

Lent and Lockdown...



Traditionally, Lent is seen as a time of abstinence, reflection and self-examination in preparation for Easter - when we recall the death and resurrection of Jesus, the hope for us of eternal life.

Lent is also a reminder to us of Jesus' own time of self-denial in the wilderness, after his baptism. When Christians give up something like chocolate or alcohol, it's not just because "this is what you do in Lent", but to show God that we take our journey of faith seriously. Lent can be an opportunity to establish or re-establish worthwhile habits of prayer and reflection. Or it can be seen as a time to review our own personal priorities.

Having said all this, some of us may feel that in the past year we have been in some sort of wilderness. We have given up so much in order to observe the lockdown and keep one another safe, that it seems like just too much for us to give up anything else - and that's perfectly understandable. As someone recently said, "we have all been



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Living in a kind of lent for the past year". We may wish to "do Lent" differently this year.

So, you might like to look at the ideas on the "Lent in Lockdown" sheet accompanying this newsletter - these don't involve giving anything up (other than some of our time).

Whichever way we choose to spend Lent this year, may it be a time which enables us to draw ever closer to God our Heavenly Father, the One who knows and loves us all, and who walks with us in the good times and the bad times.

God bless
Mary Bradley



A Prayer of hope for those we have lost and are missing from our churches...

Jesus, the hope of all who trust you;
the power of all who serve you;
the wisdom of all who follow you;
the uniter of all who worship you.
Grant us light at the beginning of this year;

Fill us with strength and boldness
according to your promises,
That we might reach our needy nation, with
your love, in this season of Hope.
We humbly acknowledge our weakness
and failure,
But our eyes are fixed on you.
Fulfil your purposes and plans that your
name may be honoured in our land.
In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.



Thank you!

Many thanks go to all who give their time in working hard “behind the scenes” to enable the work and witness of St James’, St Richard’s and St Paul’s congregations to continue, including those who do the cleaning, gardening, flower arranging, admin, building maintenance and those who run the Foodbank and Saturday night meals.

Happy 100th Birthday Irene Downes

On behalf of the parish a card and flowers will be delivered to her by 18th February in celebration of her surviving covid to reach this grand old age!

Giving and stewardship

if anyone would like to donate what they would have put in collections, that would be very welcome, as we have not been able to pay any share at all as yet this year. Please give our treasurer Joanne a ring on 07775 908146 or drop her an email and she will advise you. Email:

joanne.shaw4@ntlworld.com

An update from Neil

So what has been happening at the Centre of Mission, well loads!!! Just prior to Christmas, I have helped deliver one of the modules for the GCSE to Year Group 10 on War and Religion. To be able to speak to a full year group is amazing. This has really enhanced my relationship with the Yr 10's. I am hoping to deliver part of the 'Mission and Evangelism' module to the Yr 11's but it is down to time constraints and Covid. I am still called upon to deliver food parcels for the school when asked to do so, as well as laptops and checking in on the vulnerable pupils. We are continuing to build up a prayer base for the Centre of Mission by doing a Prayer and Praise service once per month. We have secured more funding for the Youth Club for when we are able to open. This is £1700 which is fantastic. I want to ask the young people what they want to spend it on, this fits into the ethos of 'By Young People for Young People' and to increase their sense of ownership. Volunteer training has had to be put on hold at present due to Covid but will be on as soon as we are able. We Launched a new series on YouTube called 'Sniper Talk', this was on the back of speaking to the year 10's – but as school closure not been able to speak to them about it properly yet. Been really good got lots of views and positive comments. The link to the latest one is here [SYC Sniper Talk 4 - YouTube](#)

Every blessing in Christ.

Neil Obbard



A prayer for our world, our nation, our community & ourselves

Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy in this time of uncertainty and distress. Sustain and support the anxious and fearful and lift up all who are brought low; that we may rejoice in your comfort, knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

Food Bank/Saturday Meal

We continue to be busy each Tuesday even in the heavy snow when even the Food Bank Delivery van couldn't get through! In January we fed approximately 421 people (336 adults and 85 children). In this cold weather we have also been handing out woolen hats and gloves. We open every Tuesday morning from 9am to accept any food donations and deliveries and are open for customers from 12.30 to 2.30pm.

Every Saturday from 6.30pm to 7pm. In January approximately 151 two course takeaway meals were handed out. Despite the snow and very cold weather, people still queued up for a much needed hot meal.

Lis Bows