



Christian Education Bulletin Insert

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The Ven. Patricia Drummond

Christian Education Director

patd@nb.sympatico.ca (506) 548-9365

February 9th Ash Wednesday - the beginning of Lent

In many congregations there will be a special service on Ash Wednesday at which ashes will be used to sign people's foreheads with the sign of the cross. This is a sign of mourning and penitence (being sorry) for sin. Explain 'sin' to children as things we do wrong, things we do not do that we should, and anything which separates us from God and his love because it makes us feel guilty and sad and it makes God feel disappointed in us. Explain also that, no matter what we do wrong, God is always ready to forgive us if we are sorry.

The ashes are traditionally made by burning crosses left over from Palm Sunday. They show also that we have ended our old ways and are beginning afresh.

Play 'Do This, Do That.' It is like 'Simon Says.' The leader does something such as put his hands on his head, and says, "Do this." Everyone copies him. He continues doing different actions, but if he says, "Do That," instead of "Do This," anyone who copies is out. At the end of the game, explain that people are out because they didn't listen well enough. Sin often happens because we don't listen to God. In Lent we should try especially hard to listen to him. One way we can do this is by making sure we read our Bibles and say our prayers every day. Remember to point out to children the Lenten colour for the church hangings and vestments. (Purple) It is a sign of repentance.

February 14th, St Valentine's Day

Read the story of St. Valentine. Books will be available from your local library. Then talk about the different kinds of love. We often associate St Valentine's Day with romantic love, but, when Jesus talked about loving God and loving one's neighbour as oneself, he meant agape love - self giving love that considers others first. Older children might make a collage on a cross shaped piece of cardboard. to show this kind of love. Look for pictures in articles about aid for the tsunami victims, or in fund raising flyers from such groups as Doctors Without Borders, the

Red Cross or UNICEF. Maybe, as a family, you could offer to help out at a soup kitchen or food bank sometime during Lent.

February 24th, Gladys Aylward

Gladys was born into a poor family. Her father was a mailman and, when she was old enough to work, Gladys became a shop assistant, then a children's nanny and after that a parlour maid. In church she learned about missionary work in China, and especially about a widow, Mrs Jeannie Lawson, who needed a helper. Gladys decided that was where God was calling her to work. It took her many years to save enough money for the fare but, when she was 30, she was finally able to travel to meet Mrs Lawson in China. They opened a small inn for the men who carried goods by mule along the dirt roads and Gladys learned enough Chinese to be able to tell them stories about Jesus. In the Second World War, when China was invaded by Japan, many children were orphaned or lost touch with their parents. They roamed the hillsides with no one to care for them. Gladys gathered 100 children together and led them across the Yellow river to safety. Her amazing story is told in the book, "The Small Woman" and in the movie, "The Inn of the Sixth Happiness." Maybe you could read the book as a family or watch the movie sometime during Lent.

Lent Movies

Other movies which are great to watch during Lent are: Godspell, The Greatest Story Ever Told, Jesus Christ Superstar, Jesus of Nazareth and The Gospel of John. The last two are too long to watch at one sitting and would need to be spread over two or three evenings. Only watch The Passion of the Christ if your children are over 14 and you are aware of the graphic nature of the movie.

For Fun

A little boy opened the big family Bible with fascination, and looked at the old pages as he turned them. Suddenly, something fell out of the Bible. He picked it up and looked at it closely. It was an old leaf from a tree that had been pressed in between the pages.

"Mama, look what I found!" the boy called out.

"What do you have, dear?" she asked. With astonishment in his voice, the young man replied, "I think it's Adam's suit!"