

Marking our Journey through Lent 2021

Possibilities and Opportunities

The word Lent comes from the Anglo-Saxon word 'Spring' carrying a sense of hope and new life as Christians seek to tune into God's love and make a fresh response to it. This year, marking Lent during a national lockdown, perhaps the invitation is more than ever to do something that feels life-giving. How will you mark the days? What will draw you more deeply into the love of Christ and the world he came to save? Here's a few ideas and some ways we might encourage one another.



Ash Wednesday

On the back of this leaflet is a short liturgy for Ash Wednesday that you might like to use at home – either at 12 noon to pray at the same time as others, or at any time during the day.

Marking our journey

In these extraordinary circumstances we do not have many of the usual ways in which we punctuate our lives, week by week, month by month, so that days and weeks blur. Equally as we learn to engage with life and faith in different ways we can have new experiences and understandings of our relationship with God.



During this Lent you are encouraged to intentionally record these moments as a way of marking your journey towards the Cross and Easter and progressing your own discipleship.

How might you do that? For some a beautiful notebook will be the way, but you could prefer to collect your jottings in a box or a jar or a file, or even a recycled envelope! Any of these could be decorated - it's your choice.

What to put in it? Anything that speaks something of God to you, made you aware of God's nearness, expresses your deepest longing or a question you need to ask of God.

A prayer, collected or written yourself, Bible verses, something that you read or heard or saw in the media, a place or something from nature, a drawing, painting or poem.

This is something suitable for all ages and will be ours to share or not.



Making a Lent Jigsaw of Prayer

'that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' (Colossians 2: 2-3)

You're invited to contribute a piece of our Lenten prayer jigsaw (those receiving our packs will be given a piece, others can find the template on the website). The vision is that a large interlinking jigsaw without an edge will be created, to be displayed in church, to show us visually that we all connect spiritually even when we are physically apart, as we have been for so long. Please decorate your jigsaw puzzle piece in any way you would like - colour, paint, draw, write a prayer (if you would like your prayer to be private please write it on the reverse side), a bible verse or an encouraging saying which you like. Add your name if you wish. You may find this helpful to complete during the day of prayer (20-21 February) or not! The choice is yours. Please when you have finished it (without cutting it out as that will aid assembly) could you return it to church.

Read and Reflect

There's all kinds of material available, but you might like to try the 2021 Live Lent, *God's Story, Our Story* daily reflections put together by the Church of England. The material can be accessed in a number of ways, written and in audio form.

There's a printed booklet, a free app and downloads, and you can also listen each day on the telephone free of charge on the Daily Hope telephone - 0800 804 8044.

www.churchofengland.org/resources/livelent-2021-church-resources-gods-story-our-story

If you'd like to consider the material in a little more depth the reflections draw on the Archbishop of Canterbury's 2021 Lent Book "**Living his Story**" by Hannah Steele (The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book 2021). There's questions for discussion at the end of each chapter, and if you'd be interested in exploring that together on zoom please let Rosie know (vicar@speh.org.uk). Alternatively why not agree to phone a friend each week and do the questions together?

An alternative approach which seems appropriate for these times is "**At home in Lent: An exploration of Lent through 46 objects**" by Gordon Giles. He takes everyday items from around the home and uses them as a way to open up to God.



Caring for our world – and making progress towards Eco Church Silver Award

Lent is a good time to recommit ourselves to caring for our environment. It is also a while now since St Paul's obtained our Bronze Eco Church award. While we have been distracted, understandably, by the pandemic and all that it meant, the message of the climate emergency continues to demand our attention and action.



Progress as an Eco Church requires us to look at, and where necessary change, the way we live as individuals and households, as well as how we do things at church. It could be that Lent is a good time to encourage each other so that St Paul's can achieve the Silver award. Contact Sue for more information and guidelines, or if you're interested in joining a zoom gathering to help take this forward.

Prayers for Ash Wednesday and the Imposition of Ashes



You can make your own ash by burning your old palm cross – there's instructions on the internet – it's a messy job best done outside! Or you could just burn some paper. (If you receive our weekly pack you should have some ash – just add a few drops of oil).

Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Have mercy on me O God in your great kindness:
in the fullness of your mercy blot out my offences.

Wash away all my guilt:
and cleanse me from my sin.

For I acknowledge my faults:
and my sin is always before me.

Against you only have I sinned
and done evil in your sight.

Create in me a clean heart O God:
and renew a right spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from your presence:
do not take your holy spirit from me.

Give me the joy of your help again:
and strengthen me with a willing spirit.

O Lord open my lips:
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Create in me a clean heart, O God. *(from psalm 51)*

Loving God, you create us from the dust of the earth;
may these ashes be for us a sign
of our penitence and our mortality,
and a reminder that only by the cross
do we receive eternal life
in Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen**

Mark yourself or each other with the sign of the cross using the ashes

A time of turning round

Truly dust we are, and to dust we shall return;

And truly yours we are, and to you we shall return.

Help this to be a time of turning around and beginning again.

Through the forty days of Lent, help us to follow you

And to find you in the discipline of praying

And in the drudgery of caring-

In whatever we deny ourselves,

And whatever we set ourselves to learn or do.

Help us to discover you

in our loneliness and in community

in our emptiness and our fulfilment,

in our sadness and our laughter.

Help us to find you when we ourselves are lost.

Help us to follow you on the journey to Jerusalem

to the waving palms of the people's hope,

to their rejection, to the cross and empty tomb.

Help us to perceive new growth amid the ashes of the old.

Help us, carrying your cross, to be signs of your Kingdom. AMEN.

(Jan Sutch Pickard)