

Lenten Soup and Prayers

Prayers for the Earth
and Vegetarian Recipes

Caring for God's Good Creation
New Jersey Synod Bishop's Challenge 2025

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Lent is traditionally a time to focus on simplicity. One way many congregations have often done this is through gathering for simple meals such as soup.

This year, the Bishop is challenging every congregation in the NJ Synod to take up the stewardship practice of caring for God's good creation. A key sustainability practice is reducing meat consumption. For Lent this year, then, the Bishop's Challenge team is offering a vegetarian soup recipe for each week. These recipes can be used by congregations or at home by individuals.

You are invited to let these recipes spur your imagination for what meals might be possible and to search for ways to make food choices with lesser impact on the environment. Also included are prayers for the care of the Earth for each week.

Week One: March 5-9

Prayer and Recipe from Laura Poethke

Red Lentil Soup

Serves: 8

Ingredients:

- 2 cups dried red lentils
- 2 large carrots, diced
- 4 large stalks celery, diced
- 1 medium/large yellow onion, diced
- 8 cups vegetable broth or water
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 2 bay leaves
- 4 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

Instructions:

1. Heat the olive oil until shimmering.
2. Add carrot, celery, onion, and salt. Stir to combine. Cover and let the vegetables sweat, stirring occasionally, until the onions are translucent, about 5 minutes.
3. Add the lentils, broth or water, bay leaves, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer, covered, until the lentils begin to fall apart, about 20 minutes.
4. Turn off the heat and remove the bay leaves.
5. Add the lemon juice.
6. If desired, blend to a desired texture and salt to taste.

NOTE: The recipe calls for the vegetables to be diced. I just chop them coarsely, because at the end I use an immersion blender, leaving some larger chunks. This speeds the preparation and delivers a consistency that my family likes.



God of Plenty, thank you for the gift of the earth, created by you to provide all the food we need. In selfishness we have taken advantage of your goodness and abused the soil, water, and air. May this meal remind us to protect our global environment and to live in harmony with all who share this world. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Week Two: March 10-16

Prayer and Recipe from Deborah MacBride

Lenten Lentil Soup

Serves: 6

Ingredients:

- 1 Medium onion (yellow or red) sliced thinly
- 4 tbs butter
- ½ tps kosher salt
- ¼ cup apple cider
- ½ cup yellow onion chopped fine
- ½ cup finely diced carrots
- 1 stalk celery finely diced
- ¼ dried thyme
- 2 cups French (or green) lentils
- 6 cups water or vegetable broth
- 2 bay leaves

Instructions:

1. Melt butter in a soup pot. Add thinly sliced onions, salt, and apple cider and cook over low heat for 30-45 minutes until soft and golden brown, stirring occasionally. Squeeze the fat out of the onion confit with a spoon, leaving the fat in the pan. Put aside the confit.
2. Keeping the heat low, add the chopped onions, carrots, and celery to the fat left on the soup pot. Add a dash of salt to help the mirepoix (vegetables) cook down for about 10-15 minutes. Cook until the vegetables are soft and the onions are translucent.
3. Add lentils, water, ¾ of the onion confit, and bay leaves. Bring to a boil and reduce heat to a simmer for 30 minutes or until the lentils are soft.
4. Remove bay leaves and salt and pepper to taste.
5. Serve in bowls with the remaining confit to garnish.



Lord, Lent is a time of introspection. We focus on all that Christ has taught us as we prepare for His sacrifice and the miracle of the Easter Story. And as we think on this story, we realize that there is nothing passive about it! It calls upon us to reflect on our gifts and how we use them in our everyday lives. Have we done what we can to help others in our communities? Have we hindered others from getting the help they need? Are we living each day "letting your light shine before others that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven?" Oh, how we all fall short... And yet, the Love of Christ washes over us with forgiveness that we may start anew tomorrow. Guide us on this Lenten journey, Lord, that we may be the light for others. Amen.

Week Three: March 17-23

Prayer and Recipe from Karen Le Morva

Pierre's Split-Pea Soup

Serves: 8

Ingredients:

1 16 oz bag split peas

4-5 potatoes, peeled and diced

2-3 carrots, peeled and diced

2 onions, chopped

3-4 cloves garlic, minced

2-3 slices vegetarian bacon (optional)

1 cube vegetarian bouillon (may use 2-3 cubes as substitute for additional salt)

1 teaspoon garlic powder

Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

1. Soak split peas in warm water overnight or for 8 hours.
2. Saute onions, garlic, and vegetarian bacon in 2-3 tablespoons of olive or canola oil. Add garlic powder and vegetarian bouillon cube and stir.
3. Combine all ingredients in slow cooker.
4. Cook on high for 8 hours. Season to taste. Enjoy!



Creating God, you have given us every good gift. Forgive us for the damage we have done to what you have given us, and especially for what we have done to harm our fellow creatures. Help us to see your face in the natural world around us and to treat it with the respect and love we feel for you. Inspire us to new actions, help us to communicate effectively, and sustain us when we are weary or discouraged. For the sake of the world you love and in the name of Jesus, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Week Four: March 24-30

Prayer and Recipe from Margarete Denicola

Pasta & Peas

Serves: 8

Ingredients:

1/2 pound elbow macaroni
1 (8oz) can tomato sauce
1 cup chopped onion
1 tbsp. chopped garlic
1 tbsp. olive oil
1/2 tsp. oregano
1/2 tsp. basil
3 red potatoes, cubed in 1/2 inch pieces
10 oz. frozen petite peas
1/2 cup grated vegetarian Parmesan cheese
8 cups water
Salt and pepper to taste
Pinch of red pepper flakes

Instructions:

1. Saute onion & garlic in olive oil until tender.
2. Add tomato sauce and water. Bring to a boil. Add seasonings and potatoes. Cook for 10 minutes.
3. Add elbow macaroni and peas and cook together another 10 minutes until tender.
4. Add parmesan cheese and ladle into soup bowls.
Enjoy!



We pray that you will give the hungry their daily bread and end their hunger. Give them the sustenance they need to live and thrive. Bless families of minimal resources to find the means to feed their families so that their children may flourish. Amen.

Week Five: March 31-April 6

Prayer and Recipe from Rev. Sarah Hinlicky Wilson

Sour Lentil Soup

Serves: 6

Ingredients:

- ½ c. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 large onions, chopped
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 3 large carrots, chopped
- 3 turnips, chopped
- ½ head garlic, peeled and chopped
- 1 lb. lentils
- 1 small can diced tomatoes
- 1 bunch parsley, chopped
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tsp. oregano
- ½ tsp. black pepper
- 1 tsp. salt
- 6 c. water
- ¼ c. red wine vinegar

Instructions:

1. Heat oil to medium in large soup pot or Dutch oven. Add onions, celery, carrots, and turnips. Cook, stirring occasionally, for about 10 minutes, till beginning to soften.
2. Add the garlic and let cook 1 minute.
3. Stir in lentils, tomatoes, parsley, bay leaf, oregano, and black pepper, then pour in water.
4. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer covered for about 45 minutes, or until all the vegetables and lentils have softened, but not gotten mushy.
5. Add 1 tsp. salt and ¼ c. red vinegar and let sit overnight. (Adding salt and vinegar too soon interferes with the cooking of the lentils; but if you eat right after adding them, the flavor won't have penetrated the lentils yet.)
6. The next day, reheat and taste for salt and vinegar, adding more of both as needed, or more water if the soup is too thick for your liking.



Heavenly Father, Esau son of Isaac was so taken with a pot of lentil soup that he traded away his birthright to Jacob for it. Fortify us with this meal so that we might not foolishly trade worthy things for unworthy, but rather grow in strength to serve you all the days of our life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Week Six: April 7-13

Prayer and Recipe from Donna Mertz-Burkhardt

Butternut Squash Soup

Serves: 4

Ingredients:

1 large butternut squash, peeled and seeded, cut into cubes.

2 pears, cut into pieces.

1 onion, chopped.

2 tablespoons butter

4 cups vegetable broth.

1 tablespoon grated ginger (or tsp. ginger powder)

Olive oil, salt and pepper, garlic powder

Instructions:

1. Toss squash with olive oil, salt, pepper, and garlic powder
2. Roast 20 minutes in the oven at 375* turning after 10 min.
3. Sauté onion in butter. Add pears. Cook till softened.
4. Add squash, ginger and broth. Bring to boil.
5. Simmer 15 minutes.
6. Cool to puree!
7. Heat. Eat. And Love.



As we pause in the midst of this season, when we think we have too much to do; help us to know that we need to think differently and behave differently in this year. We are in anticipation of a healthy world, a cleaner world, a peaceful world. Send us your gift of silent winter nights so that we can hear what you will bring to us: A gift of Hope and a determination to be of Help. Amen.

Holy Week: April 14-19

Prayer and Recipe from Eleanor Dill

Black Bean Soup

Serves: 4

Ingredients:

2 Tbs. olive oil
2 med. onions rough chop
4 lg. garlic cloves crushed
2 carrots rough chop
2 15 oz. cans black beans, drained and rinsed
4 c. vegetable broth
3/4 tsp. oregano
1 tsp. coriander
1 3/4 tsp. cumin
1/8 tsp. cayenne
tiny bit salt
1 Tbs. fresh lime juice
1/3 c. sour cream
fresh cilantro

Instructions:

1. Heat oil, add onions, garlic, and carrots. Cook til soft. (about 8 mins.)
2. Add beans, salt. Bring to boil. Reduce heat. Cover. Simmer gently about 15 mins.
3. Puree. Stir in lime juice. Serve with cilantro and sour cream.



Great Mystery, guide us in the way to love your creation with all our being, and to constantly protect and defend it. It is You. Let us say with our brothers and sisters, "All our relations."

And an Easter Treat!

Prayer and Recipe from Rev. Jeff Elliott

Berry Quinoa Bake

Serves: 4

Ingredients:

- 2 bananas, ripe is best
- 1 cup dry quinoa, rinsed
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds (whole or ground)
- 1 tablespoon ground flax seed
- 1 or 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 ½ cup fresh/frozen berries
- ¼ cup walnuts,
- 2 1/3 chopped cups soy milk cup
- 6 deglet dates (optional)

Instructions:

1. Add the bananas to a mixing bowl and mash with a potato masher until smooth.
2. Add all of the rest of the ingredients and stir to combine. If using dates, just blend the dates with the soy milk until smooth before adding to the bowl.
3. Add the contents to a small glass baking dish and bake uncovered at 350°F for 70 minutes.
4. Top with fresh berries or just enjoy as-is!



Eternal God. Bless this food for our use. Bless us for your service. Keep us ever mindful of the needs of others. Help us to realize that the foods we choose to eat drastically affect how many of our neighbors will remain hungry. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.