



A Student's Guide to Understanding Lent and Holy Week



Welcome to Lent and Holy Week 2026!

When I attended church as a student, I remember hearing a lot of “churchy” words that I didn’t quite understand. What is Maundy Thursday? What is Good Friday? Why do we wave palm branches on Palm Sunday? And what is the Lord’s Supper?

If you’ve found yourself asking some of these same questions (and maybe others), this guide is for YOU!

Please use it throughout Lent (and beyond) to help you understand the events and words we’ll discuss over the next several weeks.

I’m looking forward to seeing you and your family soon at FLPC!

Ed Black - February 2026

Always Remember!
YOU are Loved!

Question 1. Who are you? I am a child of God.

Question 2. What does it mean to be a child of God? That I belong to God, who loves me.

Source: Belonging to God: A First Catechism Approved by the 210th General Assembly (1998) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Lent and Ash Wednesday: Getting Us Started

Lent: We're waiting for Easter during the season of Lent. The season of Lent is a time of prayer, fasting/reduction, and self-examination in preparation for the celebration of the resurrection of the Lord (Jesus) at Easter. It is a period of 40 days — like the flood of Genesis, Moses' time on Mount Sinai, Jonah's call to Ninevah - to repent (turn toward God). 40 days is also the amount of time Jesus spent in the wilderness (with no food or water) while he was tested by the devil. The Sundays in Lent are not counted in the time period between Ash Wednesday and Easter, as every Sunday (the Lord's Day) is a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Did you know the number "40" is mentioned more than 100 times in the Bible?

Ash Wednesday: Have you ever been to FLPC and had ashes put on your forehead? Why and when do we do this? We do this on "Ash Wednesday," which is the first day of Lent (see above). Ash Wednesday calls us to acknowledge that we will not live forever, meaning that we all will die at some point. In many traditions (including FLPC's), this is symbolized through the imposition of ashes — placing a cross on one's forehead. The cross reminds us of Jesus' death, but it also reminds us that we are not alone. During the imposition of ashes, we say, "You are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). On Ash Wednesday, we begin our Lenten journey through the desert with Jesus toward Easter.

Did you know that the ashes we use at Ash Wednesday at FLPC are often from the palm branches used in the previous year's Palm Sunday worship service? See the next page for more information on Palm Sunday.

Sources: <https://pcusa.org/about-pcusa/agencies-entities/interim-unified-agency/ministry-areas/theology-worship/worship/christian-year> and <https://pcusa.org/about-pcusa/agencies-entities/interim-unified-agency/ministry-areas/theology-worship/worship/christian-year/three-days>

Holy Week Events

Holy Week: This begins with Palm Sunday and ends with Easter. Jesus has entered Jerusalem and is on the way to the cross.

Palm Sunday: Passion/Palm Sunday begins Holy Week, a time in the church year when we remember how Jesus gave his life in love for the world. As Jesus entered Jerusalem on the way to the cross, the crowd waves palm branches, wanting to crown Jesus as king. And we wave palms at Forest Lake because Jesus is our Lord! Palms also symbolize victory, which foreshadows Jesus' eventual triumph over death. But as the week unfolds, their shouts of praise turn to demands for his crucifixion; he receives a crown of thorns as he is handed over to be mocked and killed.

Maundy Thursday: This is the night before Jesus was crucified, when Jesus shared a meal with his disciples (the Last Supper) and washed their feet. We use the same words Jesus shared with his disciples that night each time we serve Communion at FLPC (see the next page). Additionally, tonight we remember his new commandment to love one another even as he has loved us. This FLPC service is a powerful way to feel the intimacy of that night long ago and gives us a chance to receive and give God's love.

Good Friday: On Maundy Thursday, we remembered his new commandment: to love one another even as he has loved us. He even washed the feet of his disciples! On Good Friday, we turn to the cross, remembering Jesus' last words as he died on the cross. If Jesus dies on the cross on Good Friday, why is it called "good?" If it helps, think of what happens on Easter. God sent God's son (Jesus) into our world with a remarkable act of love - sacrifice on behalf of our sins. Because of Jesus' resurrection, good triumphs over evil. It is good...for *us*.

Easter: On Good Friday, we witnessed the tragedy of Jesus' suffering and death on the cross, where he gave his life for us. Today, on the first day of the week, we gather at the tomb...only to discover that the stone is rolled away, and the grave is empty. Today we celebrate the good news of the gospel: Jesus Christ is risen! He has been resurrected from the dead.

Sources: <https://pcusa.org/about-pcusa/agencies-entities/interim-unified-agency/ministry-areas/theology-worship/worship/christian-year> and <https://pcusa.org/about-pcusa/agencies-entities/interim-unified-agency/ministry-areas/theology-worship/worship/christian-year/three-days>

About Communion/The Lord's Supper

Did you know that there are two Sacraments (sacred signs that reveal God's Word and love for us) that we celebrate at Forest Lake? One is Communion, and the other is Baptism. We are marked and claimed as a beloved child of God at Baptism (think of it as being officially welcomed into God's family). At Communion, this same family comes to the Lord's table to be fed "supper" and sent out into the world to love and serve God and neighbor.

Background: When Jesus entered Jerusalem (Palm Sunday), it was time for the Jewish Passover festival, which was a celebration to remember God saving the ancient Israelites/Hebrews/Jews from slavery in Egypt. During the Passover festival, it was common to eat a Passover meal, which included lamb. Eating lamb was a recognition of God "passing over" Israelite houses with lamb's blood on the doorposts in order to help them escape slavery (see the Book of Exodus in the Bible).

Jesus shared this meal with his disciples on "Maundy Thursday," the day before he was crucified (nailed to a cross). During this last meal before he was crucified, Jesus broke bread and poured wine into a cup, saying the bread symbolized his body "given for us" and the wine symbolized a "new covenant." These are words the preachers say each time we celebrate Communion at Forest Lake.

The next day (Good Friday), Jesus was crucified (nailed and died on the cross). As a result, Jesus became the sacrificial lamb in order to save us from slavery to sin and death.

What it means for you: Think of Communion as a "holy supper" with fellow children of God. It is God's meal, and Communion remembers the time when Jesus shares this same "holy supper" with his disciples. When we eat this meal (bread and juice) as a church family, we remember all that God has given us. We give thanks for these blessings and future ones we will receive. As a result of being fed at God's table, we then promise we will go out into the world and love God, serve God, and serve neighbor.

Who "owns" the Communion table? Is it FLPC's? No, it belongs to Jesus. Jesus is the host of the meal!

Lent/Holy Week Calendar

Wednesday, February 18: Ash Wednesday: We will do a “drive-thru” imposition of ashes beginning at 4 PM. In addition, all are welcome to come to the sanctuary beginning at 6 PM for prayers and the option of participating in stations. At 6:30 PM in the sanctuary, we’ll have a brief service for the imposition of ashes.

Sunday, March 29: Palm Sunday: We begin worship with a palm processional, so please meet Ellen Skidmore in the narthex at 9:45 AM before 10 AM worship. We also will have a covered dish meal and an Easter egg hunt for our preschoolers.

Thursday, April 2: Maundy Thursday/Upper Room Communion service (4-6 PM drop-in): In addition to sharing the Lord’s Supper together, attendees will have the opportunity to participate in several worship stations, including foot washing.

Friday, April 3: Good Friday sanctuary service (6 PM)

Sunday, April 5: Easter! The Lord has risen! We will have two Easter morning worship services. Our first one is at 7:00 AM in the parlor, and the second one is at 10:00 AM in the sanctuary. Join us!

Suggested Memory Verses (Lent 2026)

Genesis 3:19: *By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.*

Romans 5:8: *But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.*

Romans 8:6: *To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.*

John 9:30: *I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see may see and those who do see may become blind.*

Luke 19:40: *Jesus answered, I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.*