small envelopes, paper, crayons or markers

Jesus does not promise us a life of no fear and no trouble. However, Jesus does promise to be with us and to be in relationship with us in the midst of trouble. This week, the act of fasting is to focus on working to let go of something that we are fearful of and instead respond to that fear with love.

As you gather today to read, color, and discuss, take a few moments to think about something or someone you fear. Take a piece of paper and draw or write about what that is. Then take that paper and fold it into the envelope. During the week, when you are in a situation that reminds you of that fear, take out the paper from the envelope, think about what responding with love would look like, then draw a heart around the fear as a symbol of replacing your fear response with love. At the end of the week, gather together and share about what was easy about letting go of fear and what was difficult.

### PRAYER

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God of love,
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We live in a world that is often full of fear.

We encounter many things we don't understand.

We experience painful events and memories,

which cause us to
wall our hearts,
guard our minds,
and close us off from being open to respond

in hope

in peace

in love.

Help us to remember the promise

that you walk with us both in

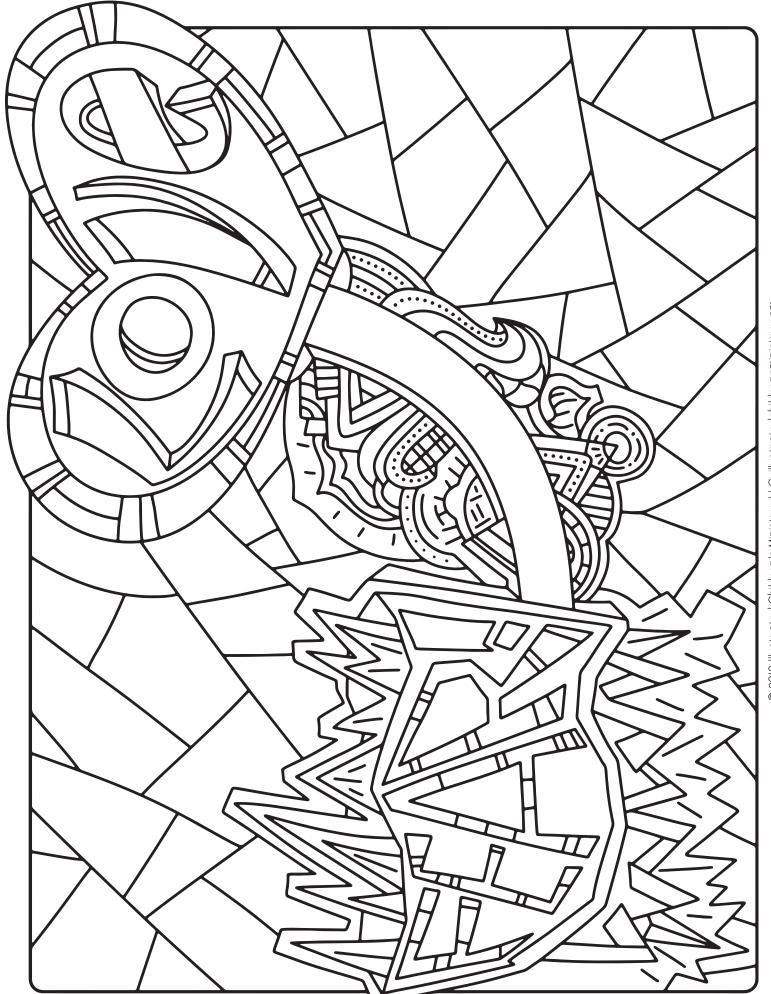
good and troubling times.

We turn from human insecurities

to your eternal security.

Help us to respond to fear in love.

In the name of Jesus,



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### · WEEK 3 ·

### Seeking God's Purpose

Last week, we challenged ourselves to move from responding with fear and replacing it with love. How did it feel to let go of fear? Was responding in love easy or difficult? This week, we encounter Jesus in a way we don't often see in scripture. We will also have an opportunity to stretch ourselves in how we view and approach routine things in our lives.

### SCRIPTURE: John 2:13-17

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

#### REFLECTION

Our passage this week is a startling one. When we enter the scene, Jesus is in Jerusalem, and he has gone to the temple. The following verses seem to come straight out of an action movie. Jesus enters the temple and finds vendors selling animals. Doves and lambs were sold and offered to God during the Passover as a way to ask for forgiveness and reconnect with God. We quickly learn that Jesus does not like what he sees, begins to drive out animals and people with a whip "a la Indiana Jones," pours out the money and overturns the exchange tables all the while yelling "Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"

What is happening here? Historians share with us that what was taking place at the Temple during this time was actually quite normal, expected, and a practical development in first-century worship practices. Jewish people came from all across the diaspora (or places God's people lived away from) to gather in Jerusalem for the Passover. Because traveling with animals was most likely not very practical, local business people were there providing a service to pilgrims. The money changers were there to do just that. Exchange money so

sacrificial items could be obtained. The purpose of the sacrifice was to reconnect with God in a tangible way. Why would Jesus be upset with this?

Christians have and continue to wrestle with this passage. This picture of Jesus makes us uncomfortable. Why was his response so forceful? Perhaps one way to approach the text is not from a place of condemnation of temple worship, but one of focus and challenge. What is the purpose of worship? Are the human practices of worship pointing more toward the practice of "right worship" or toward the one to whom we give worship? When our worship practices are challenged or change over time, how do we respond? As Christians, what we can take from this passage is a call to examine our own patterns, routines, and practices. Jesus challenges us to follow the Lord with zeal and to follow the purpose of the practice rather than commit to the practice in and of itself. Our discussion and activity this week will help us do that.

### DISCUSSION

- Imagine you were there that day in the temple. How would you have responded if you were a traveler? A money changer? A religious leader? A disciple? Why are Jesus' words challenging for them and for us?
- What are your favorite parts of a worship service? How do you feel when someone doesn't like that part or if it is not included in a worship service?
- Similar to worship practices, there are things that we add into our lives that aren't bad but perhaps become a barrier to connecting more fully with God. Take this moment to name a few that your family or group has added, or you have added individually.

### **ACTIVITY**

This week, as your act of fasting, we invite you to consider giving up something in your life that is an obligation. Something that isn't a harmful or bad thing, but is an extra layer that is placed on you that could be taking up space for opportunities to grow closer to God and others.

An example in many families' lives could be giving your family permission to fast from extracurricular activities this week. Press pause on that violin lesson or basketball practice. Do not say yes to the extra project. Notify a church committee that you will not be able to attend. Make a point to connect with God as a family in that space during that time. Share with each other how it feels to make that decision. Was it easy? Was it difficult? We invite you to end your time together with the following prayer.

### PRAYER

God of hope and purpose,

We move through our lives in search of you.

And when we think we have found you,

You continue to surprise us.

You have given us the amazing ability

to be creative and complex.

But sometimes our passion and commitment

clouds our ability to find and focus on you alone.

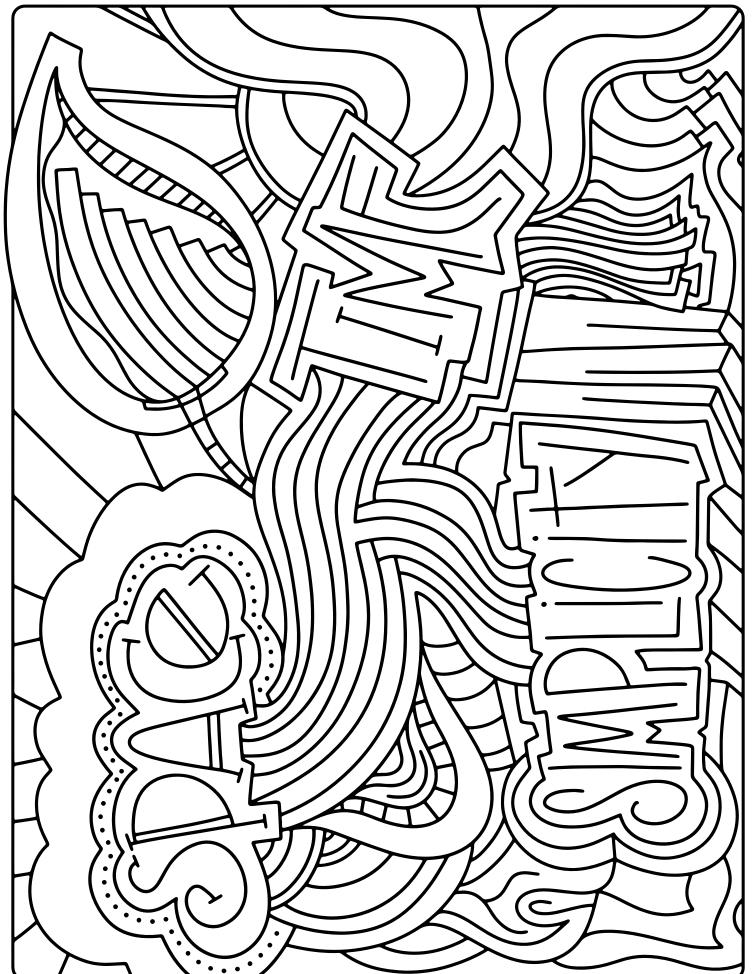
Grant us the courage to allow ourselves

Space

Time

Simplicity.

So that we may draw close to you and your purposes for us in your world.



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### · WEEK 4 ·

### Choosing Light

Last week, we were challenged to give up an obligation to create more space for connection with God. How did it go? Was it easy or difficult? This week we move from a place of a challenge to a place of familiarity. The Lenten passage this week is one that is well known across many Christian denominations. For our devotion, we focus on the latter half of this passage and how it might inspire us in a new and fresh way.

### SCRIPTURE: John 3:19-21

"And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

### REFLECTION

Dichotomy. It is a fancy word for opposite. From a very early age, opposites are pairings that help us understand our world. Let's name a few together. Up and down, left and right, near and far, good and evil, life and death, and yes, dark and light. The Bible uses dichotomies to help us understand our world and our Creator. In the Creation narratives, God defines the world through a separation or defining of light and dark, sky and water, water and land, day and night.

In our passage today, Jesus is defined as life over death and light over dark. These pairings give distinction to the one we are called to follow. However, we need to be cautious when dealing with dichotomies. Dichotomies are useful when helping to define and less helpful when used as tools to exclude.

The power and the promise of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that the resurrection life and light are an offer to all people. The struggle that the John passage highlights is that to choose life and light is not always the easy path. Darkness isn't always scary. Darkness can be comfortable, soothing, familiar. In this regard, to choose light is to choose a way that can make us vulnerable. Light can expose things in our lives that need be changed or healed. But the book of John explains that choosing Christ/choosing his light is the path toward reunion

with the Creator here in this world and beyond. We are called to live in the light of Christ so that our words and actions may draw ourselves and others closer to God in this world.

### DISCUSSION

- Take some time to talk about or draw on paper different opposites that you see in your everyday life? What can you learn from them?
- Together, think of and share times that light was helpful. Also, think of and share times where light was uncomfortable.
- This John passage urges us to seek truth and to live in the light. What might that look like for you in your home? In your school? In your community?

### **ACTIVITY**

One way that we can follow Jesus is by looking for ways to share the "light of Christ" with others. Our John passage shares that when we live in the light, others will understand that our actions are in line with God's purposes. But how can we increase our awareness of following the light of Christ?

This week, consider using the following verse from the letter to the Philippians as a guide. "Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." (Philippians 4:8).

This Sunday evening, gather as a family and brainstorm how you can live in a way that shines Christ's light in your church, school, community this week. Write down or draw the example you choose. As your act of fasting this week, make the choice to practice your example of Christ's light in the world. Make a point to check in with each other during the week by asking, "How are you choosing light today?"

### PRAYER

God of love and light,

You gave us your Son

to conquer death and bring us into life.

To lead us out of darkness and illuminate our paths with light.

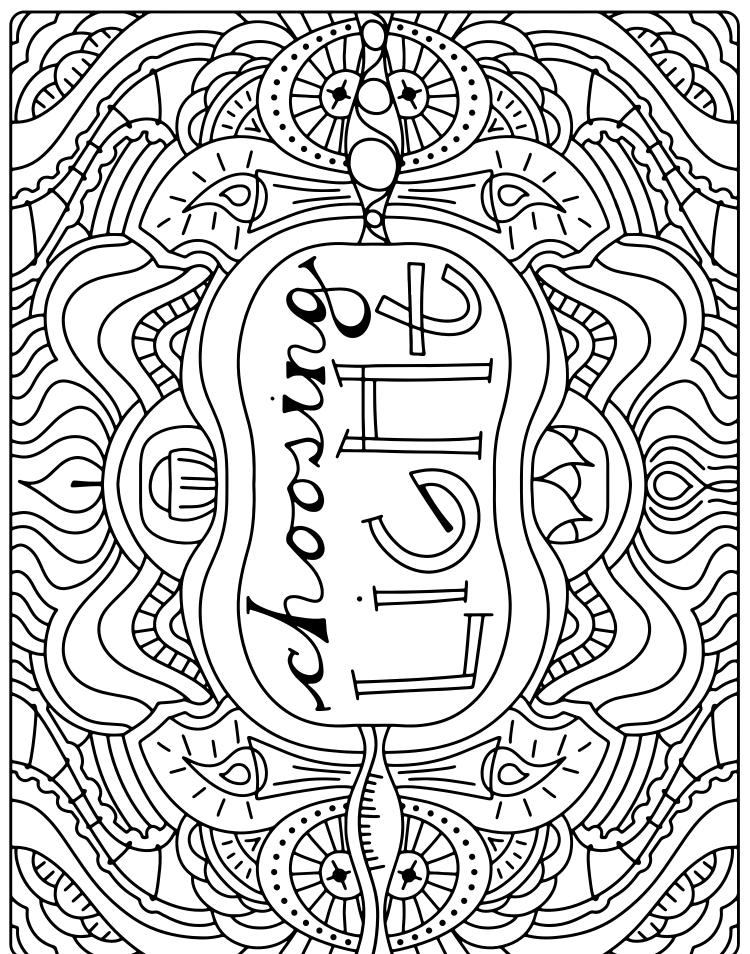
Help us this week and every week

to learn how to choose light

and to share that light with each other

So that we may know the vastness of your love for us

and for this world.



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### • WEEK 5 •

### Systems Challenge

Last week we allowed ourselves to embrace Christ's light and practiced shining that light in our communities. What was it like? What steps did you take to live with the light and love of Christ? This week, as we move closer toward Passion week, our text today reveals to us both the agony and the necessity of Christ's death and resurrection.

### SCRIPTURE: John 12:27-33

"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

### REFLECTION

If you are a part of a family with children at home or you interact with children in your work or volunteer life, you are aware that children and those who care for them face some new, unique, and complex challenges in today's world. We have the ability to obtain information from around the globe with the click of a button. Children learn how to access and utilize technology before almost any other life skill. But with this unprecedented access, comes unprecedented challenges. Children are bombarded with negative or violent messages in movies and digital games. Marketing strategies encourage all of us to overspend and overconsume. Social media boasts interconnectedness yet children, teens, and adults report anxiety and isolation. It is overwhelming to learn, see, and hear about the violence, pain, injustice, and brokenness that happens in our communities and around the world. We find that we may be the victims of injustice in some areas of our lives while also committing injustice by participating in the broken systems that benefit us.

We see in our scripture passage that we are not alone in this struggle. Jesus shares with the crowds in Jerusalem that his soul is troubled by what he has seen in the world and what he knows he must experience on the cross. He asks the very human question, "What should I say? Father, save me from this hour?" Jesus recognizes the power of the broken systems in the world. However, he continues with words of hope. Jesus does not turn from the brokenness but faces it. He shares with the crowds then and with us today that the "ruler of this world" will not be in power forever. Jesus' purpose is to "draw all people" to himself, overcoming the systems that divide us and harm us. With these words of hope also comes a challenge for us. We are called to learn to recognize how we participate in the brokenness of the world and work toward ways in which we choose to follow the hope that Christ promises us now and in the life to come.

### DISCUSSION

- What are some things that happen in the world that don't seem loving or kind? How do you feel when you see them?
- Which of these unloving things (systems) feel remote or out of reach (something that happens "over there")? Which of them are a part of your daily lives?
- What are some ways that we participate in these broken systems? What kind of lifegiving action could you make instead?

### **ACTIVITY**

As your act of fasting this week, we encourage you individually or as a family to choose a "system" in this world that is in need of God's love and redeeming power. For example, you could fast from video game technology and create a family game that fosters family interaction. You could choose from any of the broken systems you listed, or you may decide as a family to each pick a different system to fast from this week. At the end of the week, gather together to share how you, with God's help, actively challenged that system this week.

### PRAYER

God of all creation,

We come to you this week with mournful hearts.

Hearts that are heavy
Hearts that are broken
Hearts that are disconnected from each other.

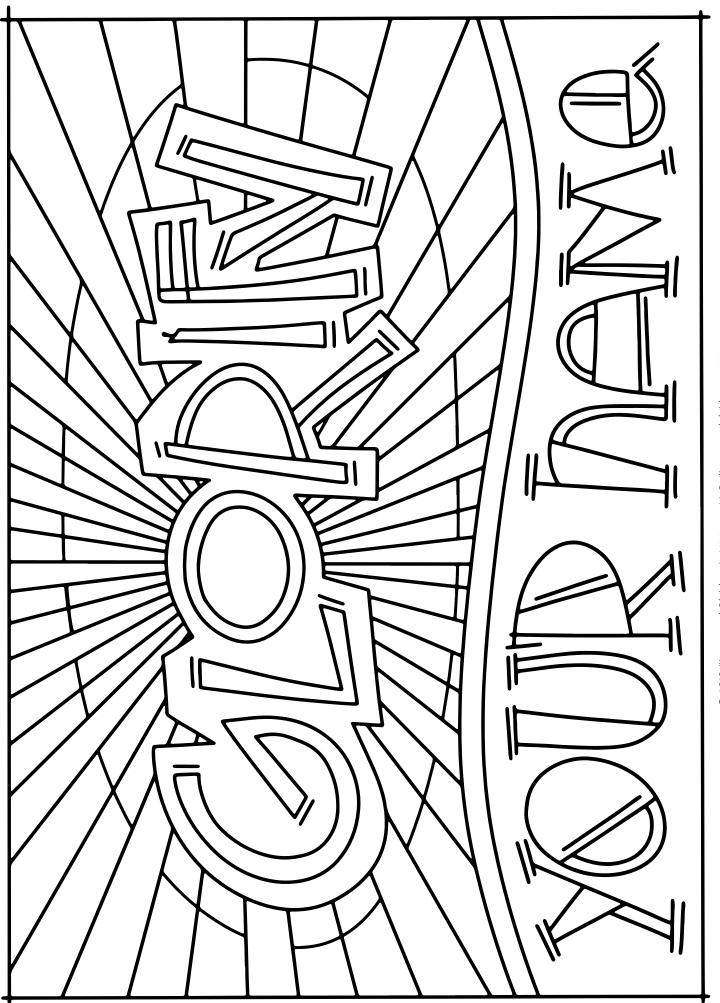
We see the daily challenges of our world.

We admit that we participate in systems that benefit us yet exclude or harm others.

Forgive us for the ways in which we do not help as you do,

work as you do, love as you do.

Help us to see ways in which we can draw others to you and challenge us to commit to working towards a more just world.



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### · WEEK 6 ·

### "Not So Great" Expectations

During the previous week's devotion, you reflected on things in the world or systems that are not as they are supposed to be. Hopefully, you had some opportunity to fast from and/ or take action to bring a measure of healing to a broken system in our world. We have come to the final week of Lent also known in Christian traditions as Holy Week. It begins with Palm Sunday, or the Sunday in which we remember Jesus entering Jerusalem riding a colt and the crowds cheering "Hosanna." Within the same week, Jesus will be betrayed by one of his own disciples, arrested, convicted and sentenced to death on a cross.

### SCRIPTURE: Mark 11:1-11

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

### REFLECTION

In the Christian tradition, Holy Week is a week in the life of the church in which you truly have the opportunity to experience almost every human emotion. At the start of the week, we have Palm Sunday. Many churches have services that include special processionals complete with waving palm branches. Those same branches that become our Wednesday ashes next year.

Palm Sunday is festive and celebratory. But then, we move straight into a time of the solemnity of the Last Supper, of betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane, and of pain of the cross on Good Friday. As we experience these emotions this week, we also can remember that the disciples experienced them that much more vividly than we. Our passage today in Mark gives us a small glimpse of the beginning of the intensity of this week.

The passage begins with Jesus and the disciples drawing close to Jerusalem. Perhaps the disciples were thinking to themselves; this is it. Jesus is going to reveal his true identity. After all, the Passover brings God's people from around the world together in one place. Passover was a yearly opportunity for God's people to remember who they were and are. People chosen and saved by God from slavery in Egypt. The timing is perfect. But as we have seen throughout the Gospel of Mark, peoples' expectations and Jesus' reality are two different things. Jesus instructs the disciples to get a colt and bring it to him. The disciples did what Jesus asked, but surely some of them were wondering if they would get in some kind of trouble for taking a colt from his owner? Things seemed to get a little brighter when they entered Jerusalem. The crowds were cheering and laying coats on the ground to honor Jesus. This is more like it. Yes, now is the time for action.

What happened next? Jesus went to the temple, took a look around, and left. The author of Mark doesn't give us any more details than that. What the author does give us is room for imagination. What were the disciples thinking at this point? If you said confused, you are likely on the right track. With their expectations unmet, perhaps it is more understandable that their responses were to fall asleep, deny, run, or hide rather than follow Jesus to the cross. When we have expectations in our own lives that are not met, these responses the disciples had can be natural human responses. Holy Week is the opportunity to journey with both Jesus and the disciples, recognizing our desire to be close to Jesus but realizing that we have our own expectations and limitations that challenge us in that task.

### DISCUSSION

- Imagine you were a disciple with Jesus in the Mark 11 passage. What would be some thoughts or emotions that you might have experienced?
- The disciples and the crowds had expectations of what and who Jesus was. Expectations are things you think will happen. The reality of Jesus was something very different. How do we respond when we experience something in our lives that is different than our expectations?
- Think of a time where you had "great expectations," and you were hurt or disappointed when those expectations were not met. What did you learn?

#### **ACTIVITY**

Supplies needed: paper, writing utensils, envelopes, sticky notes

This week gather as a family and talk together about a situation or a person that you had high expectations for and things turned out differently than planned. For a young child, perhaps they expected to play with their favorite toy at preschool and were upset when that toy was unavailable. For a teen, maybe someone who was a best friend is no longer spending time with them. For an adult, maybe you had an expectation of your child's or co-workers' behavior that was disappointing to you.

As your act of fasting, we encourage you to write or draw a note of apology, encouragement, or thanks (depending on your situation) to the person or people that did not meet your expectations. Make a point to admit in the letter that your expectations may not have been helpful or realistic. Deliver or mail your letter to that person. If you don't know this person or are unable to give a note to the person, make a point to share what you wrote or drew to a family member.

### PRAYER

Holy one,

This week we journey with you

from the gates of Jerusalem to the cross.

We bring to you our sadness

for the ways in which our expectations bring division and brokenness,

instead of unity and healing.

We ask forgiveness for the ways we put expectations on you

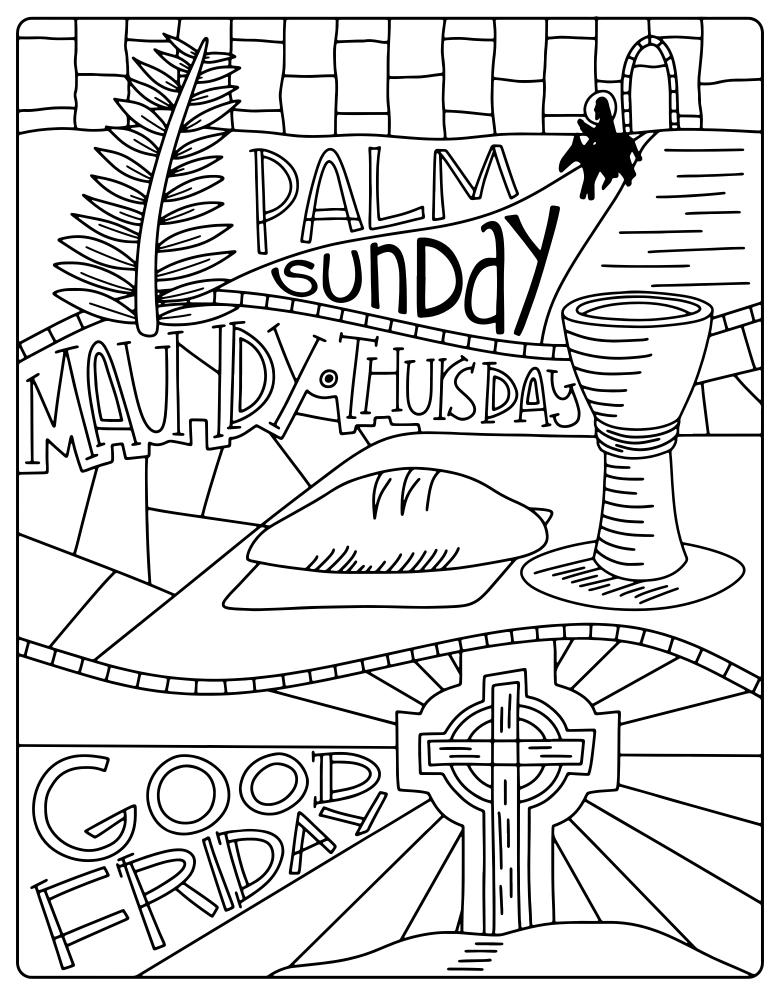
and turn from your call to follow you daily.

Thank you for loving us and freeing us from the burdens we place on others and ourselves.

In your name we pray,

### GOOD FRIDAY

On Good Friday, gather again as a family around the labyrinth you saved from Ash Wednesday. On pieces of sticky note paper, write or draw the things in our lives that keep us from being close to Jesus. Put those in the center of the labyrinth as you pray this prayer of confession together written on the previous page.



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# ·WEEK 7 · (Easter!)

Come and See

#### CHRIST IS RISEN! CHRIST IS RISEN INDEED!

You may hear these words spoken at Easter worship today. This was one of the first greetings that Early Christians gave to each other to remember and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and the new life they had with him. Our devotion today invites us also to remember and celebrate together.

### SCRIPTURE: John 20:1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

### REFLECTION

Easter Sunday has arrived! Christ is risen! We have journeyed through the season of Lent together which has culminated in today's celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. We have the joy and privilege of being able to come each year to "see" and experience the full resurrection story in the Gospel narratives. We are familiar with the pacing of Holy Week, and we are energized by Sunday morning Easter worship, the signs of spring and new life around us (in many parts of the world), and the promises of the resurrection.

However, imagine you were in the company of Mary, Peter, and the Beloved Disciple on that first Easter morning. Jesus had shared with them what was going to happen, but as we know explaining and living through something can and often are two totally different experiences. Like we learned last week, these first followers of Jesus had their expectations shaken to the core with the arrest and death of Jesus. Mary helped put Jesus in the grave. When Mary went to the tomb that morning, it wasn't to remember and celebrate but to remember and grieve.

Again, imagine you were Mary arriving at the tomb that morning. What do you see? The stone is rolled away. Do you dare go inside? What will you find there? No, you need someone with you. So you go and get two others to come back. Once inside, what do you discover? The tomb is empty. There is nothing there except some of the burial materials. What is the logical conclusion? Someone has taken the body. That is enough for the disciples, and they return home.

But you stay. You aren't sure why you stay, but you do. And in that moment of deep grief, questioning, and longing Jesus is there. You do not recognize him at first. But then he calls you by name. Why is that important? When someone calls you by your name, it communicates several things. First, that at some level you are known. And second, that you are invited into relationship. In this moment, when Jesus calls you by name, you recognize him and respond. You have experienced the living hope of the resurrection.

This is what we remember and celebrate each Easter Sunday. We remember the first story of Jesus calling us by name and inviting us to share in the resurrection life together. We are then called to respond and go into the world to live out the hope of the resurrection in our daily lives.

### DISCUSSION

• As a group, discuss what it might have been like that first Easter morning. What are some things you would have noticed? Would you have entered the tomb? What would you have done after that?

- What is your name? Is your name easy or difficult to pronounce? Do you have a favorite nickname? Talk about what it means to you to have someone know you and call you by your preferred name.
- What are some ways you have seen new or resurrection life in the past 40 days? Has your journey in Lent helped you follow Jesus more closely?

#### **ACTIVITY**

Supplies needed: Recipe items listed below, bowl, baking sheet, oven, Bible

On Easter Sunday, we have included an activity where every member can actively participate. You may choose to make these at any time on Easter Sunday as another way to remember and celebrate Christ's resurrection.

Resurrection Rolls (adapted from allrecipes.com/recipe/84289/resurrection-rolls)

#### Ingredients:

- 1 (10 ounce) can refrigerated crescent dinner rolls
- 8 large marshmallows
- 1/4 cup melted butter
- 2 tablespoons ground cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons white sugar

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F (200 degrees C). Lightly grease a baking sheet.

- 1. Separate crescent rolls into individual triangles.
- 2. In a small bowl, mix together cinnamon and sugar.
- 3. Dip a marshmallow into melted butter, then roll in sugar mixture. Place marshmallow into the center of a dough triangle. Carefully wrap the dough around the marshmallow. Pinch the seams together tightly to seal in marshmallow as it melts. Place on a baking sheet. Repeat.
- 4. Bake in a preheated oven until golden brown, about 15 minutes.
- 5. As the rolls cool, read John 20 together. Invite each person to bite into a roll and notice that the inside is empty, like the tomb. Say together: Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

### PRAYER

Jesus,

Alleluia! You are risen!

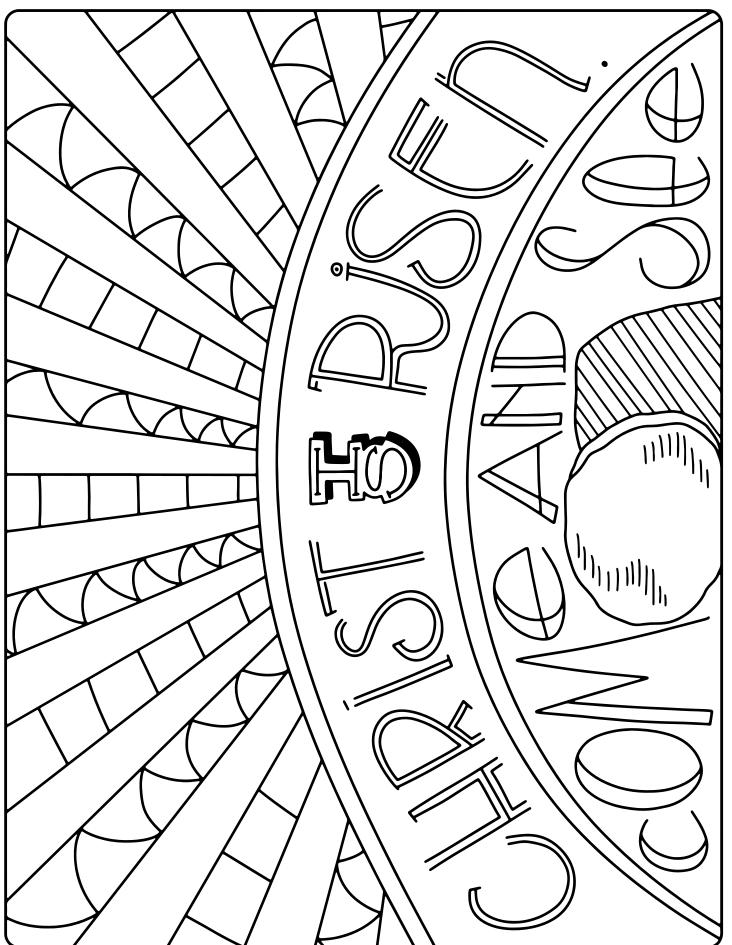
We remember and celebrate with you.

We thank you for knowing us.

for calling us by name,

and for inviting us to live out your resurrection

today and every day!



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### ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

JESSICA HAUSER BRYDON is a Social Worker serving Early Childhood Programs in Muskegon County, Michigan, and is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA). After earning her Master of Social Work degree from the University of Michigan and Master of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary, Jessica found herself in a variety of work situations that drew on her training in both disciplines. As one half of a clergy couple and parent to three children, Jessica has had both personal and professional experience helping her own family and many church families discover ways to be fully engaged in worship and faith communities. Having been a big fan and supporter of Illustrated Children's Ministry from the beginning, she is excited to have an opportunity to join the writing team.

REBEKAH LOWE, a local of Kansas City, Southern California, and Austin, TX, served as the Director of Children's Ministry at Brentwood Presbyterian Church (USA) in Los Angeles, California, for over five years. There, she created meaningful worship experiences and developed curriculum for children in 5th grade and younger. Her desire to serve in children's ministry began in Shawnee, Kansas, eventually bringing her to Southern California to earn a B.A. in Biblical Studies with a minor in Leadership Studies and a minor in Hebrew at Azusa Pacific University. In addition to her work for Illustrated Children's Ministry, she is developing resources for churches on the practice of welcoming children in worship and sharing the Bible with children in a meaningful and formative way. She resides in Austin, TX with her husband and their two daughters.

**ADAM WALKER CLEAVELAND** is an artist, entrepreneur, pastor, pastor's spouse, and father of four (two living). Adam graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity and a Master of Arts in Youth Ministry. As an ordained Teaching Elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA), Adam has served churches in Idaho, California, Oregon and Illinois. Adam is the founder and illustrator of Illustrated Children's Ministry, LLC.