

A Lent Challenge from Bishop Stephen and Bishop David

“..let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith...”

Hebrews chp 12 vss 1f

In this Olympic year we shall be doing a lot of talking about races won and lost, about amazing feats of endurance and yes, disappointments too, and no doubt we shall be counting medals and labelling people according to their performance.

The Bible often talks of the Christian life as a race, but not a race with a few winners and a lot of losers, it speaks of a race in which everyone who perseveres claims a crown—the race of faith is not about beating other people, it is about *personal commitment*.

It is with this in mind that Bishop Stephen and Bishop David are challenging schools to observe Lent this year in a focussed way. The booklet maps out a route through Lent for you, but the decisions on the “how” and the “who” lies with individual schools and the degree to which you wish to commit to the challenge.

Read on to discover how the Lenten challenge works out in practice:

A Weekly Challenge

There are six weeks worth of challenges in this booklet covering the weeks of Lent which fall in the school term; each week has a different theme such as “your school neighbour” or “the environment”. Examples are given to illustrate the kind of challenge schools could undertake in the different weeks—but these are examples only, the school can just as easily devise its own challenge to perform. In fact, we recommend that you involve the School Council in working out the challenges—they are sure to have a wealth of creative ideas!

When you have completed the challenge we ask you to grade your effort as worthy of a bronze, silver or gold award. There is a simple grid to help you do this which is based not on the action per se, but on the *commitment* that it took to complete it. It is thus perfectly possible that two schools might undertake very similar tasks, for example, but rightly grade themselves differently using the grid.

Challenges can be carried out by any grouping of pupils—a class, a key stage, a whole school, even an after school club or breakfast club. Different groupings could undertake the challenges in different weeks on the whole school’s behalf.

Schools are asked to make a contemporaneous (brief) record of their challenges and e-mail them into the Diocesan Office

(shirley.hall@ely.anglican.org) as we shall be putting them up on line on the Stir-up website - do send us a photograph too if you can! The notes can be written up by the children—would your School Council like to appoint a “challenge news team” to take on this task?

You will find on the Stir-up site that each school will have its own record page, so you can check out what other schools are doing , or your families can check up on your progress. We shall also be running a blog as a way of sharing some of your ideas and inspiring each other—this can also be accessed through the Stir-up site.

See www.stir-up.org.uk/lent.html

Would you like a weekly certificate?

Many schools have an achievement assembly on a Friday and if you would like a certificate at the end of each week to share with the children, and to show you have completed a challenge, then send an e-mail to Karen Pritchard at resources.centre@ely.anglican.org on Thursday for one to be e-mailed to you. Remember to tell Karen at what level you have graded the challenge.

Do we have to do follow each theme in the week designated?

Three of the challenge titles are date specific, but the challenges to do with school neighbours, the natural environment, and with the world, may be interchanged if this makes arrangements easier for you in school. Remember to mention you have done this if you send in for a weekly certificate!

We recommend you take time to map out your route through the booklet before Lent begins as some challenges are likely to need more planning than others.

Collective Worship

Although the challenges are very practical, it is important that the children's Lenten experience is grounded in worship and prayer. The new worship website www.worshipworkshop.org.uk is a helpful resource for crafting acts of worship with a Lent focus. A group of children could use this website to create and lead an act of worship (with a little help)..... and this could even count as one of the challenges if you wished.

Powerpoint outlines of possible acts of collective worship to introduce the challenge each week can be found on-line at: **www.stir-up.org.uk/lent.html**

The Bible references for the message of these acts of worship are:

- Lent begins—Jesus in the Wilderness / the Temptations—Matthew chapter 4 verses 1-11, Luke chapter 4 verses 1-13
- School Neighbours— the wise and foolish builders— Matthew chapter 7 verses 24-27
- Natural environment –Creation—Genesis chapters 1 & 2
- Families—being part of one “body” - I Corinthians chapter 12 verses 14-26
- The world—Good Samaritan— Luke chapter 10 verses 25-37
- Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter

The powerpoints are broad worship outlines only and will need to be adapted by the worship leaders as appropriate.

When Lent is over.....

Check out your Stir-up web page to make sure that we have received news about all six of your challenges—it is not too late to send in missing information if something has gone adrift.

As long as you have sent in your notes for all six weeks of Lent including, importantly, your bronze, silver or gold assessment for each one, you will receive your Lenten challenge award after Easter.

Reminder of contact details:

To sign up for the challenge e-mail Shirley Hall on **shirley.hall@ely.anglican.org** — news items about your weekly challenge should also be sent to Shirley to go up on the Stir-up website at **www.stir-up.org.uk/lent.html**

If you would like a weekly certificate to show you have completed a challenge contact Karen Pritchard on **resources.centre@ely.anglican.org** Karen will also be running the Lent Challenge blog.

Lent begins

Thinking about the meaning of Lent

Shrove Tuesday : 21st February

Ash Wednesday: 22nd February

“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And he fasted forty days and forty nights...”

Matthew chp 4 vss1f

Lent is an important preparation for Easter. The celebration of Easter – the resurrection of Jesus – is the most important festival of the Christian Year; Christians need to be spiritually prepared for this event by renouncing their sins and demonstrating their penitence through physical and spiritual disciplines. *For more information about Lent and some of the ideas below see Appendix A on page 16.*

What shall we do?

The aim of this week’s challenge is to do something which will bring Lent to the attention of the whole school community (and beyond!), for example you could:

- Create a display in your school entrance hall or assembly hall explaining Lent to visitors
- Create a calendar for each classroom to count the forty days of Lent
- If you have an electronic rolling photo frame in the foyer you could create a display composed of Lenten images
- Or....?

We have decided our Lent challenge is :

Was this a bronze, silver or gold challenge? Use the grid below to help you decide on the level of commitment required:

	Bronze	Silver	Gold
How many people were involved?	Less than one class	One or more classes	The whole school
How much time did it take to do the challenge?	A few minutes	More than half an hour	More than an hour
How much preparation time was there?	Very little preparation time was needed	Some things had to be done in advance	We spent a lot of time organising this

We agree that this was a bronze / silver / gold challenge

Now let's share our news.....

Send in your news, and a photograph if possible, to shirley.hall@ely.anglican.org - don't forget to tell us whether it was a bronze, silver or gold challenge. Your news will go up on-line at www.stir-up.org.uk/lent.html



Week beginning 27th February

Remember your School Neighbours

“Everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.”

Matthew chp 7 vs 24

The parable of the wise and foolish builders is all about building one's life on the solid ground of faith in Christ, but it is also a story which can help us think about community and ask the question “What is the rock our school community is built upon?”

What shall we do?

This week we are thinking about the people in our own immediate community and how we relate to them and can support them. This may mean building relationships in school, or relating to your immediate neighbours e.g.

- How well does everyone know the school governors? Invite as many school governors as possible to join you for collective worship this week.
- At lunch time every day of this week people sit with someone they don't know very well (including the staff) *and talk to them.*
- At least one class in the school undertakes a neighbourhood prayer walk around the school grounds. *See Appendix B on how to organise a prayer walk*
- The oldest children work with the youngest e.g. reading stories
- The choir visits a residential home
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Week beginning 5th March

Remember the Natural Environment

“God saw everything that he had made, and indeed it was very good.”

Genesis chp 1 vs 31

This week we think about giving thanks to God by joining with Him in the work of preserving Creation.

What shall we do?

This is an environmental challenge and you may choose to link it with work already been done with Eco Schools or similar initiatives. Examples could include:

- Planting some flowers or seeds where other people will appreciate them.
- Tidying up the school’s natural environment by picking up litter, weeding etc.
- Is a class brave enough to spend a day without using any electricity in their room (heating and overhead lighting excepted)?
- Creating a wild garden or reflective garden
- Or.....?

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Week beginning 12th March Mothering Sunday is 18th March

Remember your Families

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.”

I Corinthians chp 12 vs 12

Paul wrote to the Corinthians about how the different members of the church community had different roles, but everyone was of value - this is just as true of any family, and so it is an especially appropriate message for one of the great family days—Mothering Sunday.

Mothering Sunday is seen as the mid point of Lent. Traditionally it is the day on which servants were allowed home to visit their families—returning not only to their mothers but to their “mother church” i.e. the church where their family normally worshipped. The day is now more popularly known as Mothers’ Day and has become a celebration of family life.

What shall we do?

Challenges could be based on either “Mothers’ Day” or “Mothering Sunday” e.g.:

- Write thank you letters to your parents and carers for all that they do for you
- Create Mothering Sunday cards to be given out to the congregations at your local church(es) this Sunday (i.e. cards which recognise the family link between church and school)
- Find out about the saint(s) to whom your local mother church / parish church is dedicated and create an attractive display for your school entrance hall or for the church itself (See Appendix C)
- Focus on stories of famous mothers in your collective worship this week (and can the pupils lead the worship?)
- *Or....?*

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Week beginning 19th March

Remember the World

“And who is my neighbour?”

Luke chp 10 vs 29

The answer to the question above is effectively “everyone” - it comes from the story of the Good Samaritan and the call is to act as a true neighbour, even to your enemies. As a result, this week we remember the joys and sorrows of our neighbours around the world. If you are using the on-line powerpoints in your collective worship this links particularly with the call and response which closes the worship : “Go in peace to discover God’s world and your place in it.”

What shall we do?

Anything which focuses on the needs of other people outside of the UK is appropriate to this challenge e.g:

- Learn how to greet people in different languages—you could use a different greeting in the classrooms or assembly for each day of the week. (There’s a helpful website for this at <http://www.omniglot.com/language/phrases/hello.htm>)
- Use a newspaper / news bulletins to pray for world issues in collective worship every day of this week. Pupils select the issues and, where possible, lead the prayers. (See Appendix D)
- Undertake a fund raising event which supports families elsewhere in the world
- Do you already have a link with a school abroad? Do something to build on that link this week.
- Or.....

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Week beginning 26th March

Term ends 30th March

Palm Sunday is 1st April

Easter Day is 8th April

It is the last week of term—how can we best prepare for Easter?

What shall we do?

(See Appendix E)

- Learn a new hymn for use in your end of term Easter Service.
- Create a traditional Easter Garden
- Delay your Easter Service until after your return to school for the Summer Term —instead hold a Holy Week celebration (e.g. a Palm Sunday walk of witness or a Maundy Sunday foot washing) to end the term.
- Perform an Easter Play
- Discover how Easter is celebrated in other countries and decide how to share this information
- Or.....?

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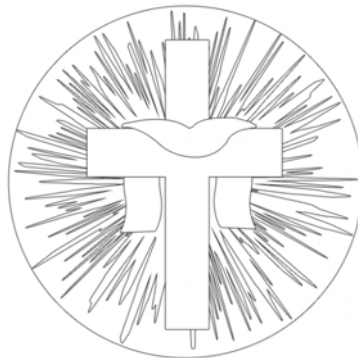
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Appendix A

About Lent

- Lent is a six-week (40 day) fasting period beginning on Ash Wednesday and concluding with Easter. Traditionally Sundays are not included in the fast. It is a time of penitence and preparation and is linked to the forty days Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness. (Matthew chapter 4 verses 1-11, Luke chapter 4 verses 1-13)
- The day before Lent is Shrove Tuesday – its name comes from the custom of “shriving” (confessing) one’s sins and receiving a penance to complete over Lent.
- The fourth Sunday of Lent is Mothering Sunday when one traditionally returns to one’s “mother church” and servants visited their mothers.
- Whilst often neither observing a strict fast, nor following a rigorous regime of abstinence, many Christians use the opportunity of Lent to “give up” certain foods or observe a stronger spiritual discipline (e.g. Lent Bible Study Groups). This is frequently associated with the giving of money to particular charities which will launch “Lent Appeals”. Lent is thus a time for: spiritual self-examination and penitence; fasting and self-denial; prayer; resisting temptation; self-sacrifice; new beginnings and making a fresh start; new challenges. The Lenten Challenge reflects some of these traditional disciplines.

Lenten customs include:

- In the churches - vestments, altar cloths etc are purple, the colour of penitence and preparation. There will be no flowers.
- Shrove Tuesday is traditionally a time for feasting and eating up fats and delicacies in the form of pancakes – this includes the fun of pancake races, and in some countries colourful Mardi Gras street processions.
- Ash Wednesday includes a service of imposition of ashes when the congregation are marked with ash made from burning last year’s palm crosses.
- Mothering Sunday has been overtaken by a more secular “Mothers Day”, but the traditional gift for mothers – simnel cake – is still made.
- Nowadays the Church only recommends a strict fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

Note: the name "Lent" has nothing to do with the Christian story, but is an ancient variant of "lengthen" to remind us of the lengthening Spring days.

Things which could be included in a **Lenten display** are:

- a purple backdrop or drape as this is the traditional colour for the seasons of preparation in the Church calendar, and Lent is a preparation time for Easter
- An interactive section where people can leave (anonymous) notes on things they are doing for Lent, or things they are sorry for or are thinking about and praying for.
- Information about Lent researched by pupils—look at <http://www.reonline.org.uk/ks2/topiclist.php> to find some of the most useful on-line resources and ideas
- Bishop Stephen's and Bishop David's Lent message and challenge to schools
- Information about what your local church(es) are doing during Lent

Your Lenten calendars can count up or down the forty days of Lent. Remember that Sundays do not count as part of Lent proper as Sundays are always a day of celebration in the Church, so if you are laying the calendar out by weeks there will be six days in the week! The calendars could take different forms and you may like to invite each child to make their own Lent calendar, rather like an Advent Calendar. As the last week of Lent is Holy Week, when the children will not be in school, individual calendars could be taken home.

Your Lenten calendar could be made by:

- If you google "Lenten calendar" images you will find several examples of simple calendars to inspire you, many in block shapes or designed to follow a road—the road to Jerusalem. Some of these have suggestions for other tasks which could be performed each day.
- You could set up a calendar on your interactive whiteboard
- You could mark up a large candle and burn a section each day
- You could string a "fishing net" up in your classroom and add a purple fish for each day of Lent! The fish is an important Christian symbol as the Greek word for fish—*ichthus*— is a mnemonic for "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour".



Appendix B

A **prayer walk** is when someone stops at various points on a walk to pray for people in that neighbourhood. This may mean, for example, praying for groups such as:

- The elderly people of the community and their needs
- The unemployed
- Local retailers or industry
- The local church community
- Other schools and playgroups
- Activities for young people in the neighbourhood e.g. clubs
- Community activities
- The sick and the local surgery

By focusing on the wider community the prayer walk could include countries in the geographical direction the class is facing and their particular needs, or, alternatively, particular areas of our own country.

To set up a prayer walk the class concerned can use their local knowledge and a map of your area to help them identify four or five groups within the community to pray for. They then plan a circuit of the school grounds picking out spots where they will stop to pray—here they can face the direction of those they are praying for. Who or what are they facing and should be praying about? What would God want them to pray about for these people and their needs? Is there someone or something to give thanks for? Should you simply say a blessing at each place? Prayers could be prepared in advance for the walk or delivered extempore.

The prayer walk could be the act of collective worship for that day for these pupils.

Appendix C

The purpose of the church dedication display is to celebrate the partnership between the church and the school, and to explore the idea of a “**mother church**” . As you explore the life of the saint(s) discuss together what we can learn from their example and faith and share these ideas in the display.

There are several online dictionaries of saints' symbols e.g.: http://www.illuminatedink.com/saint_symbols/ or http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_symbolism Websites with summaries of saints' lives include: <http://www.catholic.org/saints/faq.php> and <http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/ncdsaints.htm>

It would be especially good if members of the church community were able to join the children in school as they work on the display and discuss their findings with them. Is this possible?

Appendix D

If you take up the **prayer challenge** this will take some preparation, but this is a good opportunity to encourage pupils to take an active role in leading worship.

Parents will need to be told that their children will be especially interested in the news as they will be able to support this interest or, if necessary, carefully limit the viewing of younger children (depending on what the news may be this week). This could be carried forward in a variety of ways e.g.:

- The news issues are the main theme of the collective worship and the children are invited to respond with ideas for prayer or extempore prayers
- A prayer tree is set up and pupils are asked to look at the news and leave ideas for prayers
- A pupil worship group is given the task of writing the prayers this week (with adult support). This may be a task you would like to offer to your school council, or to some pupils from the top class.

Appendix E

Learn a new hymn - “New” in this case means “new to the school”, not necessarily brand new—in fact you may like to learn one of the traditional Easter hymns. As you might expect, there are numerous traditional Easter hymns, many of which are used infrequently, - one website which includes both words and music downloads for you to explore is <http://www.hymnlyrics.org/easterhymns.html> and there is of course also www.worshipworkshop.org.uk but our best advice is to first ask your local church what they will be singing this Easter.

Easter Gardens—This could be one large garden for the hall or smaller gardens for each classroom. An Easter Garden can be any size—for example it could be made on a tray. If you make a large garden more children can be involved in its creation. A traditional Easter Garden has two distinct halves. One half portrays the story of Good Friday with a hill and three crosses set in a bare landscape. The second half portrays Easter Day with the empty tomb and stone rolled away set in a landscape of greenery and flowers. The contrasting halves tell the story of the darkness and devastation of the crucifixion of Jesus, and the light and celebration of the resurrection. Instructions on making Easter Gardens can be found in many places including [http:// www.just4kidsmagazine.com/rainbowcastle/](http://www.just4kidsmagazine.com/rainbowcastle/)

[eastergarden.html](#) or http://www.ely.anglican.org/education/schools/collective_worship/pdf/HowtomakeanEasterGarden.pdf see also <http://www.refuel.org.uk/beliefres/easter-garden/>

The Easter Service suggestion: This challenge suggestion may surprise you as it is traditional to end the Spring Term with an Easter Service, but of course it is still Lent (check your Lenten calendar!) and Easter Sunday falls half way through the school holiday. Dare you stay in step with the Church and maintain Lent? Now that is a real challenge!

Alternative end of term church services could include variations of the popular Holy Week services e.g. a walk of witness to the church with "palms" or palm crosses. In this scenario the first act of collective worship of the new term would then be an Easter celebration, which may or may not be a second church service. An alternative scenario would be to end the Spring Term with an act of collective worship telling the Holy Week story, and then have your traditional Easter Service in church during the first week of the Summer Term.