

The Journey: 40 days through Lent.

Vicar Joyce.

Welcome to this 40 day walk through Lent.

Lent was named for the northern hemisphere and is the Latin word for the season of Spring.

Please take your copy of the book Love Life, Live Lent. 'Transform your world' is the subtitle and in the book are activities, daily actions, recipes and prayers to help you indeed do that.

Make a difference by consciously doing an additional act of generosity each day. You may like to wear one of the purple bracelets to say to yourself and to others that in Lent you are seeking to help build a just world. The books offer ideas for each day of the week except Sunday. The ideas start tomorrow. For kids and adults the suggested activity is the same. We know how easily we can say derogatory things about others when they are absent so let's -

Say something nice about someone behind their back!

Why do we celebrate this season we call Lent? Today, Quinquagesima Sunday (quinqua derives from the Latin for 50) indicates that Easter day, the day Jesus rose from the dead, is 50 days away. The church has a discipline of preparation for this wonderful day, for 40 days. Why 40?

Here are just 8 of the 146 times that the number 40 is mentioned in the Bible.

- Noah spent 40 days and nights in the ark with his family and lots of animals avoiding the flood.
- Israel was in the wilderness for 40 years moving from Egypt to the Promised Land of Canaan.
- Elijah the prophet travelled for 40 days and 40 nights to reach Mount Horeb.
- Moses was on Mount Sinai for forty days and nights receiving the law.
- 12 spies spent 40 days moving through the Promised Land.
- Jonah told the people of Ninevah that they had 40 days to repent before God's judgment.
- Jesus was tempted for 40 days in the wilderness.
- Mary carried the baby Jesus for 40 weeks.

Some years we have put 40 stones in a line to show the journey. If we are picking up a new habit of prayer or bible reading or giving up something, 40 days is a good length of time to make a change and keep to it. The day before Lent begins is called Shrove Tuesday. Shrove comes from the old English word 'shrive', which means to confess. Any rich food in the house was eaten before Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent; hence the tradition of making pancakes, using up eggs and fillings and other luxury food ingredients. Some countries have a big carnival named Mardi gras – literally, 'Fat Tuesday'.

I want to discuss our worship and study plans for Lent. Mission giving is part of Lent, as is fasting. We begin with Ash Wednesday, a day when people are anointed with an ash and oil cross to signify being sorry for the wrong things that have been done and a desire to turn to good things. You may see people with a black ash cross on their forehead. The Ash comes from burnt Palm Sunday crosses from the previous year. Our worship is different in Lent. We usually put away the alleluias until Easter. Apart from Mothering Sunday, we do not have flowers in the church or other colourful decorations. In Advent we light an extra candle each Sunday. In Lent we extinguish one each week. The Song of Praise, the Gloria, is not recited. The colour for Lent is purple, symbolising sorrow and reflection for change, with pink on Lent 4, Mothering Sunday, and red on Lent 6, Palm Sunday. Each Sunday there will be a symbol of the readings. Last year we made coloured roosters, gave out crosses and used passion play pictures. What can we do this year?

Lent One involves celebrating the promise of God through the covenant made with Noah never again to flood the earth. The sign of this promise is a rainbow. We will place a rainbow in the church after 'Mainly

Music' on Thursday to remind us of this sign. We read of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness. How can we show this scene this year?

Lent Two. Abraham and Sarah are given the promise of many descendants. Jesus talks of taking up one's cross. Our Archdeacon, The Venerable John Blundell, will visit us on this Sunday.

Lent Three. Moses is given the 10 Commandments. Jesus clears the money changers out of the temple.

Lent Four is *Mothering Sunday, Refreshment Sunday and Harvest Festival*. As well as the morning services we will attend Evensong at the Cathedral, to honour the Mother Church of the Diocese and give a flower to remember our mothers. Some may make a special cake known as a Simnel cake for each congregation to share.

Lent Five, March 25th. We have one service at 9.30, followed by the Annual General Meeting of Parishioners. This is an important business and spiritual meeting where everyone on the Parish Roll for at least two months has the opportunity to speak and vote. The Jeremiah reading is about having a new heart.

Lent Six. April 1st. is Palm Sunday, with the symbol of greenery and processions leading into Holy week. We have palm cross making events with these being blessed and shared during the service.

Holy Week - we celebrate with a meal on **Maundy Thursday** evening, and then a **Good Friday** service which we share with the Baptists and the Catholics. Do we want to have a bulb to plant in the Memorial Garden? On **Easter Saturday** the church is decorated with symbols of new life, ready for **Easter Sunday**. What symbols do we wish to use? Easter gardens, Easter hats and bonnets, ribbons?

Studies. We will continue the Wednesday mornings and also hold an evening one.

For the latter we could go to the Cathedral for four social justice studies or take five evening studies here. I wonder what your choices will be as you discipline yourself this Lent. Will you remember to look in your book for generous ideas? Will you come each week to worship? Will you give to missions? Will you study the Bible and support the issues of justice? Will you pray for the Church and the precious congregations here of which we are all significant members?