**The Parish of St Paul, Wokingham: Spring 2024**

**From the Rector**

*Dear friends,*

*As you know, Lent is coming soon so it seems a good moment to send a short paper to you, capturing forthcoming dates as well as some ideas for how you might choose to keep Lent when it comes. There is obviously no right answer to the Lent question but the key things are preparation and focus- making a plan and then sticking to it throughout those long weeks so you arrive at Holy Week with a clear sense of God’s Spirit and presence.*

**Forthcoming Dates**

**Sunday February the 11th**

**9.30 and 11** Collection of items for the Foodbank.

They are especially looking for long-life milk, hot dogs, tins of fruit and potatoes, custard, tea bags in 40s or 80s and female deodorant.

 **3pm** Taize Service, St Nick’s, Emmbrook Village Hall

**6.15pm** Songs of Praise at St Paul’s, with refreshments, raising money for the new Hymnbooks

**February the 14th: Ash Wednesday**

Services at 10.30 and 8 at St Paul’s,

and at Woosehill in the early evening- time TBC.

**Sunday February the 18th**

**6.15pm** First Sermon in our new Evensong Series, followed by refreshments- on the theme

God’s masterpiece.

**Saturday February the 24th**

 Quiet Day at Finchampstead Church,

led by clergy from All Sts and St Paul’s.

**Lent 2024**

Lent is a chance to..

• rediscover something of the freshness and exhilaration of faith, to strip away some of the things which come between us and God and get back to the core of what we believe by rediscovering our need of God,

• reflect on our lives, our values, our priorities,

• think more about God: pray more and read more and think more and give more time to God,

• prepare ourselves for the trauma and triumph of Holy Week, to make sure that we are ready to journey with Jesus as he comes to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and is greeted with cries of “Hosanna.”

There are as many different ways of keeping Lent as there are people reading this letter.

If you want some inspiration, talk to a friend or a prayer partner, or look at some of the links and ideas which form an appendix to this letter.

So, what are *you* going to do to keep Lent well this year?

There are a range of things on offer you could consider:

• Some people take something up for Lent, like reading the Bible every morning, or coming to Morning Prayer online or in person, or joining the Tuesday night Bible Study and Study Group, or walking instead of driving.

• Some people give something up for Lent, like alcohol or chocolate. Sometimes people gather the money they save in Lent and donate it to a charity like the Church or Christian Aid.

• Some people use Lent as an incentive to do things they have always meant to do like mending a relationship or joining the gym.

• Some people commit to do an act of kindness every week- writing a letter, sending a flower, making a donation, sending a gift to their GP surgery etc

• Read a favourite novel again, listen to a piece of music which brings you close to God every week, visit an art gallery, go for a prayer walk…

• And there are loads of other options as well, from websites to Lent Lunches to joining the Churchyard Gardeners to helping the Church Polishers to tidying the Children’s Chapel to…

• Stations of the Cross (every Friday at noon in Lent)

• The Church of England’s small Lent Book for 2024 is called Watch and Pray and it looks excellent. A group will be meeting in the Rooms every Wednesday at 1pm throughout Lent from the 21st of Feb. Find out more at cofe.io/watchandpray

• Or you could join in with the Bishop of Oxford by following the Diocesan website to Come and See- you get to watch a weekly video of Bishop Steven as well as receiving a daily email as a way of helping you day by day through Lent. If you sign up could you let me know so then we can work out a way of supporting each other and having some good conversations about what we are hearing and finding? [Come and See - Diocese of Oxford (anglican.org)](https://www.oxford.anglican.org/come-and-see/)