

A Lent Message to the Pupils, Families and Staff at Powick, Callow End & Madresfield CoE Primary Schools

February 2025

What Is Lent?

For you, maybe Lent kicks off the hype and excitement surrounding Easter, or maybe Lent is a time for fasting and sacrifice. Or maybe you're sitting there thinking, *"What is Lent anyway, and why is it a big deal?"* Wherever you fall on the Lenten spectrum, I hope I can shed some light on why Lent is still relevant today.

First, it's important to understand the significance of Lent. The word Lent comes from the Latin root meaning "to lengthen." It marks the time that days are lengthening up in Spring from the darkness of winter. It's the 40-day period prior to Easter, excluding Sundays, that begins on Ash Wednesday and concludes on Holy Saturday (the Saturday before Easter) and reflects the 40 days that Jesus was alone in the wilderness – being tempted but also reflecting on his upcoming ministry. On Ash Wednesday, many Christians embark in the tradition of receiving ashes on their foreheads as a reminder that we were made from dust, and to dust we shall return. This literally and physically marks the start of Lent. The ashes remind us that we are but fleeting flowers in a field, here today and gone tomorrow—but we have hope in the resurrection of Jesus.

Although Lent is not defined as such in Scripture, many Christians choose to participate through practices such as reflection, repentance and prayer as a way to prepare their hearts for Easter. It would be great if you could come to an Ash Wednesday service (Wednesday 5th March, 12noon at Madresfield Church this year) but I encourage you to consider some way to make this a season of self-reflection. For me, Lent is a time to open my heart a little wider so when we arrive at Good Friday and Easter, it is not just another day at church but an opportunity to receive the overflowing grace, hope and love of the risen Lord.

Here are a few ways you can engage in Lent to prepare your heart for Good Friday and Easter:

Give Up

The most common discipline that people engage in during Lent is fasting. Some may give up certain types of food (puddings, meat, etc.). Others may give up a habit or behaviour such as caffeine, social media or TV. In past years, I have given up chocolate (incredibly painful), fizzy drinks, crisps and Instagram.

Fasting is a powerful discipline because when we deny ourselves something we desire, we are saying there is something more important in our lives than that thing. During Lent, we are declaring that God is more important.

When we fast, we are also reminded of God. On certain days I can go through the day without thinking much about him. But whenever I have to fight the temptation to indulge in something I have chosen to give up, it reminds me of Him, His sacrifice, and His reality in our lives. The year I gave up chocolate, I was reminded every afternoon when I would normally raid the sweet tin at The Vicarage of this powerful truth.

Give Something

During Lent, you can also choose to give something. Jesus gave us everything on the cross, so this season can be an opportunity for us to give to others. What if during Lent we committed an intentional act of kindness every day? What if we asked God to help us see those around us that we could love, serve, and be generous toward? Imagine how powerfully that would reflect the message of the cross to those around us. What about giving as a Class or Year Group to a Charity - maybe do something for Comic Relief (Isn't that great to have such a good fundraiser in the middle of Lent?) or ask about this year's Church Lent Collection for Sight Savers and St Richard's Hospice.

Give In

Some commit to a daily devotional activity during Lent. This often includes reading a short teaching on a Scripture passage or topic every day and then spending a few moments in prayer to help you focus your mind on Christ.

Even though Lent is not a "requirement" for Jesus' followers, millions every year choose to participate. If you do, I know you will be amazed as to what occurs in your life as you choose to spend a portion of every day intentionally focused on Jesus.

An interesting fact - Ramadan coincides with Lent this year and both times of devotion have very similar aims.

I hope that this little note helps you to understand the importance of Lent and to encourage you to take a step towards preparing your heart and mind on Jesus during the journey to Easter.

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