

THREE ACTIVITIES FOR SPRING

Here are three activities from the Department of Christian Education, one based on a saint's feastday and two based on Bible readings. All three appear on the Orthodox Church calendar in the spring. But they could be used at any time of the year, and with various age groups.

Answers follow the activities. (Note: Bible activities use the Revised Standard Version.)

SAINT STEPHEN OF PERM (Feastday April 26)

The life of the saint is told here in 26 narrative statements for students to read in turn. They might present the reading to the parish, or to other church school classes. It can also be used in class to learn about Saint Stephen. His icon, a map showing the region of Perm, or internet pictures of that area and of the Zyrian people would be good accompaniments to the reading.

1. Saint Stephen of Perm was born in Russia in the year 1340. The Church was important to him from the time he was very young.
2. Stephen read the Epistle during services and helped his father take care of the church. During these years he met and talked with many of the Zyrian people, who lived in northeastern Russia.
3. Later, Stephen became a monk at the Monastery of Saint Gregory the Theologian in Roskov, Russia. The monk Stephen made an important decision: he would try to bring the pagan Zyrian people to faith in Jesus Christ.
4. He prepared for this work by learning the Zyrian alphabet. Then he translated some Church books into the language of the Zyrian people.
5. He went to the bishop in Moscow and asked, "Bless me, Master, to go to the pagan land of Perm. I most deeply wish to lead the people to Christ, or else lay down my life for them and for my Lord Jesus Christ."
6. The bishop gave his blessing, and also gave Stephen things he would need to conduct worship services. Stephen then began his travels along the North Dvina river, stopping along the way at Zyrian settlements.
7. It was not an easy journey, and Stephen was often cold, hungry and exhausted. But the hardest thing was to see that the Zyrians worshipped idols rather than God.

8. Father Stephen built a small cell to live in, not far from a tall, thick birch tree that grew on an elevated spot. The Zyrians worshipped what they called the “sacred tree” and brought wild animals to it for sacrifice.
9. Father Stephen prayed, and then set fire to the tree and burned it down. He knew the Zyrians would be very angry with him for doing this, but he wanted to end their worship of false gods.
10. Sure enough, some people wanted to kill him. But he asked them, “Why couldn’t your gods protect themselves from fire? Why couldn’t they stop me, a weak man? Can they be gods when they are so powerless?”
11. Then Father Stephen said, “Your gods cannot think or see or hear. But the true Christian God sees everything and knows everything. He is good to everyone. All I want is to do what is good for you—to bring you to the true God.”
12. At the place where the birch tree had stood, Father Stephen had a church built, in honor of the Archangel Michael, who is the fighter against the spirits of darkness.
13. Over time, the Zyrians could see that Father Stephen loved them and was telling them the truth about God. They accepted baptism and destroyed the idols they had worshipped before he came.
14. But the chief pagan wizard, whose name was Pama, was not convinced. He argued with Father Stephen and said, “You have only one God. But we have many gods who help us in the water and on the land. They give us good hunting in the forests. They provide food and skins of animals for us. They reveal magic mysteries.”
15. Father Stephen answered, “God is One, and He is Almighty. He blesses and provides for all those who know Him and honor Him. The gods you speak of have no hearts, and cannot love you as the true God does.”
16. After arguing for a long time, Pama challenged Father Stephen to pass through fire and water as a test of faith. Father Stephen humbly said, “The God of the Christians is great. I accept your challenge. Let us walk hand in hand together through fire and water.”
17. But Pama lost his nerve, and became frightened. He begged Father Stephen not to make him do something that would surely lead to his death.

18. Father Stephen said to the watching crowd, "What shall we do with this man? He wanted to end the argument about faith by fire and water, but he will not accept the waters of baptism."
19. Some people shouted, "Put him to death! He lied, and if he is set free he will make more trouble for you, Father, and for us."
20. But Father Stephen said, "No, Christ sent me to teach and not to kill. If he refuses to accept the saving faith, let his refusal punish him. I will not."
21. In 1383, Saint Stephen was consecrated Bishop of Lesser Perm. He spent the next twelve years caring for his people. He built schools, taught many to read and write, and helped them study the Bible in their own language.
22. He also built new churches, and trained Zyrian men for the priesthood to serve in them, using the language of the people. He translated the Psalms and many service books for the priests to use.
23. Saint Stephen gave away whatever he had to help the poor. He defended the people from crooked officials, and built monasteries for those who wanted to give their lives to prayer.
24. Saint Stephen admired Saint Sergius of Radonezh very much, and hoped to meet him one day. But he never did, because he had so much to do. In 1390, traveling to Moscow, he was about eleven miles from Saint Sergius's monastery. There was no time to stop. He bowed in the direction of the monastery and said, "Peace to you, my spiritual brother."
25. At that moment, Saint Sergius was eating a meal with his brothers in the monastery. He suddenly stood up, bowed in the direction in which Saint Stephen was traveling, and said, "Hail also to you, pastor of Christ's flock. May God be with you!" This little miracle has never been forgotten.
26. Saint Stephen died in 1395. If you go to Perm today, you will see many beautiful churches. And you will understand why the people of Perm said this when he died: "If we had lost just silver or gold, we could regain those. But we shall never have another like you, beloved Father Stephen."

END

Fill in the Words and Find the Phrase

Use the Bible to read Luke 24: 1-5. Fill in the missing words. Then use the letters that have numbers following them to complete the phrase below the Bible passage. For example, the number 12 appears after a letter in the first word to be filled in. That means that the letter is the 12th letter in the phrase.

The phrase is something that Jesus Christ promised us.

BUT ON THE ____ (12) ____ (2) ____ ____ ____ (7) DAY OF THE
____ (5) ____ (4) ____ ____, THEY WENT TO THE TOMB, TAKING THE
SPICES WHICH THEY HAD PREPARED. AND THEY FOUND THE
____ ____ ____ (10) ____ ____ (17) ROLLED AWAY FROM THE TOMB, BUT
WHEN THEY WENT IN THEY DID NOT FIND THE BODY. WHILE THEY WERE
PERPLEXED ABOUT THIS, TWO MEN STOOD BY THEM IN
____ ____ ____ (1) ____ (6) ____ ____ APPAREL; AND AS THEY WERE
____ (3) ____ (14) ____ ____ ____ (8) ____ ____ (15) ____ ____ ____ (11)
AND BOWED THEIR FACES TO THE ____ ____ (18) ____ (13) ____ ____ ____,
THE MEN SAID TO THEM, "WHY DO YOU SEEK THE
____ ____ ____ (16) ____ ____ ____ (9) AMONG THE DEAD?"

Here's the phrase, which has four words. One word needs a capital letter:

____ (1) ____ (2) ____ (3) ____ (17) ____ (5) ____ (6) ____ (7) ____ (8)
____ (9) ____ (10) ____ (11)
____ (12) ____ (13) ____ (14) ____ (4) ____ (16) ____ (15) ____ (18)

Cross Out and Get to the Message

Follow the numbered directions and cross out some words in the lines below. Use a separate sheet of paper to keep track if your wish to. When you finish, go to the lower part of the page to see what comes next.

1. Cross out words that rhyme with **lark**
2. Cross out the opposite of **found**
3. Cross out 2 things you can do with water
4. Cross out words that rhyme with **wall**
5. Cross out 2 rhyming words: a kind of fruit; an item of outer clothing
6. Cross out words that rhyme with **can**
7. Cross out something you use to clean up leaves in the yard
8. Cross out 2 rhyming words: a kind of footwear; what you do with a gun
9. Cross out 2 rhyming words: a word that means hit; a word short for bicycle
10. Cross out 2 rhyming words: another word for nasty; the opposite of dirty
11. Cross out 5 colors
12. Cross out the opposite of **loud**

LOST SPARK CAPE LAYS RAKE SHOOT

RAN CLEAN DOWN BROWN HALL DRINK

HIS FAN GRAPE MARK PURPLE BOOT

LIFE DARK MEAN FOR RED STRIKE

BIKE STALL THE SWIM FALL STARK

BLUE PAN MALL SHEEP SOFT GRAY

When you finish crossing out, circle the remaining words. Then read John 10:11, and use the circled words to complete Jesus Christ's words in that verse.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd

_____."

Answers for “Fill in the Words and Find the Phrase”

The four-word phrase describing something that Jesus Christ promised us is
life with God forever

The words to fill in are:

- FIRST (f, l, and t are used)
- WEEK (w and e are used)
- STONE (o and e are used)
- DAZZLING (l and l are used)
- FRIGHTENED (f, r, h and e are used)
- GROUND (r and o are used)
- LIVING (v and g-- which will be capped for “God”--are used)

Answers for “Cross Out and Get to the Message”

1. Cross out spark, mark, dark, stark
2. Cross out lost
3. Cross out drink, swim
4. Cross out hall, call, stall, fall, mall
5. Cross out cape, grape
6. Cross out ran, fan, tan, pan
7. Cross out rake
8. Cross out shoot, boot
9. Cross out strike, bike
10. Cross out clean, mean
11. Cross out brown, purple, red, blue, gray
12. Cross out soft

The remaining words will be “lays down his life for the sheep” and this completes Jesus Christ’s words “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” in John 10:11.

This activity could be followed with a discussion question: How does Jesus Christ compare Himself as “shepherd” to another kind of shepherd? (*He says that He loves and knows His sheep, unlike a hired shepherd who doesn’t really care for them, and runs away when there is danger. Jesus Christ, by contrast, gave His life to save us, His sheep.*)