

Rachel writes . . .

As I write this it is almost a year since I was licensed to our 6 parishes as your Priest in Charge. While I feel I am still learning about how each parish does things, and getting to know you all, I feel that we have all made a good start together. I hope you do too. It is lovely to see people attending services in another parish when their home parish doesn't have a service, and to see events in each parish attract support from across the other parishes.

The first month to have 5 Sundays this year will be March, but since that is Palm Sunday there won't be a joint service. A normal Sunday pattern will be maintained. However, we will all soon have a time to gather together, because on Sunday after Easter, known as Low Sunday, April 12th, Bishop Libby will be visiting Christ Church, and that service will be the only one in our 6 parishes that morning. I hope as many of you as possible will gather to worship with our Bishop, and to share fellowship with each other afterwards.

Lent begins this year on February 18th. There will be the usual midweek service at Christ Church that morning, with the addition of the Imposition of Ashes for Ash Wednesday. Please come along if you would like to mark the start of Lent in that way. The following week we shall start our Lent course on Wednesdays at 10:15am at Christ Church, and on Zoom on Thursday evenings at 7pm. Please see the bulletin for further details.

When I was at secondary school, something compelled me to give something up for Lent every year, even though my family didn't go to church often. The first year I gave up chocolate, and ate a lot of salted peanuts, so the following year I gave up both chocolate and salted peanuts. Each year I found a loophole for myself, and the following year added that loophole to the things I was giving up. To be honest, it wasn't much about faith, and more about just giving something up.

These days, as I approach Lent, I still often choose something to give up, but more as a way of reminding myself that it's Lent, rather than challenging myself to endure the absence of something I enjoy. I find it more worthwhile to add something to my life - a little more time in prayer, a conscious increase in giving to a charity, or choosing a Lent book to read.

Within our churches there are opportunities for study and for giving, as well as needs in our communities. We are also starting a bookstall at Christ Church which will be available every day if you'd like to pop in to pick up a book (more details in the monthly bulletin).

Lent is a wonderful gift of time to wait and prepare for Holy Week and Easter. Whatever you choose to do, and however you choose to observe Lent as a separate season, I wish you joy and blessings in your endeavours.

Blessings,

Rachel CJN