

EXPECTING LIFE
LEADER INSTRUCTION SHEET
FIVE-MINUTE LENTEN EVENING CANDLE SERVICE
EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH + 7:00 PM

Thank you for serving as a Five-Minute Lent service leader for the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh!

The Advent season prepares Christians to welcome Jesus Christ into the world at Christmas. Advent is often called the Little Lent, with about a month of preparation and brief fast. Lent is the Big Fast getting us ready for Jesus' resurrection at Easter: 40 days of intense preparation and fasting. The global pandemic has caused us to experience the last year, itself, as a massive fast: abstaining from gathering together with loved ones and colleagues and from many freedoms previously taken for granted – casual grocery store visits, regular church services, attending parties and long-anticipated concerts, etc. There has been enough fasting for what feels like a lifetime.



This year the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh will observe Lent as a Big Advent, turning our eyes toward new life and resurrection at Easter. Because if there was ever a time we feel an urgent need for Jesus? It's now. We need hope against the death-dealing stuff the pandemic has leveled among us. Therefore, as a diocese, we will focus our Lenten fast toward Easter morning, preparing urgently for the surprising new life Jesus brings out of the grave. Together we'll share 5 minutes these Lenten evenings, turning our hearts toward the hope we receive in the story and promises of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Our 5 Minute Lent series will follow the John 12, verse by verse, which is the chapter just prior to Jesus' passion, crucifixion, death... and resurrection. Together we will hear the story of Jesus that prepares us for new life.

Instructions to prepare for the evening(s) you lead

You will receive a copy of the working bulletin for the day by email. You will lead all parts of the service except for the hymn. Participant responses are in bold.

Please prepare a prayer and email to Canon Hall (nhall@episcopalpgh.org) to include in the bulletin at least 24 hours in advance. The prayer should relate to the reading and your reflection and be no more than 3 sentences long.

Here are three examples:

- God of our homing,
You went to Lazarus' home, whom you raised from the dead. Come to our own lives and homes, too. Give us new life and celebrate your lifegiving work among us. **Amen.**
- Holy God,
We're told to stay home now. Before the pandemic that was sometimes our hope: to stay home and rest. But now, give our hearts and minds other places to go by hope in you, through your promises out ahead of us. **Amen.**
- God of life,
We enter the world in various ways, yet we all need the same things: food, clothing, home, and family. Thank you for parents who find every way possible to give children what they need. Give us eyes to see where we can help. **Amen.**

Please prepare a brief reflection on the verse(s). The reflection should be a short paragraph which speaks to the context and meaning of the verse(s) on what it is to expect life coming to us at Jesus' resurrection (remember this is 5 minutes total!).

Sample verse and reflection:

Thursday, February 18

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.

Growing up, before dinner, my family offered a prayer you might be familiar with: *Come Lord Jesus, be our guest, and let these gifts to us be blessed.* But what if he actually showed up? Our verse says that exactly that happened to Lazarus. Jesus shows up for dinner. The verse reminds us that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, which suggests that they're friends. They've celebrated new life at a graveside, and now they're going to have dinner.

If Jesus were to show up at my home tonight as our guest, he'd find crumbs on the floor and dust on the mantle. He'd step over toys. The kids would ask to play with him while we cooked. We'd put out an extra Disney-character placemat and pray silently that our children didn't impolitely fling pasta in our Lord's general direction.

For all of the serious-sounding and pious ways we often talk about Jesus, holy scripture often reminds us that we usually find him where there's life: normal, everyday life with people who are living, dying, eating, sleeping, recovering, celebrating, and working. We find Jesus at Lazarus' house and can all the more expect him to show up at ours. We hardly even need to ask, because he's already and always with us, first finding a place in the home of hearts by faith with his promise of life abundant. Amen.

Instructions for the evening(s) you lead

- Canon Hall will start the Zoom link every evening at 6:55 PM. Please also join a few minutes before the 7:00 PM start.
- Hall will introduce you by name and parish, then screenshare the PDF of our evening bulletin.
- Please begin the brief evening service at 7:00 PM. Gathered participants respond with the bold text.
- Hall will advise participants to mute during the hymn.
- Conclude by blessing those gathered with one of the blessing options.
- At 7:05 PM, at the conclusion of the service, thank everyone, say that you look forward to seeing them tomorrow evening, and Hall will end the Zoom meeting.

Thank you for your faithful leadership and helping us gather around Jesus as a diocese during this unusual pandemic Lenten season!

In Christ,
Natalie+