**Collective Worship**

**Inclusive Invitational Inspirational**

**Lent, Holy Week and Easter**

Lent is the period of 40 days before Easter in the Christian calendar; it is a time of reflection for many Christians as they prepare to remember and celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Churches use the liturgical colour of purple to signify the season of Lent and change to white, yellow or gold to show the celebration of Easter. The date of Easter changes as, in the western calendar, Easter Sunday must fall on the first full moon after the Spring equinox.

**What is Lent?**

For some, Lent is a 40 day period of giving up things like chocolate, coffee, sugar or something else after Shrove Tuesday. Traditionally, it’s seen as a time in which to reflect upon the life and death of Jesus. The season of Lent is one which is marked by many people around the world.

The arrival of Lent is heralded by pancakes. **Shrove Tuesday** is traditionally a day of preparation before the season of Lent begins. The 40 days of Lent represent the [40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%204%3A1-13) at the start of his ministry, after being baptised by John (Matthew 4:1-11). Jesus fasted during his time in the wilderness, and so some Christians identify with his suffering by abstaining from particular foods during this time, including meat, fish, milk and egg products. The recipe for [pancakes](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-you-can-do/fundraising-and-events/easy-peasy-pancakes) is great for using up milk and eggs before giving up these things. You may like to host a fundraising ‘pancake party’ in your school <https://www.cuf.org.uk/the-big-pancake-party/bpp-about>

Shrove Tuesday gets its name from the ritual of ‘shriving’. This 1,000 year old practice involves a person confessing their mistakes, and receiving absolution for them before Lent begins.

**Starting Lent**

Lent begins on **Ash Wednesday**, a day of penitence or cleansing of the soul. Many Christians will attend Lent services, and be marked with a cross of ashes on their forehead. Traditionally, the ashes come from burning the previous year’s palm crosses. The ash cross is a sign of mortality, based upon the idea from the book of Genesis that humankind came into the world from

dust and will return to it. It is a time to express sorrow over sin, and a reminder that Jesus brings freedom from sin. <https://www.barnabasinschools.org.uk/idea/ash-cross>

[**Mothering Sunday**](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-you-can-do/your-church/pray-worship-reflect/worship/mothering-sunday) occurs on the fourth Sunday of Lent, which many use as an opportunity to celebrate mothers, but also all who care for us. Mothering Sunday is thought to originate from the time when individuals returned to their mother church, typically a main church or cathedral of the area. It further developed when servants were allowed Mothering Sunday off to return home to their mother church and would often take a rare opportunity to see family.

Being sensitive to the needs and circumstances of your children, if you wish to introduce Mothering Sunday during your worship time during Lent, the following websites have ideas to use:

Design the perfect Mum <http://www.elyeducation.org/main/?page_id=1896>

Mary the mother of Jesus <http://www.elyeducation.org/main/?page_id=1768>

Alternatively this could form part of your Celebration Worship.



**Holy Week**

Lent culminates in Holy Week. Holy Week begins with **Palm Sunday**, (John 12:12-17) a day which commemorates Jesus’ triumphant procession into Jerusalem on a donkey. In many churches, the congregation is given palm crosses, whilst others wave palm branches. Occasionally a donkey is paraded near (or even in!) a church.

Jesus’ visit to the temple has been used to explore the concept of ‘righteous anger’.

The Thursday before Easter is Holy Thursday, or **Maundy Thursday**. It is a reminder of the last meal Jesus ate with his disciples, washing their feet and leading them in the meal which is now remebered in the celebration of the Eucharist/Holy Communion (John 13:6-11). He foretold his death; drawing a direct parallel between the bread and his body, and the wine and his blood (Luke 22:19-20). Later on, one of Jesus’ disciples Judas betrayed Jesus to the Roman authorities. The following day is Good Friday, a day commemorating Jesus’ death on the cross (Matthew 27:32-56). It is a day of mourning, when the suffering and pain of Christ is remembered. The service on this day in churches provides Christians with an opportunity for solemn reflection.

**Easter Sunday**

On Easter Sunday, the Church celebrates Jesus' resurrection. Fasts are finished, chocolate Easter eggs consumed, and the resurrection foreshadows the renewal of creation. Good Friday is so called because the death of Christ led to the resurrection, which brought new life to those who believe. Good Friday challenges mere human goodness – it is the nature of Jesus’ sacrifice that overcomes the weakness of humanity. Some churches will light a paschal candle to represent the eternal presence of Jesus, as he rises from the dead. Some churches decorate a cross with fresh flowers to signify new life, new hope and the coming of Spring. Families gather to celebrate, traditionally sharing meals of roast lamb and simnel cake, similar to the fruit cake eaten at Christmas. Simnel cake has eleven balls/eggs of marzipan that represent the disciples minus Judas. Hot cross buns, a bread rich in fruit, eggs and sugar with a cross on top have become popular through the Easter season.

Easter eggs are rich in symbolism for some Christians. Many link the empty chocolate egg to the empty tomb. The sweet treat of chocolate celebrates the end of the time of fasting during Lent. Traditional Ukrainian Easter egg decorating (Pysanky) uses colours and symbols to share the Easter story. Over 2000 years ago, before the time of Christ, people decorated eggs believing that great powers were embodied in the egg. Eggs symbolised the release of the earth from winter and the coming of spring with its promise of new hope, new life and prosperity. Within Christianity, Easter eggs are reminders of the resurrection of Jesus and a promise of eternal life. Legend has it that as long as pysanky eggs are decorated, goodness will prevail over evil throughout the world.

The story of Lent for Christians is one of sadness and joy; a story which is still celebrated in diverse ways throughout the world today.