

Ash Wednesday and Lent



Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent for Christians in this part of the world.

On Ash Wednesday, lots of Christians have their foreheads marked with ashes, often in the sign of a cross.

This is why it is called Ash Wednesday.



Long ago, people used to have ashes put on their heads as a sign that they were sorry for their **sins**- their faults and mistakes.

Lent is a time of getting ready for Easter and Christians receive ashes on Ash Wednesday as a sign that they want to start Lent by being sorry for their sins.



Having ashes on your forehead is a symbol of being sorry for your sins and asking for God's forgiveness.

The sign of the cross on the forehead also reminds us of when we were baptised and became a member of God's family.



The ashes used on Ash Wednesday are made by burning the palm crosses that were blessed on Palm Sunday, the year before.





Here are last year's palm crosses being burned outside Bradford Cathedral.

They will make the ashes that will be used at this year's Ash Wednesday service.

Lent

Lent is a season of forty days (not including Sundays), which starts on Ash Wednesday and ends at Easter.

The forty days remind Christians of the forty days that Jesus spent in the desert, praying and fasting.



For Christians, the forty days of Lent are a time to:

Think about how we can be a better person and Christian

Be sorry and say sorry to God for our faults and mistakes

Get ready for Easter- a special time, when we celebrate Jesus rising from the dead

In the Bible **forty** is a number used to mean **a long time**.

During this time people need to be patient and get ready for something important that is going to happen.



40
days

Lent is a time of waiting and preparing for **Easter**.

We try to think about God and how we can be better Christians.



The colour for Lent is **purple**, as you can see from the altar at Bradford Cathedral and the stole (a kind of scarf) that Dean Jerry is wearing in the photo where he is giving out ashes.



In churches, **purple** is the colour used to show: being sorry; getting ready for a special time.

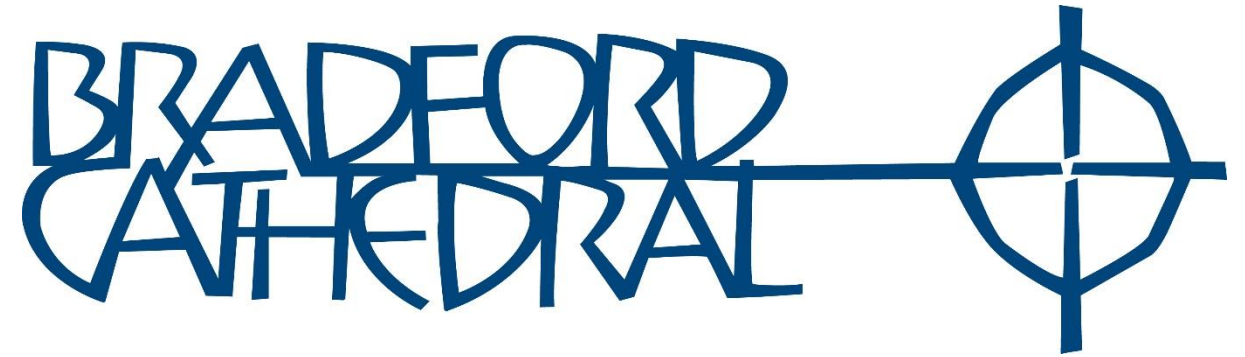


On Good Friday, when we remember Jesus's death, the colour changes to red.

At Easter, gold and white are used.

The colours in a church help us to remember what part of the church year it is.





Acknowledgements

These sites were helpful for Ash Wednesday:

Church of England

Going For Growth- Church of England for young people