



Hello everyone,

I can't believe I'm saying this, but Lent begins next week! It doesn't seem possible that it was last Lent that we were hearing the first murmurings of the new virus that had made its way to Britain and were being encouraged to sing Happy Birthday whilst we washed our hands. The months following have been hard and long, and at times have felt overwhelming. And so, as we turn our thoughts towards Lent, we want to offer a slightly different mindset to previous years where the emphasis has been on giving up or going without. This year, let's focus on the hope and light of Easter, that we KNOW will come at the end of the Lenten journey; we know this with all certainty because Jesus is Alive! This year, as the Church of England Lent material invites us, let's Love Lent and Live Lent.

Please find enclosed some materials to help you Love Lent and Live Lent:

- A short service with some liturgy from the Ash Wednesday service if you would like to mark the start of Lent in this way.
- The Church of England's Prayer for the Nation resource, which gives daily prayer themes as the Archbishops invite everyone to join with them in prayer at 6pm every day during Lent to pray for our nation.
- A Live Lent calendar, which gives suggestions for different activities that might help you to Love Lent and Live Lent this year, and to connect with others.
- A small wooden heart, as this Sunday is St Valentine's Day; a reminder that you are loved by God and loved by your church family.

If you haven't already let us know whether the following would be helpful, please do give the office a ring on a Tuesday or Thursday between 10.30am and 2pm to indicate that you would like this resource; we are developing a phone-in service, and a dvd of services for those that would like them.

I received this email today: "I ventured out with the dog earlier and we couldn't wait to return home. The bitter cold with swirls of snow and hail and a biting wind sent us scurrying for warmth. The beauty of nature even at the chilliest of times prevails, and the cheer of seeing the hardy snowdrop is something to be shared." If you see snowdrops or daffodils this week, you might like to remember that beauty of nature, and that Paul, in his letter to the Philippians says: "Do not be anxious about anything. Instead, in every situation, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, tell your requests to God. And the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7)

We know that for many of you the uncertainty and anxiety about lockdown restrictions and health continues. We want to continue to remind you that we are here for you. If you need a chat, prayer, or some practical help then do reach out – either by phoning 01432 273086 or by contacting your Pastoral Coordinator.

We hope these resources help you feel connected as we worship as a scattered Church. Please be assured that you are not forgotten and that you are remembered in our prayers.

God Bless,

Ruth and Jo