2022 LENTEN TO ASCENSION GUIDE

CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

501 Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr., SW Atlanta, Georgia 30314



"Walking a Christ-Centered Path"

WELCOME

DISCIPLE OF CHRIST

&

YOU WHO ARE SEEKING A DEEPER SPIRITUAL CONNECTION

This is your personalized journey to clear out the unhelpful and negative thoughts, feelings, opinions and actions from your spirit that might be weighing you down and causing you difficulty from experiencing the serenity and joy in your life that you desire and so richly deserve as a creation of The Divine, Almighty, Loving Creator, GOD. Also, this is your opportunity to put in place optimal thoughts, feelings, opinions and actions that will aid you in living a meaningful, fruitful, joyous and VICTORIOUS life!

IT IS TIME

To focus on you. It is time to focus on The Omnipotent (God). It is time to focus on how you relate to God's creation whether that be other people, animals, vegetation and the entire Creation of the Creator.

GIVE YOURSELF

To this time of Lent or The Lenten Season. Get to know you better and get to know God better. EXPECT the best for your life!! Tomorrow is not promised. The past is gone, but dwelling in it will cause you blockage. Today is a gift; that is why we call it the Present.

Let Us Now BEGIN in faith on a Christ-centered path of a satisfying and fulfilling life!!!

Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.

Martin Luther King

From THE UPPER ROOM

March 6, 2022 By Michael D. Kurtz (North Carolina, USA)

Made Whole

READ JEREMIAH 18:1-6

Heal me, Lord, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise.

Jeremiah 17:14 (NIV)

I dropped the Communion chalice! It slipped out of my hands and broke into pieces on the concrete. This special chalice, which I had borrowed, belonged to my church. What was I to do? I was almost sick with worry. So I gathered up the chalice pieces and took them to a local potter. He studied the shards for several moments, then looked me directly in the eyes and said, "This is a broken mess, but I will see what I can do. Come back next week."

When I returned the following week, I could not believe my eyes! The potter had taken my broken mess and transformed it into a whole chalice once again. Yes, fracture lines remained; but the cup was beautifully mended and functional once more. How appropriate, it seemed, that a chalice chosen to contain the fruit of the vine representing the blood of Christ now bears the marks and scars of repaired brokenness, reminding us that we too may be made whole.

We, like the chalice, have been broken and scarred. Yet, when we bring our broken, messy lives to God, we find forgiveness and restoration. God's amazing grace, exemplified through Christ, puts us back together so that we are forgiven, freed, and empowered for fruitfulness in God's kingdom.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Gracious Lord, thank you that by your scars we are healed and made whole. Empower us to serve you each and every day. Amen.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Christ chose to be broken so that we could be whole.

PRAYER FOCUS

Artisans in my community

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CREATING A SACRED SPACE IN YOUR HOME: LENTEN PRACTICES FOR THE FAMILY

As we journey through Lent and Easter, this packet has weekly suggestions for ways your family can appreciate the season, celebrating new life and resurrection together. Many of the suggestions are from the book "Faithful Families for Lent, Easter and Resurrection" by Traci Smith.

Before the Season begins, create a **Sacred Space** in your house to serve as a focal point for your Lenten and Easter practices. This could be a small table, nightstand or even a corner of a room. If possible, cover the table with a purple cloth – purple is the color of the season of Lent. Purple stands for being sorry, for repentance. During the season of Lent, we do our best to build and repair our relationship with God and with others.

Before you begin this family journey through Lent and Easter, you might want to answer at least one of the following questions together:

- This year we would like our Lenten season to be......
- We hope by the end of the Lenten experience together, we will
- One question we would like to answer during this Lenten season is.......

May your Lenten Season be blessed and may your family find these practices meaningful and thought provoking.

WEEK OF MARCH 2, ASH WEDNESDAY MAKE A LENTEN CHAIN

Ash Wednesday will be on Wednesday, March 2. The ashes that are used in Ash Wednesday services are from the palms used in the previous Palm Sunday Services. Wearing ashes is like asking God for mercy and compassion – to forgive your sins. We have all acted in ways that are not the ways God wants us to treat ourselves and each other. We are all sinners and when we receive ashes on Ash Wednesday, it is saying we are sorry for our sins, and we will do our best not to sin in the future. We also want to use the season of Lent to correct what we have done to separate us from God so we will be prepared to celebrate Easter with great joy!

ADD A LENTEN CHAIN TO YOUR HOLY SPACE:

Using a paper chain is an easy way to count the 40 days of Lent. (If you use a calendar to count the days, don't count Sundays as all Sundays are considered "Little Easters!") Keep the chain in your Holy Space.

First, cut paper into 40 rectangular pieces to make the links. If you want to be consistent and include Sundays so you have a chain for each day, cut 46 pieces. If possible, use purple paper. There are two options to make the chain:

- 1. Make the chain in advance and take off a chain each day from Ash Wednesday to Easter.
- 2. Create a chain that grows each day. If you do a paper chain that grows, you could consider writing a memory from each day on each link and watch your memories grow.



WEEK OF MARCH 6 LIGHT A CANDLE

Lighting candles to represent prayers is a tradition that spans many centuries, countries and religious traditions. Candle flames are a simple way to make the prayers of our hearts visible. Choose wax or battery-operated candles depending on the ages represented in your household.

ADD AT LEAST ONE CANDLE TO YOUR HOLY SPACE

When you add the candle to your space, say something similar to "The light of this candle represents God's love for us and for all people."

Ways to incorporate candles into this week:

- Send a candle prayer light a candle, pray for someone, and take a picture. Send it to someone your family is praying for with a message. A suggested message is, "As we prayed for you today, we lit this candle for you. Thinking of you and sending you love."
- During the week, when someone in your family thinks of someone who is in need of prayer, have them write the name on a small piece of paper and slip the name under the candle. Each week, when you light the candle, as the light of the candle shines, read the names on the papers.



WEEK OF MARCH 13 MAKE PRAYER A FOCUS FOR LENT

Pretzels have been associated with Lent and Easter for centuries. There's a legend that pretzels were used by Italian monks to remind young people to pray. People at that time usually prayed with their arms folded across their body, with hands touching their shoulders. So, the monks shaped the bread made of flour, salt and water in the familiar pretzel shape to remind everyone of the way they looked when they prayed. The simple ingredients for pretzels were also important since people ate simply during Lent, cutting out meat and animal products.

ADD A BAG (OR BAGGIE) OF PRETZELS TO YOUR SACRED SPACE.

Ways to incorporate pretzels into this week:

- If you have small children, have them cut brown construction paper into the shape of pretzels and glue kosher salt (the grains are bigger) onto the pretzels. Put these on your Holy Space or maybe hang a few on your refrigerator.
- Include one small pretzel in each lunch or dinner this week to remind your family members to pray.
- When you add the pretzels to your Holy Space, enjoy a pretzel snack and have a family prayer together.
- Either make pretzels from scratch or buy crescent rolls (or some premade dough) roll them into pretzel shapes, cook them and then eat together as a family.

When we pray today, sometimes we close our eyes, put our hands together, bow our heads. All of these are to show that we are humbling ourselves before God, who is much greater than us, and to help us focus on God and not be distracted.

Your family might like to look at some of the different body postures used for worship in the Bible:

Psalm 95:6 (Bowing Down/Kneeling); Ezekiel 9:8 (Laying prostrate); Psalm 47:1 (clapping); Psalm 63:3-4 (Lifted hands); Exodus 15:20-21 (Dancing)



WEEK OF MARCH 20 FAST FROM SUGARY DRINKS

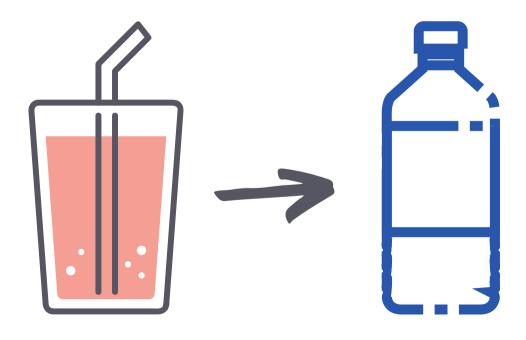
Clean water is truly a miracle and a luxury much of the world does not enjoy. It is so easy for us, who can get clean water so easily in our homes by just turning on the tap, to take it for granted. And, many of us drink lots of other things with our meals – tea, juice, kool-aid, adult beverages, etc. Drinking water with meals brings the focus of the many miracles we enjoy in our daily lives.

ADD A GLASS OF WATER TO YOUR SACRED SPACE

Ways to incorporate water into your week:

Jesus began his ministry with a 40 day fast. Fasting is one of the spiritual disciplines used to bring ourselves closer to God. We usually think of fasting as not eating or drinking a certain food, but we can also fast from watching television, from shopping, from anything that takes away the time and attention we could use to spend time with God.

- This week, drink water with all your meals. As you drink the water, be sure to give thanks to God for it.
- Make a goal of drinking at least 3 glasses of water each day this week.



WEEK OF APRIL 3 TRY A COLOR-FILLED POEM

Just think how dull our world would be without all the beautiful colors God uses to brighten our world! Read the following jellybean poem, and then be thankful for God's creativity as you eat them!

ADD A BOWL OF JELLYBEANS TO YOUR SACRED SPACE

As you say the following poem, line up then put the corresponding colored jellybean in the bowl as the color is mentioned.

Orange is for heaven so bright.

Yellow is for God's perfect light.

Black is for the sins we've made.

Red is for the blood Christ gave.

Green is for our new life in Him.

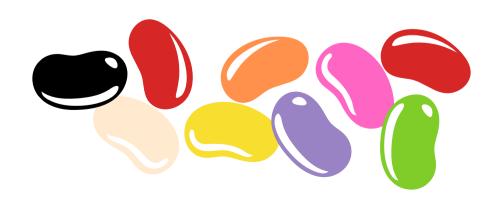
White is for our cleansing from sin.

Pink is for His love to share.

Purple is for the crowns we'll wear!

Ways to incorporate the colors into your week:

Have each person pick one of the colors of the jellybean. This week, they are to find as many things they are thankful for that is their color. Have a different sheet of paper on the table for each color and let each person add things (write the word or draw it) in their color that they are glad is in our world.





WEEK OF APRIL 10, PALM SUNDAY MAKE A BASKET OF EASTER EGG PRAYERS

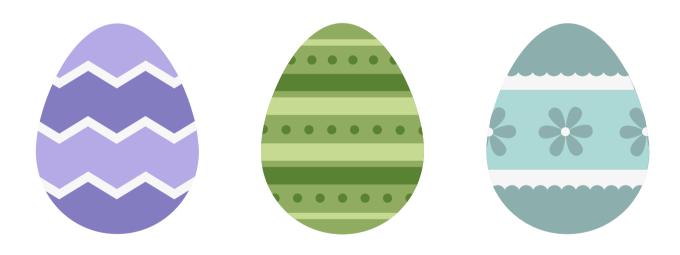
Many families all over the country will be decorating Easter Eggs or filling plastic Easter Eggs with surprises and using them in hunts this week. For your Sacred Space this week, fill your Easter Eggs with prayers.

ADD A BASKET OF EMPTY FASTER EGGS TO YOUR SACRED SPACE

Ways to incorporate Easter Egg Prayers into your week:

- During the week encourage the members of your family to write or draw their prayers on slips of paper and close them up in one of the empty eggs. Put the eggs in a basket in your Sacred Space. Save opening the eggs to Easter day.
- Write the names of people you are thankful for on a slip of paper and put them in your eggs.

On Good Friday, April 15, read all the prayers and/or names together as a family.





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WEEK OF APRIL 17, EASTER CELEBRATE THE RESURRECTION

Jesus went through a horrible death and was put into the empty tomb which was then sealed with a rock. But death or the rock didn't keep Jesus in the tomb! He rose from the dead with new life! And now that new and beautiful life is offered to each one of us! A traditional phrase used all around the world for Easter day is:

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed!

ADD A ROCK TO YOUR SACRED SPACE

Begin your time together with the phrase "Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!" Have each person go outside and find a rock. Add it to your table. Read together Mark 16:2-5.

Reflect: when the women went to the tomb, they were expecting to find it sealed shut, just as it had been left. The rock used to seal the tomb would have been very heavy and it would have taken several strong people to move it. But it was open! Jesus had risen from the dead – but the women didn't understand that right away. They saw the angel, dressed in white, and it scared them at first. Sometimes even good and exciting things can be scary when we are surprised or don't understand what is going on. But his was very, very good news!! As you look at the rock you chose, remember the wonderful day when the stone was rolled away from Jesus' tomb and he rose from the dead!

Color the butterfly and add it to your sacred space on Easter Sunday!

STEP 1: Make Your Commitment

Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake. Jesus implied that all of His followers should fast (Matthew 6:16-18; 9:14,15) For Him it was a matter of when believers would fast, not if they would do it. Before you fast, decide the following up front:

- How long you will fast one meal, one day, a week, several weeks, forty days (Beginners should start slowly, building up to longer fasts.)
- The type of fast God wants you to undertake (such as water only, or water and juices; what kinds of juices you will drink and how often)
- What physical or social activities you will restrict
- How much time each day you will devote to prayer and God's Word

Making these commitments ahead of time will help you sustain your fast when physical temptations and life's pressures tempt you to abandon it.

STEP 2: Prepare Yourself Spiritually

The very foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance. Unconfessed sin will hinder your prayers. Here are several things you can do to prepare your heart:

- Ask God to help you make a comprehensive list of your sins.
- Confess every sin that the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and accept God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9).
- Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended, and forgive all who have hurt you (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3,4).
- Make restitution as the Holy Spirit leads you.
- Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit according to His command in Ephesians 5:18 and His promise in 1 John 5:14,15.
- Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Master; refuse to obey your worldly nature (Romans 12:1,2).
- Meditate on the attributes of God, His love, sovereignty, power, wisdom, faithfulness, grace, compassion, and others (Psalm 48:9,10; 103:1-8, 11-13).
- Begin your time of fasting and prayer with an expectant heart (Hebrews 11:6).
 - o Do not underestimate spiritual opposition. Satan sometimes intensifies the natural battle between body and spirit (Galatians 5:16,17).

STEP 3: Prepare Yourself Physically

Fasting requires reasonable precautions. Consult your physician first, especially if you take prescription medication or have a chronic ailment. Some persons should never fast without professional supervision.

Physical preparation makes the drastic change in your eating routine a little easier so that you can turn your full attention to the Lord in prayer.

- Do not rush into your fast.
- Prepare your body. Eat smaller meals before starting a fast. Avoid high-fat and sugary foods.
- Eat raw fruit and vegetables for two days before starting a fast.

Next: While You Fast

Your time of fasting and prayer has come. You are abstaining from all solid foods and have begun to seek the Lord. Here are some helpful suggestions to consider:

- Avoid drugs, even natural herbal drugs and homeopathic remedies. Medication should be withdrawn only with your physician's supervision.
- Limit your activity.
- Exercise only moderately. Walk one to three miles each day if convenient and comfortable.
- Rest as much as your schedule will permit.
- Prepare yourself for temporary mental discomforts, such as impatience, crankiness, and anxiety.
- Expect some physical discomforts, especially on the second day. You may have fleeting hunger pains, dizziness, or the "blahs." Withdrawal from caffeine and sugar may cause headaches. Physical annoyances may also include weakness, tiredness, or sleeplessness.

If you choose to do a multi-day fast, the first two or three days are usually the hardest. As you continue to fast, you will likely experience a sense of well-being both physically and spiritually. However, should you feel hunger pains, increase your liquid intake.

STEP 4: Put Yourself on a Schedule

For maximum spiritual benefit, set aside ample time to be alone with the Lord. Listen for His leading. The more time you spend with Him, the more meaningful your fast will be.

Morning

- Begin your day in praise and worship.
- Read and meditate on God's Word, preferably on your knees.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to work in you to will and to do His good pleasure according to Philippians 2:13.
- Invite God to use you. Ask Him to show you how to influence your world, your family, your church, your community, your country, and beyond.
- Pray for His vision for your life and empowerment to do His will.

Noon

- Return to prayer and God's Word.
- Take a short prayer walk.
- Spend time in intercessory prayer for your community's and nation's leaders, for the world's unreached millions, for your family or special needs.

Evening

- Get alone for an unhurried time of "seeking His face."
- If others are fasting with you, meet together for prayer.
- Avoid television or any other distraction that may dampen your spiritual focus.

When possible, begin and end each day on your knees for a brief time of praise and thanksgiving to God. Longer periods of time with our Lord in prayer and study of His Word are often better spent alone.

STEP 5: Expect Results

If you sincerely humble yourself before the Lord, repent, pray, and seek God's face; if you consistently meditate on His Word, you will experience a heightened awareness of His presence (John 14:21). The Lord will give you fresh, new spiritual insights. Your confidence and faith in God will be strengthened. You will feel mentally, spiritually, and physically refreshed. You will see answers to your prayers.

A single fast, however, is not a spiritual cure-all. Just as we need fresh infillings of the Holy Spirit daily, we also need new times of fasting before God. A 24-hour fast each week has been greatly rewarding to many Christians.

It takes time to build your spiritual fasting muscles. If you fail to make it through your first fast, do not be discouraged. You may have tried to fast too long the first time out, or you may need to strengthen your understanding and resolve. As soon as possible, undertake another fast until you do succeed. God will honor you for your faithfulness.

I encourage you to join me in fasting and prayer again and again until we truly experience revival in our homes, our churches, our beloved nation, and throughout the world.

Next: How To Experience and Maintain Personal Revival

- 1. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any unconfessed sin in your life.
- 2. Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended, and forgive all who have hurt you. Make restitution where God leads.
- 3. Examine your motives in every word and deed. Ask the Lord to search and cleanse your heart daily.
- 4. Ask the Holy Spirit to guard your walk against complacency and mediocrity.
- 5. Praise and give thanks to God continually in all ways on all days, regardless of your circumstances.
- 6. Refuse to obey your carnal (worldy) nature (Galatians 5:16,17).
- 7. Surrender your life to Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. Develop utter dependence on Him with total submission and humility.
- 8. Study the attributes of God.
- 9. Hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matthew 5:6).
- 10. Love God with all of your heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37).
- 11. Appropriate the continual fullness and control of the Holy Spirit by faith on the basis of God's command (Ephesians 5:18) and promise (1 John 5:14,15).
- 12. Read, study, meditate on, and memorize God's holy, inspired, inerrant Word daily (Colossians 3:16).
- 13. Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
- 14. Fast and pray one 24-hour period each week. Prayerfully consider becoming one of the two million Christians who will fast for forty days before the end of the year 2000.
- 15. Seek to share Christ daily as a way of life.
- 16. Determine to live a holy, godly life of obedience and faith.



What is almsgiving? Why the heck would I do it?

Almsgiving is (unsurprisingly) making a gift of alms, which are physical gifts (money, food, or goods) intended to help those who are poor.

Choosing to give alms makes a difference for those who give. It is an exercise in detachment, a reminder that money is not an ultimate good. Money can, in fact, be a distraction from things that are more important, so giving up some money helps to redirect our attention to what we really value.

Giving alms is also a social practice, perhaps the most social of the Lenten trio. Giving always occurs in relationship. This social aspect of almsgiving can remind us of the social aspect of all of Lent -it reminds us that we're not alone on this journey. At its best, almsgiving is an act of solidarity with those who struggle with poverty, helping us to recognize our common humanity.

Above all, though, giving away money or possessions is an act of love. Even though it might also help the giver, it's really about choosing to help someone else above ourselves. It's a way of embodying our desire for others' good. It's about making a sacrifice that echoes the self-giving love of God. And it's about returning that love; all our acts of love for others are ultimately acts of love for God.



CUMC 2022 - "JESUS'S STEPS FROM MINISTRY TO ASCENSION"

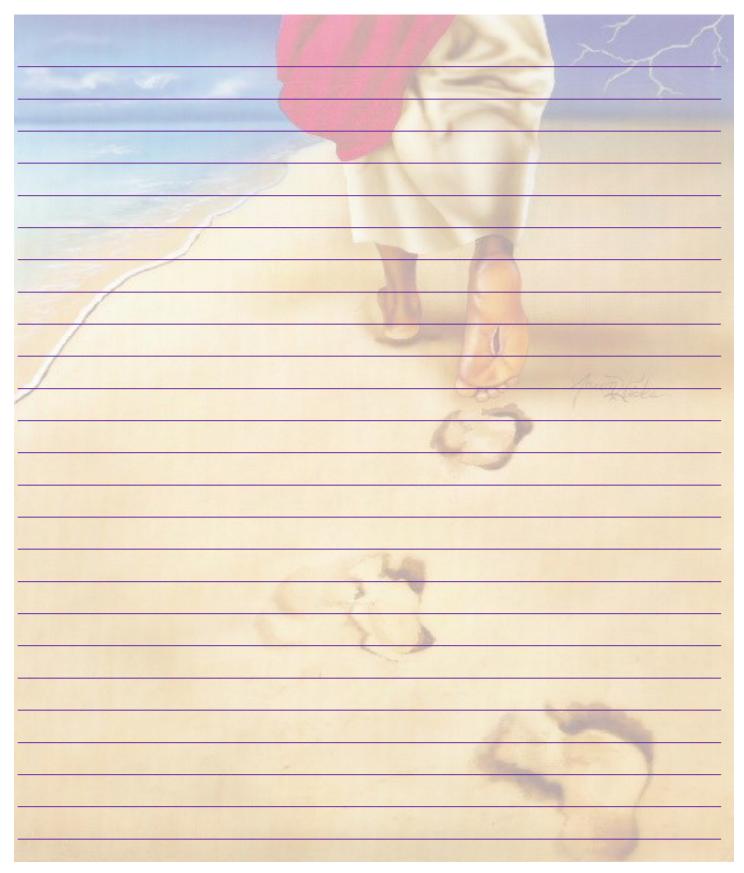
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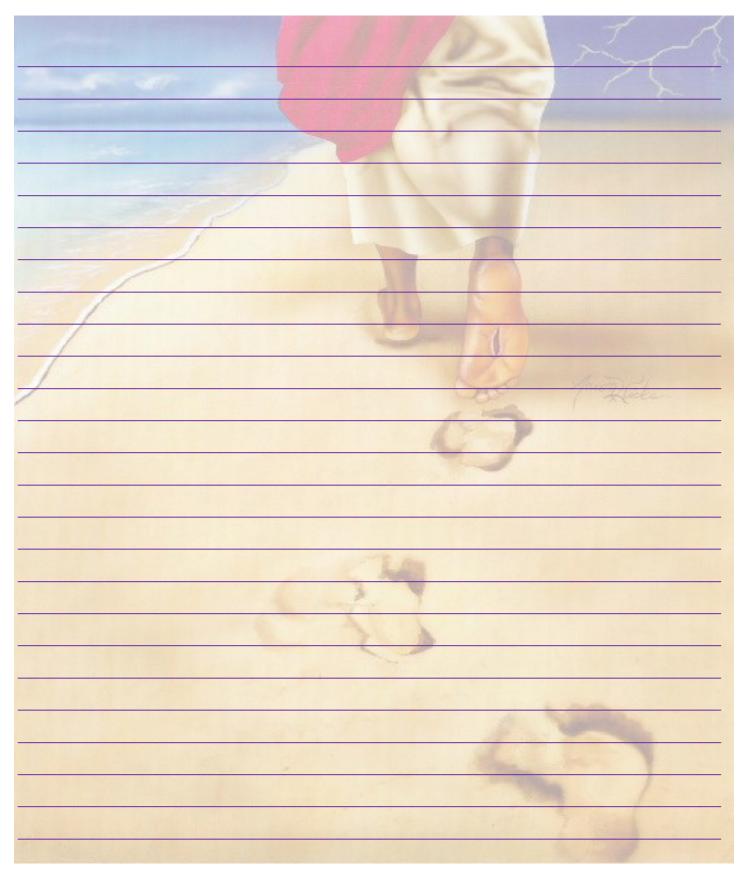
Step 1. Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21	March 2, 2022	Jesus teaches his disciples
Step 2. Luke 4:1-13	March 6, 2022	Jesus Is Tempted by the devil
Step 3. Luke 13:31-35	March 13, 2022	The Pharisees urge Jesus to flee because Herod is trying to kill him
Step 4. Luke 13:1-9	March 20, 2022	Jesus gives the parable of the Fig Tree
Step 5. Luke 15:1-3,11b-32	March 27, 2022	Jesus gives the parable of the Prodigal Son
Step 6. John 12:1-8	April 3, 2022	Jesus scorns Judas Iscariot for rebuking Mary, Lazarus' sister
Step 7. Luke 19:28-40	April 10, 2022	Jesus triumphantly enters Jerusalem
Step 8. John 13:1-2	April 14, 2022	The Lord's Supper / Holy Communion /The Eucharist
John 13:3		Jesus washes the disciples' feet
John 13:10-11		Judas betrays Jesus
John 13:12-33		Jesus gives the remaining disciples instructions
John 13:34		Jesus gives his disciples A New Commandment!
Step 9. John 18:1—19:42	April 15, 2022	JESUS IS CRUCIFIED!
Step 10. John 20:1-18 Luke 24:1-12	April 17, 2022	JESUS IS RISEN!!!
Step 11. John 20:19-31	April 24, 2022	Jesus appears to the 10 disciples / Jesus appears to Thomas
Step 12. John 21:1-19	May 1, 2022	Jesus appears to the disciples, performs a miracle, leaves instruction

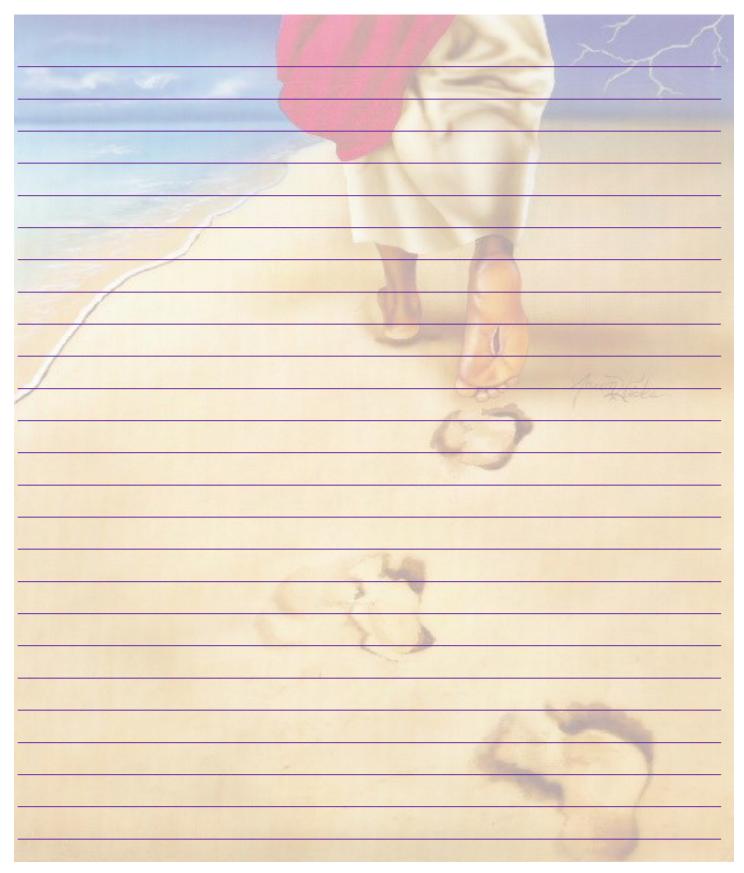
Step 13. John 10:22-30	May 8, 2022	The Festival of Dedication
Step 14. John 13:31-35	May 15, 2022	The New Commandment!
Step 15. John 14:23-29	May 22, 2022	Jesus Speaks of the coming of The Companion/ The Holy Spirit
Step 16. Luke 24:44-53	May 26, 2022	JESUS ASCENDS INTO HEAVEN!!!!!!



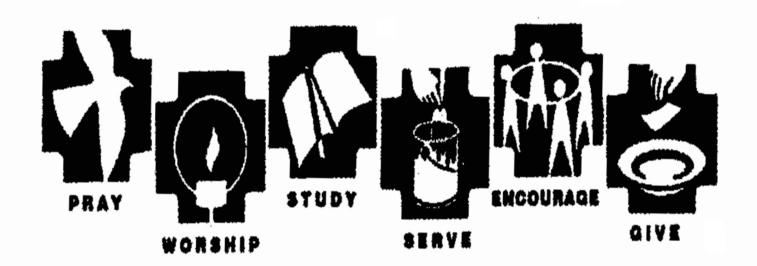








The Six Marks of



Discipleship

- Daily prayer
- Bible reading
- Weekly worship
- Christian service
- Relationships that encourage spiritual growth
- Giving in the spirit of generosity

Prepared by the 2022 WORSHIP DESIGN TEAM

At

CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

501 Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr., SW Atlanta, Georgia 30314



"The Church at the Heart of the City with the City at Heart"

Phone: (404) 524-4263 Email: <u>info@centralumcatl.org</u>
Website: www.centralumcatl.org Facebook.com/centralumcatl/