

February 2026 Lent – Draw Near

This year Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, is on Wednesday 18th February. I'm guessing that many people know that Lent is 40 days long, and comes before Easter. But what Lent is all about may be a mystery, and certainly means different things for different people.

I remember growing up knowing that Lent was a time when you gave things up, without really knowing why, and mostly seeing Lent as an opportunity to kick-start again those New Year resolutions that had fallen by the wayside. I still remember my confusion when I discovered that Lent is only 40 days long if you don't count the Sundays, because some people believed that you shouldn't give things up on Sundays, which to my teenage self felt like cheating!

As I gradually discovered more about the Christian faith that I claimed for my own as a teenager, I learned that the Christian Church understands Lent as a period of reflection on our faith, a time of reflecting on how well the way we live actually reflects the values we believe in. So while giving up things that are self-indulgent or that distract us from the most important things in life might be part of Lent, it doesn't have to be. Modern churches are far more likely to focus on the reason behind Lent, and to encourage people to focus on things that help us to live in a way that reflects God's values of love and care and justice.

This year the Church of England is encouraging people to share together some resources called 'Draw Near.' Throughout the six weeks of Lent, these resources help people to focus on values and activities that are important to living as a Christian; sharing worship, sharing prayer, sharing the Scriptures, sharing Communion, sharing service and sharing the Good News. There are '40 acts' activities for individuals and families to share throughout Lent to help a focus on 'Doing Lent Generously.' For example, on Ash Wednesday we are encouraged to 'Make a helping hands poster by tracing your hand on paper and writing or drawing five ways you could help someone this week. Colour in a finger each time you achieve one.' I know that I am looking forward to this year's Lent focus on the simple things that we can all do to help us live well with one another, to help us build Christ-like communities of caring, and I am looking forward to the activities!

So this year, I invite you to do two things; I invite you to consider joining me in using these resources, and I invite you to find someone else who is also 'keeping Lent' – either using these resources or some other way, and to talk together about what Lent means to you. And my prayer is that God will bless us through all that we do this year to 'Do Lent Generously,' and will use our thoughts and our prayers and our actions to bless others.

Yours in Christ,
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Church of England Draw Near: Life-giving habits for Lent

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