

RESOURCE PREVIEW



LENT IN A BOX

VOLUME 3 | 2024

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THEME OVERVIEW

Lent is often a time of self-reflection, spiritual discipline, commitment, and community. Congregations gather to sing the minor harmonies of the way of Jesus on the road toward the cross. This Lent with Church Anew, however, we are going to look at a kaleidoscope of stories from the Book of Acts, with Revised Common Lectionary suggestions that pair directly with the theme. We'll see the ways the Spirit alters our perspective, transforms our communities, and consistently blazes a trail ahead of us. We'll catch up with the work of the Holy Spirit, finding ourselves:

Altered in witness
Altered through God's Creativity
Altered on the Edge of Belonging
Altered Alongside our enemies
Altered by disruption
Altered through Stories We Don't Trust
Victory Altered

Because the Spirit is alive in, with, and under our ordinary lives, always calling us forward into transformation, nudging us into wholeness, and beckoning us forth into an alternative way.

If anyone wants to follow this theme through Holy Week, the feast days could look like this:

- Maundy Thursday: Love Altered
- Good Friday: Violence Altered
- Easter: Life Altered



SERMON OUTLINE

DEVELOPED BY:
DR. MICHAEL CHAN AND
REV. DR. ERIC BARRETO

Sermon prompts developed for a series based on Acts or Gospel Lectionary texts. Both options contain prompts and preaching helps.



Option 1: Acts Focus

Altered in Witness (Ash Wednesday)
(Acts 1: 6-11)

Altered Through God's Creativity
(Acts 2:1-13)

Altered on the Edge of Belonging
(Acts 8:26-40)

Altered Alongside Our Enemies
(Acts 9:1-22)

Altered by Disruption
(Acts 10: 1-16, 34-35, 44-47)

Altered through Stories We Don't Trust
(Acts 12:6-17)

Victory Altered (Palm Sunday)
(Luke 19:28-40)

Option 2: Lectionary Focus

Altered in Witness (Ash Wednesday)
(Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21)

Altered in the margins (Feb 18)
(Mark 1:9-15)

Altered Through Unlikely Voices (Feb 25)
(Mark 8: 31-38)

Altered from the inside (March 3)
(John 2:13-22)

Altered through a broadening circle
(March 10) (John 3:14-21)

Altered with our enemies (March 17)
(John 12:20-33)

Walking an alternative way (Palm Sunday)
(Mark 11:1-11)



SAMPLE SERMON PROMPT

DEVELOPED BY:
DR. MICHAEL CHAN AND
REV. DR. ERIC BARRETO

Week 1 (Lectionary Focus) **Altered on the edge of belonging**

Scripture: Mark 1:9-15

By this time in our lectionary cycle, we have heard about John the Baptist three times in three months. Instead of telling the story again, which may not be needed at this point, preachers might instead focus on the location of John in the story. In order for Jesus (or anyone, for that matter) to be baptized by John, he has to leave the boundaries of the city, safety, and comfort behind and enter the wilderness place. John is typically considered an outlier, someone who was living outside of the norms and depicted as kind of an odd duck. What does it mean that the transformation didn't happen when he was welcomed in, but when everyone else came out?

We've intentionally used the words on the "edge of belonging" to expand the table of understanding and assist preachers in the in-between work of reaching across aisles, divisions, identities, and categories, just as the Spirit is working in the wilderness through John.

A few questions to ponder as you preach this Sunday:

- What does the edge of belonging mean to you?
- Who in your community is considered an outsider?
- Who might you name as someone in your context who fits this label?
- How might they be pointing a finger at the savior who is also there with them?
- How might your congregation be wrestling with questions of who belongs?

SAMPLE LITURGY

BY REV. ELISE AND ANDY POKEL

Week 1 Lectionary Focus **Altered on the edge of belonging**

Prayer of the Day

O God, your creativity is apparent in the stark, simple beauty of nature. In a butterfly's life cycle or the changing of seasons, we find stability, order, and intention. In the complex stories of our lives, however, we struggle to find that same clarity. Help us to trust that your goodness is expressed perfectly in the slow unfolding of history. Even when it's hard to recognize, may we search for the saving love of your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



Thematic Litany

For us, you created mountains and valleys, hummingbirds and albatross, mustard seeds and redwoods, wild animals and beloved pets. We praise you, creative God.

In us, you created hearts that long for wholeness, minds that seek understanding, senses that experience Creation, and a divine spark of your holy image. We praise you, creative God.

With us, you are creating stories of life beyond death, songs of hope beyond despair, meals of abundance beyond greed, and visions of heaven on earth. We praise you, creative God.

May we create blessings for our neighbors, peace in our communities, and harmony with the Holy Trinity. Amen.

Confession and Forgiveness

Holy God,

We confess that we have rejected the refuge you offer.

**We try to hide behind self-sufficiency and pride,
but you see us, and love us still.**

We confess that we have chosen strife over peace;

we want to be right more than we want to be in right relationship.

**Forgive us for the ways we have rebelled against you
and harmed our neighbors in action, thought, or indifference.**

We confess that we have settled for convenient comforts,
for palm-sized imitations of mercy and justice.

**Your mighty hands break the bow and topple the throne,
yet also gather and shelter us like a mother hen.**

We confess that you know what we need and gladly provide it.

**Grant us the courage, patience, and trust
to receive and share your love.**

Amen.

Hear this, beloved children of God:

God rejoices when you turn and return.

Search, that you may find.

Find, that you may be found.

Loosen your grip, that you may be more tightly held,

more warmly comforted, and more tenderly nourished.

Your stony heart will soften like the river's frozen mouth.

Your stiff neck will relax as you accept God's love,

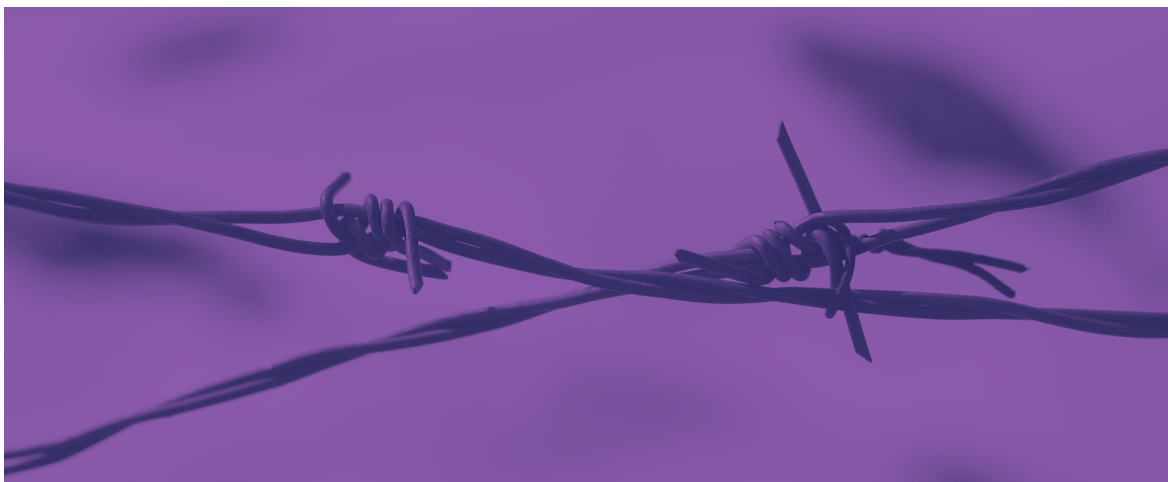
allowing you to see more of the world around you.

God forgives your sins and remembers them no more.

In the name of the Creator, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

receive this divine peace.

Amen.



SAMPLE MUSIC IDEAS

BY: PAUL KOOPMAN

Week 1 (Acts Focus) Altered Through God's Creativity

Modern:

Beautiful Things, by Gungor
For Joy, by Aaron Strumpel

Traditional:

Christ, the Life of All the Living (ELW#339)
My Song is Love Unknown (ELW #343)
Now Behold the Lamb (ELW #341, TFF #128)

ART-BASED DEVOTIONAL PRACTICE

BY: MICHELLE WALKA / BELOVED ART & PRACTICE

A daily devotional that engages the Lenten theme with creative expression and contemplative practices.

Part of this will include two guided creative expressions: creating an icon as well as creating a home altar space. Each week, folks will be invited to create a piece of their reflection icon and add an element to the altar space.

SAMPLE CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILY RESOURCES

BY SHAWNA BERG

Week 1 (Acts Focus) **Altered Through God's Creativity**

Scripture: Acts 2:1-13

God had a great imagination when creating us, creating us all uniquely different, with different gifts and things about us that make us special and different. Think of the creativity God had in creating animals – imagine the God that delighted in making an aardvark and an octopus also delighted in making each one of us! Think that each one of those fingerprints you left on the cross last week, every one of those is unique! There are no two fingerprints that are exactly alike!!! This week when you leave, I would like to invite you to take a brick (perhaps everyone uses the same color if you have enough to do that in your context) and write one word or draw one thing on it that makes you unique, and reminds you of God's creativity when creating you! Place that brick on the cross and pray that God will help you use your gifts in service to God's people this week.

Consider introducing these ideas or themes during a Children's time or community meal during your Lenten worship services. Each week, you will use this opportunity to introduce and build on your community art project.



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MEET OUR COLLABORATORS



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EQUIPPING EVENTS



JANUARY 18
ONLINE &
ON-DEMAND

Get all the resources you need to guide your community through a meaningful journey through the season of Lent and attend the Equipping Event online on January 18, 2024 from 9:30am-12:30pm. or watch on-demand after the fact.



JANUARY 22
FARGO, ND

Get all the resources you need to guide your community through a meaningful journey through the season of Lent and attend the Equipping Event in-person in Fargo, North Dakota on January 22, 2024 from 9:30am-1:30pm (central time) at Olivet Lutheran, 1330 South University Drive.

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GRAPHICS FOR WORSHIP & SOCIAL MEDIA

BY: COMMON GOOD CREATIVE




WORSHIP GRAPHICS

Including weekly title graphics, sermon note templates, and song backgrounds. Plus access to the Canva files for complete customization.



SOCIAL GRAPHICS + CONTENT CALENDAR

We will create the content for you and share a planning calendar with email and social post ideas to keep your community engaged online!



BECAUSE **THE SPIRIT IS ALIVE**
IN, WITH, AND UNDER
OUR ORDINARY LIVES,
ALWAYS CALLING US FORWARD
INTO TRANSFORMATION,
NUDGING US INTO WHOLENESS,
AND **BECKONING US FORTH**
INTO AN ALTERNATIVE WAY.

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