



LENT

15th February 2021

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Greetings to you as we approach the holy season of Lent.

Lent is a season in the Christian year that is often regarded as a means for us to draw closer to God and how we live our lives as Christians – both as individuals and as a community of faith. We are reminded, in one sense, that Jesus has given us a new normal way to live. In Lent we consider, perhaps in a more disciplined way, how that can be achieved. Some folk look at what can be given up for Lent to create more space to spend with God or live more healthily. It may involve reading a particular book or taking extra time to meditate and reflect. It may mean joining a small group or Bible study.

In choosing what discipline to follow in Lent, we might consider how we keep God at a distance, whether through our actions or our inactions. We may be grieving the life that we had hoped to live this past year, and maybe we have chosen to do things that make life easier. Whatever state of mind, body and spirit we are in as we begin Lent, we begin with confession.

On Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, the traditional service is one of “Imposition of Ashes”. The use of ashes is a reminder of our mortality and desire to repent. It is a solemn and stark experience as we confess our sin before God within the community of faith. Traditionally the ashes are the burnt remains of the palm branches used on the previous year’s Palm Sunday service.

As the ash cross is made on the person’s forehead the following words are said: *“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”*

So begins the forty days (not counting Sundays) of Lent, which ends on Holy Saturday. It begins with us sombrely confronting our mortality and, bit by bit, leads us toward the joyful expectation of Resurrection.

At this time, the guidance regarding Covid-19 restrictions has not changed, and it appears to be very unlikely that churches will be open for us to meet physically before Easter. However, I hear of more and more people being vaccinated. This is very encouraging as we gradually, carefully, responsibly move towards a new normal way of living together.

I pray that together as we journey through Lent, we will discover the deeper presence of God in our lives. We pray for our families and for each other, particularly those going through very challenging times.

Be encouraged - live in hope.

Grace and peace,

Eddie

