

# Introduction

But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

—Ephesians 4:15–16

In a small way, this book's intention is to help the Body of Christ grow in understanding and “build itself up through love” at church or home. Celebrations, gatherings, and rituals help members of every generation find both individual meaning and common ground, all through the medium of direct experience, no matter the age of the participant. *Faithful Celebrations: Making Time for God from Mardi Gras through Pentecost* offers a multitude of ideas for planning an event focused on a season or day of the calendar year that will bring families together and build strong communities of faith, whether it is in the home or a congregational setting.

Through such occasions we can become better acquainted with our extended family—young and old together—in any setting. We can take steps toward making our congregation (or neighborhood) the warm, nurturing community we long for in our fragmented world. Older adults sometimes feel a sense of displacement in congregational life today, and younger people are increasingly looking to a variety of sources for spiritual nurture and faith practice.

Singing, praying, eating, and creating memories together enhances our wellbeing and makes our connections to one another stronger. Undergirding our experiences is the presence of God among us, nurturing us and working through us to help us grow in the knowledge and love of Christ Jesus.

Through community celebrations, we can experience Scripture and traditions in a fresh way that can give beauty and meaning to our daily lives. Within these pages you will find ideas to hold a theme-based event, or simply ideas to supplement other activities you have planned. This abundance allows you to choose only those activities that meet your congregation's or family's particular needs—and fit your timeframe. *Faithful Celebrations* will help you and your family—at home, school, or church—learn more and experience these particular winter and spring Christian seasons:

- Mardi Gras/Shrove Tuesday
- Lent
- Holy Week
- Easter
- Pentecost

## ALL AGES GROWING TOGETHER

Many of the formative experiences in life happen when several generations are together. In our society we tend to separate people by ages mainly for education and employment. In recent years, Christian formation programs have made this same separation of generations, but more and more religious educators are recommending programs in which adults and children learn together. It is a way to pass on faith—generation to generation. Old learn from young, and young learn from old.

*Faithful Celebrations* is designed to meet the need for generations to learn together. This approach requires that we venture beyond traditional learning methods into the world of experiential

learning. Just as old and young alike can participate in vacations, trips, holidays, and family events together, learning more about our relationship with God can take place with all generations growing together. This may mean that adults work alongside children, helping them as well as listening to them as full partners in an activity or discussion. It means allowing children to experience things for themselves, not doing things for them but with them.

## **WHEN, WHERE, WHY, AND HOW**

Finding time and resources to add another component to already full schedules, both in families and in congregations, can be a challenge. Within your community of faith, look to different groups who could successfully host an intergenerational gathering. One promising lead might be to invite your youth organization to be in charge of leading one or more sessions. Consider also the possibility of asking different congregational organizations to host a given session. In a typical community of faith, consider using these ideas as:

- intergenerational and multi-age programming
- seasonal church gatherings for families
- primary Christian education material for a small church
- supplementary material for large Christian education programs
- supplementary material for classes in church-based schools
- home-study Christian education programs
- small-community or base-community Christian education
- supplementary to family sacramental programs

In a home setting, families can use these activities for:

- family vacations and holidays
- neighborhood or community events
- home schooling and education
- gatherings of friends and families

Each chapter in *Faithful Celebrations* begins with an Introduction that includes background material and key ideas for each Celebration. Use this content to inspire your vision of what the event needs to be, for you, your planning committee, and your congregation or family. The pages that follow are organized by type of activity, such as opening prayer, story, craft, food, drama, music, game, or more. It will always conclude with a closing activity of prayer.

Each activity or experience will include a very brief explanation for the leader, followed by a list of materials needed and step-by-step directions. The materials called for in this book are simple and inexpensive. Those common to most activities are:

- Bibles
- whiteboard, poster board, or newsprint pad with markers
- felt pens
- crayons (regular and oversized for young children)
- drawing paper
- glue
- scissors

From time to time links will be offered to supplemental online materials; there are also downloadable resources of craft patterns and templates available for free at [www.churchpublishing.org/faithfulcelebrations1](http://www.churchpublishing.org/faithfulcelebrations1).

Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom: Enlighten by your Holy Spirit those who teach and those who learn, that, rejoicing in the knowledge of your truth, they may worship you and serve you from generation to generation; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

—*For Education*, Book of Common Prayer, p. 261

## PRAYER ACTIVITIES

### Thanking Jesus

Work together to write a litany of thanksgiving to Jesus that can be recited at the conclusion of your event or as part of your family devotions.

#### *Materials*

- whiteboard or newsprint
- markers

#### *Directions*

1. Write the following phrase on the whiteboard or newsprint:  
*Jesus, I know you love me because only someone who loves me would . . .*
2. Divide participants into pairs, encouraging older participants to pair with younger participants. Ask each pair to decide on an ending to the sentence and to write it on the whiteboard or newsprint.
3. Ask participants to gather around the whiteboard or newsprint. Ask the first participant to read the sentence including the first ending from the whiteboard or newsprint. Ask the group to respond to the reading by saying, “Thank you, Jesus,” in unison.
4. Have participants continue reading and responding until all the endings have been read. Then finish the litany by praying:

*Jesus, thank you for the love you have shown to each one of us.  
Help us to love others as you love us in the days of Lent and ever  
after. Amen.*

### Rule Discovery

This activity invites participants to consider a rule of prayer for Lent. Please note that a rule must not be thought of as a set of actions by which Christians can earn favor from God. A Christian

rule is a response to the saving love of God given to us in Jesus Christ.

### *Materials*

- paper
- pens or pencils
- whiteboard or newsprint
- markers

### *Directions*

1. Distribute paper and pencils. Ask participants to list how often (daily, weekly, or monthly) they engage in the following activities (list these on whiteboard or newsprint):
  - sleeping
  - working
  - eating
  - driving
  - time with family
  - recreation
  - reading
  - computer time
  - television
  - prayer
  - reading the Bible
  - prayer time with other Christians
  - helping others
2. Allow 5–10 minutes for the group to work on their lists. They may choose to add other activities that are part of their lives that aren't on this list. Then ask participants to consider the idea that these papers represent our current “rules”—our habits, our regular ways with time and prayer.

3. As you introduce the concept of “rules,” bring up the following ideas:
  - Many of us have heard of monastic Rules, such as the Rule of St. Benedict.
  - The English word *rule* is based on the Latin word *regula*, related to our word *regular*. It describes what we regularly do in an ordinary day, week, or year.
  - We can consider the way we use our time already to be our current “rule.”
4. Discuss the following questions:
  - What part of your rule gives you the most satisfaction?
  - What part of your rule do you wish you could change?
  - What obstacles stand in the way of changes we want to make?
  - What possible solutions can you imagine for your own obstacles?
5. Ask participants to take another 10 minutes to write down new rules that represent participants’ desires for change.

## LENTEN RECIPE

### Lenten Pretzels

The pretzel has been used during Lent for over 1,500 years. It is thought that originally pretzels were made by monks to resemble arms crossed in prayer. These breads were called “little arms.” This can have deep spiritual meaning for us during Lent. Since basically only flour and water are used, pretzels can remind us of fasting.

#### *Ingredients*

- 2 packages dry yeast
- 1½ cups warm water
- 4–5 cups flour
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- coarse salt

#### *Other materials*

- measuring cup
- bowl
- mixing spoon
- 8- to 10-quart pot
- slotted spoon
- cookie sheet
- oven

#### *Directions*

1. Soak the yeast in  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup warm water for five minutes. Add the remaining water and beat in 4 cups of the flour, sugar, and salt. Add as much of the remaining flour as necessary to make a dough that is firm enough to be kneaded, but is still soft.



2. Knead the dough for 10 minutes. Let rise in a warm spot for 45 minutes. Punch down the dough. Divide the dough into 24 small pieces. Roll each piece into a rope. Twist each rope into a pretzel shape.
3. Bring 6–8 quarts of water to a boil. Drop in the pretzels, no more than two at a time. The pretzels will first sink and then rise to the top of the pot. When a pretzel rises, flip it over and boil it 15 seconds on the second side. Then remove the pretzel with a slotted spoon and place the pretzel on a cookie sheet. Continue for the other pretzels.
4. Sprinkle the boiled pretzels with coarse salt. Bake at 425° for 12–15 minutes. Eat while still warm.

## Easter Cards

Make Easter greeting cards to spread the joyous news of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

### *Materials*

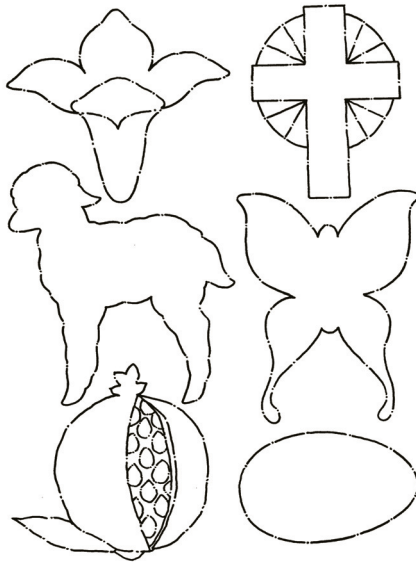
- whiteboard or newsprint
- markers
- white paper
- construction paper
- crayons
- colored chalk
- scissors
- glue
- newspapers
- construction paper
- collage materials: cotton, felt, sequins, glitter, ribbon, yarn, etc.
- hair spray
- potatoes
- knives
- stamp pads
- examples of the Easter symbols found on page 85

### *Directions*

1. Brainstorm appropriate messages to share the joy of Easter. Record all suggestions on whiteboard or newsprint. If ideas are slow in coming, ask these or similar questions:
  - How can we tell the Easter story in only a few words?
  - What songs do you like to hear on Easter day?
  - Why do we celebrate Easter?
2. Invite each participant to make a card, decorating it and writing a message on it. Older participants can help young ones write their messages.

3. Make available a variety of materials, including white paper, construction paper, and card stock.
4. Encourage creativity. A card might be cut in the shape of an Easter symbol, or a traditional folded card could be decorated with:
  - Easter symbols drawn in markers or crayons
  - symbols cut and glued from newspaper or construction paper
  - collage symbols made from cotton, felt, sequins, glitter, ribbon, yarn, etc.
  - symbols drawn in chalk on colored construction paper and fixed with hair spray
  - symbols carved in a potato half and stamped, first on a stamp pad, then on the cards
5. Send the cards home with participants to be mailed to friends or other family members.

## Easter Symbols



Download a full template at [www.churchpublishing.org/faithful-celebrations1](http://www.churchpublishing.org/faithful-celebrations1).

## GAMES

### The Holy Spirit Is Here!

This game is a variation of “Duck, Duck, Goose.”

#### Materials

- Flame Hats (see activity, p. 105)

#### Directions

1. Invite participants to sit on the floor in a circle. Designate one player as *It*. Give *It* a Flame Hat.
2. Holding the hat, *It* circles the seated players, touching each participant on the head and saying, “The Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit,” etc., until he or she chooses one player by saying, “The Holy Spirit is *here*,” dropping the Flame Hat on that player’s head.
3. The player who receives the Flame Hat must chase *It* around the circle as *It* tries to run to the chosen player’s place. If *It* reaches the place before being caught, then the chosen player becomes the new *It*. If *It* is caught, he or she must take the hat back and try again.
4. Any successful *It* should be given a Flame Hat to wear once seated. Only players who do not have hats may be chosen in subsequent rounds.

### Wind Play: Parachutes

Invite a group of participants to take a parachute outside and participate in various parachute games. Ideas for parachute games are available on many websites, for example: [www.playparachutes.com/pagaac.html](http://www.playparachutes.com/pagaac.html) and [www.kidactivities.net/category/games-parachute.aspx](http://www.kidactivities.net/category/games-parachute.aspx).

#### Materials

- a parachute or a circle of lightweight fabric (If you can’t find a parachute, try a lightweight sheet or curtain, trimmed into

a circle or oval shape. This “parachute” may tear if the edge isn’t hemmed.)

*Directions*

1. With everyone holding onto edges of the parachute, lift it overhead and bring it down, trapping air underneath.
2. Have everyone pull the parachute tight and make it ripple up and down.