

St Laurence, Upminster



Lent 2018

Introduction

During the forty days of Lent we remember the time that Jesus spent in the wilderness, preparing for his public ministry and facing hard questions about how he would carry that out – temptations which he faced and resisted through knowledge of who he was and of his relationship to God the Father.

In popular culture, where an idea of Lent still exists, it is often construed as simply a time of ‘giving up’ – a time when people give up chocolate, or alcohol, or something else that they think of as an indulgence. However, in Christian understanding, this is only one aspect of a much bigger picture.

At its heart, Lent is a time when we are invited to turn back to God – ‘turning back’ being the literal meaning of the word ‘repentance’. Though we may not be entering a literal desert, we are invited to find ways to take a step back from all that is going on in our lives and inside us, and, like Jesus, to reflect on basic questions about who we are and what our lives are for. For Christians especially, these basic questions will always be questions about how we relate to God, to other people and to creation as well – recognising that we are all part of something greater than ourselves. Our reflection may take various forms – perhaps in stillness and silence, but also in practical acts that can help us to discover more of God’s purposes for us.

Some of the words used in Mass change with the seasons of the Church’s year. During Lent, the words of the preface to the Eucharistic Prayer (the prayer which consecrates the bread and the wine) provide us with some helpful pointers to a framework for observing this season:

**‘For in these forty days
you lead us into the desert of repentance
that through a pilgrimage of prayer and discipline
we may grow in grace
and learn to be your people once again.
Through fasting, prayer and acts of service
you bring us back to your generous heart.
Through study of your holy word
you open our eyes to your presence in the world
and free our hands to welcome others**

into the radiant splendour of your love.'

The purpose of this booklet is to provide some ideas for ways that we can incorporate this framework into our lives. Exactly what you decide to do, will depend, to some extent, upon your particular circumstances – but if possible, it would be good to try and take up one idea for each area – either concurrently or focusing on one per week. You may well have ideas of your own beyond what is suggested here.

Hopefully this can be a way of observing Lent in which every member of the church can participate. Some of the ideas are actions you can share with others. You may like to find a time to compare notes with a friend or family member who is also observing Lent. Many of the ideas are suitable for children – if you have children, you may like to discuss with them the meaning of Lent and the ways in which they would like to observe it.

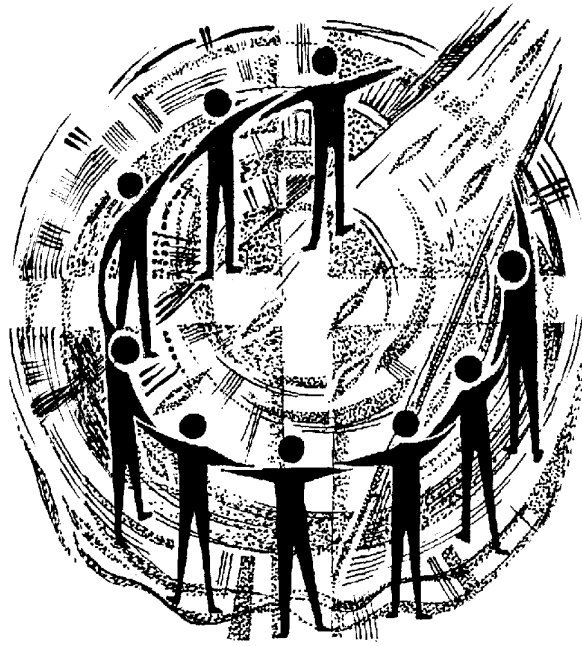
After Easter, we will have two opportunities to come together with others from church and to discuss our experiences of Lent. These will take place in church on:

- Wednesday 18th April, after the 11am Mass**
- Monday 23rd April, 7.30pm**

There will also be opportunities for the younger members of our congregation to talk about Lent, Holy Week and Easter at Adventurers.

Please do not hesitate to speak to me if you have any questions or would like to know more.

Revd Susannah



1. Fasting

Fasting is an action often associated with Lent. We are told that Jesus fasted during his time in the desert, and for many centuries observance of Lent has often involved some degree of abstinence (not eating certain foods) and fasting (reducing one's intake of food) of various kinds. The purpose of this is for self-discipline, as an act of penance, and as a way of focusing upon God. Traditionally it is the ordinary weekdays of Lent that are kept as days of fasting and abstinence; Sundays and feast days are not, as, although falling in Lent, they remain times of celebration.

In the Bible we also find encouragement to a spiritual and moral attitude of fast, where we seek to give up ways of behaving that are contrary to God's hopes for us:

**'Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?**

**Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?'**

(Isaiah 58.6-7)

There is often a strong connection between fasting/abstinence from food or drink and social justice – for example, people may choose to have a more simple meal than normal and to donate the money saved to a charity working with the homeless.

Ideas to consider:

- Eating more simply, giving up a ‘treat’ food or drink item, or another luxury – which could include donating money saved in the process to charity.
- Identifying any habits and behaviours that we would like to try to abstain from – e.g. angry words, negative ways of thinking, gossiping about others, etc.
- Fasting from being busy – in order to have more space to live purposefully and to notice God’s presence around us.

2. Prayer

Prayer is, at heart, time spent with God. It can encompass a whole range of communication – adoration and worship, confession, thanksgiving, bringing the needs of others and our own needs before God, offering ourselves to God and seeking guidance. It can take a wide variety of forms – from particular devotional acts, to forms of creative expression, to ways of seeking to embrace a prayerful and worship-centred attitude in the whole of our lives:

‘The fundamental business of life is worship. At the root of all your being, your intellectual studies, the games you play, whatever it is, the impulse to do them well is and ought to be understood as being an impulse towards God, the source of all that is excellent. All life ought to be worship; and we know quite well there is no chance it will be worship unless we have times when we have worship and nothing else.’

Archbishop William Temple (1881–1944)

There are many ways in which we might seek to develop our prayer and worship during Lent – including:

- Participating in the Church’s seasonal worship from Ash Wednesday until Easter. You might like to try a service or form of worship that you have not experienced before.

- Establishing or maintaining a routine of using a simple form of prayer at home. You may like to use the 'Time for God' Daily Office used by a number of people at St Laurence – please speak to Susannah if you would like to know more – or to use one of the forms available on the internet, e.g.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-in-daily-prayer>

or

<https://www.pray-as-you-go.org>

- Trying a new form of prayer. You may like to research and try practices such as Lectio Divina (praying with passages of scripture), praying the rosary, using a prayer labyrinth, praying through art, contemplative colouring or other forms of creativity.
- Creating a place to pray in your home – e.g. a dedicated corner or table with particular items for you to use and focus on in prayer.
- Going on a 'prayer walk' – by yourself or with someone else. Notice the people, places and situations around you. Where can you see God at work? Where might his help be needed? Where might he be calling you or others to act?
- This blog <http://sacraparental.com/2014/02/02/sacraparental-lent-with-kids/> offers a prayerful approach to Lent for use which children, using candles in a way similar to the Advent Wreath.

3. Acts of Service

For Christians, love of God and love of neighbour are fundamentally connected. When asked, 'Which commandment in the law is the greatest?' (Matthew 22.36), Jesus responds, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.' Through the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10.25-37) Jesus conveys the idea

that our neighbours are not simply those close at hand, or those like us – they can be anybody. And, in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25) he makes clear that in serving one another we are also serving him.

‘Acts of service’ may constitute many things. Our daily lives can include various ways of serving others – through what we do for friends, family or others in the community, through support for wider campaigns and charities, through paid or voluntary work. In Lent we may like to take up some particular activity or form of support through which we can serve others. For example:

- **Supporting our Lent charity at church – The House of Luhuvilo. More information about the charity can be found in the February/March edition of ‘Gridiron’ – or please speak to Revd Nicky. Support can be offered by making donations, by offering practical help with the Lent lunches, or by organising your own fundraising initiative.**
- **Finding ways – practically or financially – to support another charity.**
- **Doing something to help someone whom you know is having a difficult time.**
- **Taking time to notice where you might be able to be helpful to those whom you meet who are not known to you – even in small ways.**
- **Becoming involved in one of the ongoing ways in which St Laurence seeks to serve the wider community – e.g. transport of Foodbank donations, expressing willingness to offer lifts to those need transport to church, joining the Gardening Squad or Pathsweepers who ensure that the churchyard is a pleasant space, being someone who is happy to welcome people coming to church for baptisms, funerals, weddings, concerts and other events...**
- **Reflecting on the place that ‘acts of service’ have in your life more widely. Where do you serve? Whom do you serve? Is there**

something new that you would like to do, or something that you would like to lay down in order to take something up?

4. Study of God's holy word

In the Bible we find the story of God's relationship with humanity and wider creation, focusing particularly on his relationship with the people of Israel, and then the revelation which he offers to us in Jesus. The Bible contains a wide range of literature in which we find a rich wealth of experiences of life, faith and encounter with God. Though it is grounded in contexts quite different from our own, it remains a source of great wisdom; God's word through which we continue to encounter the living Word, Jesus Christ. Reading the Bible can remind us of God's promises and help us to see where God is at work in our lives.

Engaging with the Bible is helped by reading it regularly, by using materials that can help us to understand it, and by having opportunities to discuss its content with others.

Here are some ideas for engaging with the Bible during Lent:

- The Church of England is offering a resource called *#LiveLent – Let your Light Shine*. This is a Lenten journey through John's Gospel, offering a reading, a prayer and a challenge to action. The booklet can be ordered from Church House Publishing and other bookshops. There will also be daily reflections available through apps – please see the Church of England's website for details.
- You may like to start to read the Bible daily as part of one of the forms of prayer mentioned above (using the 'Time for God' Office, the Church of England's Daily Prayer or Lectio Divina).
- You may like to think about trialling Bible Reading Notes for a year – please contact the Parish Office for more information.
- Another idea could be to read through one of the Gospels during Lent, perhaps with a commentary – Tom Wright's 'For Everyone' series of commentaries provides concise but informative and intelligent insights.

- Children may like to read a story a day from a children's Bible. There are various Bible reading apps for children and young people available online.

In addition to reading the Bible, reading another devotional or theological book during Lent may be helpful. These are two published for this year:

- 'Lent Talks: Preparing for Easter with Radio 4: A collection of broadcasts' – six talks by public figures, originally broadcast on the radio.
- 'Dust that Dreams of Glory: Reflections on Lent and Holy Week' – Michael Mayne. Collected sermons by a profound and prayerful preacher.

For other ideas for spiritual reading, you may like to visit the Parish Library (on the shelves just inside the Parish Office porch) – or please feel free to speak to one of the clergy.

5. Noticing God's presence in the world

Through habits of prayer and reading Scripture, we can become more aware of God's presence in our lives and in the world. There are also other ways in which we can cultivate this awareness:

- Taking time to reflect on each day – what is there to be grateful for? What has gone well? What has been difficult? Where do we need God's help? There is a form of prayer called the Examen which can help with this. For more information, please see: <https://pray-as-you-go.org/prayer-resources/the-examen/> This webpage includes links to forms of the Examen that are suitable for children and young adults. If you do not have internet access, please contact Susannah, who will be happy to supply you with a copy of the Examen.
- Going for a walk – see the 'prayer walk' idea above.
- Noticing where God's work is being done in acts of service or in the quest for peace and justice. You may like to take some time to research an issue of peace and justice – e.g. the plight of

refugees, homelessness – and/or to look at what a particular charity or initiative is doing to address a situation. The PCC are always happy to consider suggestions of charities we might support as 'Charity of the Month'.

- Taking time to appreciate and to explore the many expressions of creativity around us – for example, in art, music, science etc.

6. Welcoming others into the radiant splendour of God's love

Christianity is, first and foremost, a way of life. We are called to respond to God in the whole of our lives – and in doing so, to communicate God's love to others, sharing with them the belief that God's love is greater than everything that is difficult or dark in our lives. Helping others to be aware of God's love is something that we can do both through our participation in the Church and in the rest of our lives. Here are some things to ponder, but you will doubtless be able to think of many more ways in which you communicate God's love to others, or could begin to do so:

- Trying to be welcoming is essential for the Church, and one of the great gifts of the Church is the way that it can bring together a diverse group of people. If you have been part of St Laurence for a while, perhaps Lent can be a time when you purposefully seek to speak to people at church whom you don't already know, stay for coffee if you don't usually, or try sitting in a different place in church or at coffee.
- Consider whether you could offer something to the ministries of the Church that help to welcome and support others, and to provide a place of worship and sanctuary for all – e.g. as a sidesperson/welcomer, making coffee, working with the Adventurers, doing cleaning, arranging flowers, being involved with maintenance, being on the Parochial Church Council...there are many opportunities; please speak to Susannah if you would like to know more.
- Think about how your faith influences your day-to-day life. What are your callings in life? Where do you find meaning and purpose? How do you prioritise them? Is there a calling, in life generally or in the

Church, that you can sense but have not yet answered, or are not sure how to answer? The clergy and Deborah are very happy to speak to anyone who would appreciate a conversation about such matters.

- Is there anyone you know who might be helped by an invitation to a church service, a Lent lunch, the Good Friday children's workshop – or to some other event or activity (in church or elsewhere)?
- How do you share God's love with others in your lives – do you have opportunities to explore and discuss faith with family members, friends, others at church? Would you like to find ways to do this on a regular basis, for their benefit and for your own?
- Is there someone you know who would be helped by an encouraging word, a kind note at a difficult time, an offer of help?

Special services at St Laurence during Lent, Holy Week and Easter

Lent

Ash Wednesday, 14th Feb

**11am Said Mass with ashing
8pm Sung Mass with ashing**

Stations of the Cross

**Fridays in Lent, 7.30pm
16th Feb, 2nd and 16th March – St Joseph's
23rd Feb, 9th and 23rd March – St Laurence**

Taizé Prayer

6.30pm, 18th Feb and 18th March

Celtic Worship

7.30pm, 19th Feb and 5th March

Youth Service

6.30pm, 25th February

Footsteps

9.30am, 26th Feb

Compline

**6.30pm, 4th March (Sung)
11th March (Said)**

Mothing Sunday (11th March) 9.30am Parade Mass

Holy Week and Easter Day

Palm Sunday, 25th March

8.00am Holy Communion

**9.30am Procession, Reading of the Passion, and Sung Parish
Mass**

6.30pm Said Compline

Monday, 26th March

9.30am Footsteps

5.00pm Holy Communion and Address

Tuesday, 27th March

10.30am Holy Communion

5.00pm Evening Prayer and Address

Wednesday, 28th March

11.00am Holy Communion

5.00pm Evening Prayer and Address

Maundy Thursday, 29th March

8.00pm Sung Mass of the Last Supper; Watch until midnight

Good Friday, 30th March

**Morning Ecumenical Walk of Witness followed by service in
Upminster Park (*see Porchtalk for exact times*)**

12-2pm Good Friday meditations

*(If you do not wish to stay for all the meditations, there will be
opportunities to come and go during the hymns)*

2.00pm The Last Hour: Liturgy of Good Friday

12-3pm Young People's Activities in the Main Hall

Easter Eve, 31st March

**8.00pm Easter Vigil (*we read Scripture, kindle the Easter fire,
light the Easter candle and renew our baptismal vows*)**

Easter Day, 1st April

8.00am Holy Communion

9.30am **Procession & Sung Parish Mass**
6.30pm **Festal Evensong, Procession & Benediction**

Eastertide

Celtic Worship **7.30pm, Monday 9th April and 14th May**

Children's Service **3pm, Sunday 22nd April**

Footsteps **9.30am, Monday 30th April**

Choral Evensong **6.30pm, Sunday 6th May**

Ascension Day **8.00pm, Thursday 10th May**

Pentecost **Sunday 20th May (usual Mass times and
Taizé at 6.30pm)**

**Wishing you a holy Lent, a prayerful Holy Week and a joyful
Easter...**