

# Creative Ideas for Lent & Easter



Here are two simple ideas to deepen your congregation's engagement with Lent and to celebrate Easter. One is "burying the Alleluia" and the other is a Lenten pathway. They are intended to engage children, but in every congregation I've been part of the adults have also enjoyed these activities.

An important thing to think about is the relationship between Lent and Easter. Lent prepares us for Easter – so any symbols, artwork or practices that you use during Lent need to be 'resolved' or responded to in Easter celebrations. You will see this in both of the ideas that are suggested below.

# Burying the 'Alleluia'

In many parishes it is the tradition to abstain from saying or singing 'Alleluia' during Lent. Burying the Alleluia or putting it away makes a very clear symbol of this practice and you get to explain briefly why we do this (because Lent is a solemn season and because we are 'saving' the word for our resurrection rejoicing!).

Here are some ways that different communities do this, often on the Sunday before Lent begins, but sometimes on the first Sunday of Lent. I asked members of an online international women's clergy group how they did it at their place and here are some of the ideas:

## IDEA 1

Print out the letters that spell Alleluia, one to a page, in an outline font (A2 sized works well). Ask the children to see what the word spells, then put them away. At Easter the letters come back out and can be decorated with sparkly things or coloured in. They can then be put on the wall, clipped to a string suspended between pillars or otherwise form a decoration for Easter. The decorating can sometimes happen during the sermon, and the letters brought forward as part of the offertory.

## IDEA 2

A colleague writes: "I had large slips of paper (3 to an A4 sized

sheet) with the word "Alleluia" printed on them in lots of different type fonts, and we put one in each bulletin. Folks placed them in a small box, and we closed up the box like a tiny coffin. During Lent I replaced the black and white papers with ones done on a colour printer in many different colors, and then at the start of the Easter service, brought out the same box, reminded everyone what happened at the beginning of Lent, and passed the box around for all to pull out a paper -- those who had been at Ash Wed started murmuring immediately when they saw the colours, and you could see them explaining to those who had not been there "We put in plain ones, not colored!" Worked really well!"

### IDEA 3

Another says, "I have used the 3D cardboard shapes which the children have decorated over the couple of weeks before hand, also they decorate a box, usually in very brightly coloured tissue paper and all sorts of sparkly stuff, and then with some brightly coloured shredded paper it is buried and put away in the box for Lent. The children usually hide it themselves and then they are the only ones who know where it is to find and open on Easter Day!"

### IDEA 4

I have different sizes of the word Alleluia scattered around on the floor of the chancel and during the children's time, I have them help me put into a box, on the first Sunday of Lent. I ask someone to wrap the box in paper and bows and keep it in the chancel during Lent. Then on Easter Sunday the children help me unwrap it and I have put some kind of noise maker in the box - they may use them anytime in the service they hear the word Alleluia (except during the special choir piece!)

## IDEA 5

We have a dingy ordinary box into which we put a small, unimpressive alleluia on the first Sunday in Lent and then have kids help me tape up the box really well, the kids then have the job of making sure the box stays shut and the alleluia doesn't get out. Easter morning the box is transformed, bigger, painted white, and the sign inside is transformed and attached to balloons, so a big sparkly alleluia lifts out of box as everyone shouts "alleluia!"

## IDEA 6

Or a slight variation on the above: "During learning together time I have everyone write Alleluia on a small piece of paper and the papers go into a large box with the message "Don't open before Easter". The day before Easter I attach the alleluias to thread and tie the threads to helium filled balloons. They go into the box (that why it needs to be large). The box is opened on Easter and the alleluias come floating out".



# A Lenten Pathway

The liturgical colour for Lent is purple, denoting both suffering and kingship. If you think about the Lenten season as accompanying Jesus on his journey to the cross, or about a pilgrimage of preparation for celebrating Easter, making a physical pathway can help make a visual focus for this idea.

The idea is to move along the pathway, Sunday by Sunday, denoting the passing of time and also getting physically closer to the cross or to another image you choose as the “destination” for your pathway. It might be along a wall, or you might like to use a length of purple fabric to make the pathway.

Here are some ideas:

## IDEA 1

If your pathway is along a floor or flat surface, consider using 40 LED tealights to mark the path. Each Sunday you can switch off the right number for the days of Lent that have passed (a good time to talk about Ash Wednesday if children in your community don't usually come to services on that day). The path therefore gets darker as the time progresses, but on Easter, in the light of the resurrection, all the tealights get turned back on again! The least expensive place to get the LED tealights is on Trade Me where they seem to be sold as wedding accessories! The Fairy Light Company currently has a special on rechargeable tealights (though they are still \$50 for 24).

## IDEA 2

Using feet cut from the outlines of parishioners feet can be fun. Depending on the size of your congregation, you might choose some representatives (the smallest and largest feet, someone who is new, someone who has attended worship for a long time) or you might have lots of feet (all the children, all the congregation). Each week take a step forward on the Lenten path, and move everyone's feet. When you get to Easter you might like to turn the feet around to carry the good news of resurrection into the community, like the first disciples at the tomb going to tell others. If you use the symbols for the whole 50 days of Easter, you might like to send the feet right out of your church doors into the world at Pentecost.

## IDEA 3

You can mark the passing of the Lenten season by adding a symbol each week which relates to the Gospel reading of the day, or the theme of your worship.





Once you get to Easter it can be good to invite the children to turn the Lenten pathway into something more Easter-ly. Perhaps you could lay white or gold fabric over the purple. Maybe you will use red ribbons or fabric at Pentecost, at the end of the Eastertide season. You can, of course, simply fold up and put away the colour of preparation or suffering. Doing this with the children helps them to make sense of the transition in the liturgical seasons and engages them with the other changes in the physical environment at church: the flowers, vestments and other places that liturgical colours are used. If the pathway is simply “gone” it is harder for children to make the connection between Lent and Easter.





# Resources we recommend

- Creative ideas for Lent and Easter – 80 seasonal activities for use with children
- Messy Easter – 3 complete sessions and a treasure trove of ideas for Lent, Holy Week and Easter
- Around the Year in Children's Church – 52 Programs for Kids Ages 3 – 7
- Colour, Make and Doodle – Feasts and Festivals
- Children's Dramas for the Church Year – Reproducible dramas for Lent, Easter and Pentecost
- Welcome to the Lord's Table – a practical course for preparing children to receive Holy Communion



These, as well as many more, can be viewed at the office at Neligan House, borrowed for a set period or ordered from Epworth Books ([www.epworthbooks.org.nz](http://www.epworthbooks.org.nz)) in Wellington.

Resource developed by  
The Rev. Jemma Allen,  
All Saints, Howick  
for  
The Anglican Diocese of Auckland

Jacolize Becker  
Children and Families Ministry Facilitator  
DDI: (09) 302 7212 M: (021) 204 9629  
E: [jacolizeb@auckanglican.org.nz](mailto:jacolizeb@auckanglican.org.nz)  
[www.auckanglican.org.nz](http://www.auckanglican.org.nz)



Anglican

DIocese  
OF  
AUCKLAND