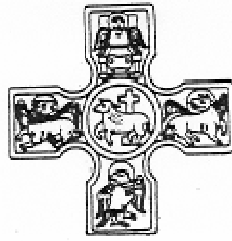


# How to observe Lent?



## **From the Introduction to the Order of Service for Ash Wednesday**

“Sisters and brothers in Christ since early days Christians have observed with great devotion the time of our Lord's passion and resurrection. It became the custom of the church to prepare for this by a season of prayer, penitence and fasting.

At first this season of Lent was observed by those who were preparing for Baptism at Easter and by those who were to be restored to the church's fellowship from which they had been separated through sin.

In course of time the Church came to recognise that, by careful keeping of these days, all Christians might take to heart the call to repentance and the assurance of forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel, and so grow in faith and devotion to our Lord.

I invite you therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy word.”

## **From these introductory words, we may see the reason for and nature of Lenten observance.**

1. It is for all Christians
2. It is preparation for observing Holy Week and celebrating Easter more fully
3. It is about growing in faith and devotion

These are achieved by

- a) deliberate acts of assessment of our state of spiritual health
- b) expressions of repentance for our short-comings
- c) prayers
- d) self-denial
- e) attention to studying God's word.

## **What have we done in the past?**

1. Whole parish study groups of about 6 people based on published material or internally-generated material. In reality no more than 40 or so people ever took advantage of what was on offer. The quality of the material and the leadership are key issues for success. We ought to be offering advance training, etc... in a perfect world!
2. Individuals followed agreed reading or study paths, associated with prayers and worship, sometime based on published material and sometimes produced by Neil or someone else. There is often a recommended book for Lent available in the bookshops.
3. Lent Lunches- a series of 6 Saturday lunches with a theme each week aimed at enhances our knowledge of the faith, or some area of creativity, sometimes with a practical session. e.g. art, poetry, music and aspects of Bible study.

4. Lenten Charity. The lunches generate a profit which is then applied to a charitable cause. The self-denial element should generate savings which are given away.
5. Sunday sermons linked to the biblical material and related to the mid-week discussion/study groups.
6. Diocese level events such as things at St. Paul's Cathedral have sometimes attracted interest.
7. Prayers at home- a leaflet has been produced for use at home during Lent to link home and church worship. The Order was aimed at Saturday evening, perhaps before a meal, and rehearsed the Gospel for the next day as part of a short ceremony.
8. Members of the congregation have been reminded that they are at liberty to take advantage of the Mid-week worship as part of their Lenten observance. The element of repentance can be found here and in some cases, confession may be appropriate.
9. Stations of the Cross and Banners of the Passion have been used for devotional purposes.
10. Lent Partners- people choose to have a partner and they talk to each other about what they have been reading, or what path they are following, and encourage each other to keep Lent well.
11. Compline- a series of Compline services has been well-attended during Holy Week.



### **What shall we do in 2006?**

The PCC Education Committee is recommending that for 2006, we have a whole-parish approach backed up by a chance to follow individual paths.

#### Basics-

1. an attempt to form study groups with those wishing to participate
2. a study pack which will interest modern people- linked to Sunday sermons
3. some provision for individual paths
4. Lent Lunches which are linked to our charity for this year- not yet decided.

We could also try and stimulate some creativity by asking people to prepare their own reflections of the Stations of the Cross and the Banners of the Passion and use these towards the end of Lent. We might be able to publish these in Magna in due course.

More details will follow during February.

Neil Richardson  
on behalf of the PCC Education Committee