

Lent

in Highbrook & West Hoathly

Lent is a solemn religious observance in the liturgical calendar that begins on Ash Wednesday and covers the period of approximately six weeks up to Easter Sunday.

The Latin name for the period, Quadragesima, means ‘fortieth’, and traditionally relates to the forty days which, according to the Synoptic Gospels Jesus spent fasting in the desert, where he endured temptation by the Devil.

It is also a remembrance of the 40 years that the Israelites spent in the wilderness. (Technically, there are 46 days from Ash Wednesday to Easter Saturday, but the 6 Sundays are excluded as there is no obligation to fast on Sundays.)



The traditional purpose of Lent is the preparation of the believer for Easter, and this leaflet has ideas and suggestions for spiritual disciples that will help you engage with the season.

1. Repentance

Ash Wednesday (6th March)

This is the first day of Lent, and is marked by Christians with prayer, fasting and repentance.

The act of repentance is commonly enacted by partaking in ashing. Ashes, made from last year's burnt Palm crosses, are used to mark the foreheads of Christians during the Ash Wednesday service. The ashes remind us that we are mortals in need of resurrection and sinners in need of forgiveness. There will be a service at 9.30am of Holy Communion with imposition of ashes, at St Margaret's.

The Book of Common Prayer does not include ashing, but instead has a service called 'A Commination'. This is a public and corporate act of penance, and although the language can sound unfamiliar and harsh to modern ears, this was, until the 1980s, the service which marked the start of Lent. It has the same purpose as ashing, to remind us of our need for God's forgiveness, and ends with great promises of hope and a brighter future. There will be a service of Choral Evensong with A Commination at 7.00pm, at All Saints'.

Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession)

Lent is a good time to consider making your Confession, since it is a time to consider whether the actions we have done in the past have damaged our relationship with God and with those around us.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is where God waits with loving and joyful arms. It is a place, not of guilt and worry, but of liberation. If you have a great weight you are carrying around on your heart, then this Sacrament offers an opportunity to receive specific and confident forgiveness from God.

Although often thought of as a Roman Catholic tradition, the Church of England has always retained the Sacrament of Reconciliation, citing "all may, some should, none must."

If you have never made your Confession before and would like advice on how to prepare for it, or would like to arrange a time to make your Confession to God, either in Lent or during Holy Week. please speak to Mthr Nicol.

2. Study

Lent activities:

This year we will have 2 Lent groups to help shape our study as we grow in the knowledge and love of God.

The first is the Diocesan Lent Course - Living Christ.

This is made up of 5 sessions, with short videos, Bible readings and discussion, looking at what it means for us to discover life in all its fullness (John 10.10) and to respond to the call of God in our lives. It will be held at St Margaret's, 10.30-12.00am (March Friday 15th, Thursday 21st, Thursday 28th, April Thursday 4th, Friday 12th).

A 2nd group will be meeting on Tuesday evenings (for more details, please speak to Derek Shurvell.)

The second activity is a Lent book club.

We will be reading 'The Merciful Humility of God' by Jane Williams. If you want to join the book club, please purchase the book (or speak to Mthr Nicol if you need assistance ordering a copy), and read the Introduction and chapter 1, by the first meeting. The Book Club will meet at All Saints' on Saturday mornings 9.30-11.00am (March 16th, 23rd, 30th, April 6th and 13th)

3. Prayer

Take time to think about justice towards God.

Daily Office

A good spiritual discipline is to pray daily. There are simple Office cards at the back of church. If it is a new discipline, consider saying one of the Daily Offices (Morning or Evening), and if you have fallen out of practice, it is a good time to pick up the habit again. Everyone is welcome to join in the Daily Office at 8.30am and 5.30pm (Tuesday-Saturday) in St Margaret's.

Prayerful habits

Prayer is something which often becomes easier the more we pray. Packs of prayer ideas are available to help you explore different ways of praying. Try something different each week, or if something begins to show fruit, focus on that prayer habit.

4. Self-Denial

Take time to think about justice towards yourself.

Fasting

Fasting can include giving something up (for example, meat, chocolate or alcohol) during the season of Lent. If you have any health concerns, please speak to your doctor before starting a period of fasting or abstinence.

Christians fast for several reasons.

- 1) It confronts us with the contrast between us and those who lack the basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter.
- 2) It helps us to draw closer to God as we experience in a small way the temptation Christ faced in the Wilderness.
- 3) In a very real way, giving up something you really enjoy is a way of rehearsing our capacity to handle death.

However, Jesus told his disciples that fasting is not to be seen by others *'but by your Father who sees in secret'* (Matt 6.18).

Fasting is done for love, not for show.

5. Alms-Giving

Take time to think about justice towards your neighbour.

Lent lunch

There will be 2 Lent lunches: Thursday 21st March, 12.30pm at Luctons, West Hoathly and Saturday 6th April, 12.00 noon at Highbrook Village Hall.

There will be a £5 charge for a simple lunch. The money will be put towards the Lent donation to our mission charities: Open House Crawley & the Diocesan Lent appeal, Turning Tides.

Charity giving

Just one example: follow Christian Aid's 'Count Your Blessings' Lent campaign, with small daily reflections some of which require a small financial donation which goes directly to change the lives of people living in poverty across the globe. We also have a young person's version available.