

Lent Worship Ideas

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At the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in the summer of 2018, the Church adopted Resolution A068, "A Plan for the Revision of the Book of Common Prayer," which among other things asks the Bishops of our church to encourage liturgical exploration among worshipping communities, and to convene a liturgical commission in each diocese to "collect, reflect, teach [about], and share" liturgical resources and options within and beyond the diocese.

Our Liturgical Commission is still taking shape, but as a first step, we are encouraging worshipping communities within the Diocese of Milwaukee to familiarize yourselves with the breadth of liturgical and musical resources already available to you, and think about how you might use them to give the upcoming season of Lent a distinctive character and tone. If you already have ways you set Lent apart in your parish that aren't listed here, like special decorations, music, or other local customs, we'd love to hear about them! (Likewise any ideas for Easter Season that you'd like to share!)

We will be inviting reflections on what you used in your Lenten liturgy, and how it served the worship of your community. Look for a simple email survey after Easter!

Beginning your Worship...

There are a variety of ways to begin worship in Lent, to set a penitential tone right from the start.

1. You may begin worship with the Great Litany, on the first Sunday or every Sunday in Lent. The version in the Book of Common Prayer uses traditional language. The Enriching our Worship materials include a contemporary-language version which we may use; it can be found here: <https://www.churchpublishing.org/siteassets/pdf/enriching-our-worship-1/enrichingourworship1.pdf>
2. You may begin worship with the Penitential Order (p. 319 or 351), and omit the Confession later in the liturgy.
3. You may, by permission of the Bishop, begin worship with the Litany of Penitence from the Ash Wednesday liturgy, found on pages 267 - 269 of the BCP. Speaking for myself, I find this litany speaks powerfully to my heart; it's more comprehensive and more grounded in the texture of our lives than the Decalogue, but much shorter than the Great Litany (and thus perhaps more practical for weekly use throughout a season).

[Here is an outline of how it would look to begin worship with this option.](#)

To seek the Bishop's permission to use this option in your parish this season, email him to ask for permission. If you use this option, you are also committing to report back on how it worked as part of your Lenten liturgy.

With any of these options, it is appropriate to conclude and transition into the rest of the liturgy with a spoken or chanted Kyrie.

Music...

Make a choice about musical tone. Think about what you'll sing for the season as whole. At St. Dunstan's, we use the Hurd service music for its simple yet poignant feel - including the Agnus Dei at the breaking of the bread, which is not our custom in other seasons.

We also sing at least one song from LEVASII every week - integrating the songs of struggle and hope from the African-American tradition of sacred music into our worship ("Wayfaring Stranger," "Precious Lord," and many others).

Think about using less music, or more, to give the season a feeling of being set apart. If you usually chant the psalm, consider speaking it. If you usually speak it, consider chanting it. The same applies to the Eucharistic prayer. (If the congregation will be chanting responses, please make sure the music is available to them, as a hospitality practice for visitors and new members!)

Prayers...

We have a lot of latitude with our Prayers of the People. Consider using a different form than usual, or composing something especially for your congregation. Be mindful that the prayers of the people are intended to open space for the people's prayers, not to show off the eloquence of the one composing the prayer; if you choose not to use the same form throughout the season (my strong preference!), then please at least make sure there is a consistent pattern of prayer biddings so that people can follow and use the pattern for lifting up their own prayers.

And remember the wealth of options for concluding the PotP on page 394-95 — and note that this is not an exhaustive list. I find #5 particularly appropriate in Lent.

Confession...

IF you're using a prayer of confession rather than a litany of confession:

- Try holding a real silence between the invitation and the confession, as the rubrics suggest, if that's not your usual practice.
- There is an alternate prayer of confession available to us in Enriching our Worship 1. If you haven't used it before, consider trying it out. New words may seize people's attention and invite them into the prayer in a new way. It's on page 56:

<https://www.churchpublishing.org/siteassets/pdf/enriching-our-worship-1/enrichingourworship1.pdf>

Change up your Eucharistic prayer...

We are authorized to use 9 different Eucharistic prayers. Choose one that fits the season with its language and themes.

Some that might be particularly appropriate:

Eucharistic Prayer II (Rite I)

Eucharistic Prayer C (more penitential language than other Rite II prayers)

Eucharistic Prayer 1 (Enriching our Worship) - stress on God's goodness and human sinfulness and rejection of God, God's persistence in calling us back, culminating in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

Fraction Anthem...

While the "Christ our Passover" anthem is particularly appropriate for Lent, please note the rubric: "In place of, or in addition to, the preceding, some other suitable anthem may be used." There are several other options in Enriching our Worship 1, p. 69.

Post-Communion Prayer...

There are also two additional Post-Communion Prayers in Enriching our Worship 1 (pp. 69-70). If your Lenten liturgical language leans into our brokenness, then the second option, with its line about "restoring us in your image", may feel like an appropriate culmination to the Eucharistic liturgy.

Special prayer stations...

If your church space and your church culture can accommodate a special prayer station for a Sunday or the season, it can be a nice way for people who are more hands-on pray-ers (both kids and adults!) to engage with the season. Search "Lent prayer station" on Pinterest for an abundance of ideas. This could certainly be placed in an area adjacent to the sanctuary/nave, if your nave does not have a convenient spot for a prayer station.