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VISION IN FOCUS





Introduction

February has arrived and we are enjoying some beautiful winter sunrises and (slightly) shorter winter nights! Our thoughts are also turning towards Lent. This edition of Vision in Focus is dedicated to this significant season. With resources, suggested reading, along with daily reflections and actions, there is plenty to explore and share. The Ven Ian Rees shares his thoughts on how appropriate it is that St David's Day nearly always falls within Lent, while we find out more about this year's Lent Appeal.

Lent is a time of solemnity and self-reflection - a time when we get closer to God through prayer and study. As we all recognise our failings, resolving to live a more Godly life, maybe we should all embrace our inner 'Dewi Sant'.

*Debra Goddard
Diocesan Communications Officer*

Lent - A pastoral and liturgical introduction



Lent, Holy Week and Easter are all one season: a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, in which we enter the wilderness and the Passion, without losing sight of the Easter promise of eternal life. It is only in the light of the resurrection that the wilderness and the Passion have meaning. Through our liturgy, we do not seek to commemorate separate events in the life of Christ, but to celebrate the mystery of the whole of Jesus' saving work.

Lent now begins on Ash Wednesday, the sixth Wednesday before Easter, but has many different origins. From the fourth century onwards, it became standardised as a forty day fast in anticipation of Holy Week as a separate preparatory fast for 'Pascha' –Easter. Originally, however, it had been a three week fast linked to preparation for baptism and this connection was maintained as Easter became a preferred date for baptism.

The 'Triduum' (three days from Maundy Thursday to the Easter Vigil) also developed from the fourth century. Origen, in the mid third century, had seen the 'Pascha' in terms of passage, using images of the Red Sea to illustrate the resurrection as passage from death to life. Other writers focused more on the Passion, and these two ideas became combined, so the feast emerged as a three day unity, reinforced by liturgical practices in Jerusalem in the late fourth century, such as the veneration of the Cross, vigil and lucernarium recorded in Egeria's Travels.

Later, the final days of Jesus' earthly life began to be commemorated on other days of Holy Week. Palm Sunday, already celebrated in fourth century Jerusalem, became the start of the Great Week we still keep today. As early as the end of the second century, the Easter season was kept as a fifty day feast, beginning on Easter Day and ending with Pentecost. Ascension as a feast emerged at the end of the Fourth Century, and shortly afterwards was celebrated across a wide area.

(from Church in Wales Times and Seasons)

This is a really rich season in the church calendar and lots of churches look for different or additional material for extra services or reflection. There are lots of things available on the internet for this, but below are some freely available resources from the Church in Wales.

Church in Wales liturgical material:

[https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/publications/liturgy/Lent Holy Week Easter/](https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/publications/liturgy/Lent_Holy_Week_Easter/)

Schools resources:

The East Cardiff MA website has resources for schools throughout the year. The following is a link to their resources for Lent (including St David's Day) Click on term 2 assembly plans

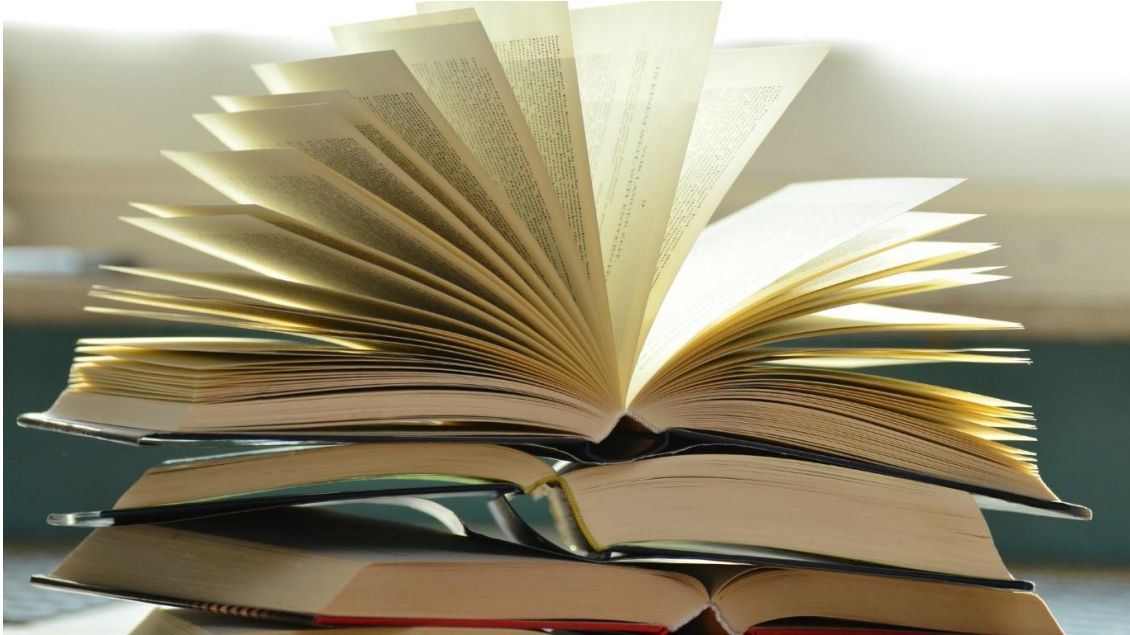
<https://eastcardiff.church/schools/worship/spring-term/>

Lent Resources - Daily Reflections and Actions

For the last couple of years we have prepared daily reflections. These have been updated for 2024 and either can be used again or for the first time! Please feel free to share these as widely as possible!

[Lent Reflections and Actions](#)
[Daily Reflections](#)

Lent Resources - Suggested Reading



Lots of people like to do some special reading for Lent. You may already have ideas and there are lots of books around, but if you're struggling to find something, here are some suggestions that you might like to consider.

Loving My Neighbour (Inderjit Bhogal, Joanna Collicutt, David Gregory, Esther Kuku, Sanjee Perera, Gemma Simmonds, John Swinton) *BRF Lent Book*

Daily Bible readings and reflections from Ash Wednesday to Easter Day explore how we can love in truth, love the vulnerable and the suffering, embrace difference, care for our world, and love ourselves as God loves us. Holy Week brings us back to reflect on Christ on the cross, who loved us to the very end.

Lent with the Beloved Disciple (Rt Revd Michael Marshall) *Bloomsbury Publishing*

The 2024 Bloomsbury Lent Book invites you on a six-week journey in the company of the 'beloved disciple' as found in the narrative of the Gospel of St John.

Tarry Awhile (Selina Stone) *SPCK Publishing*

The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book for 2024

The Little Book of Lent (Arthur Howells) *William Collins Publishing*

Daily reflections for Lent from great spiritual writers

Opening our Lives (Trystan Owain Hughes) *BRF Lent Book*

Lent is not about giving up or taking up, but a radical opening up: the opening up of our lives to God's transformative kingdom. That is the challenge Trystan Owain Hughes sets in *Opening Our Lives*.

Embracing Justice (Isabelle Hamley) *SPCK Publishing*

What is justice? It's a question we encounter everywhere in life and that over the last years has increasingly demanded an answer. In the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book for 2022, Isabelle Hamley invites us on an exhilarating journey through Scripture to discover how we, as churches, communities and individual Christians, can seek and practice justice even when enmeshed in such a fractured world.

And Yet... Finding Joy in Lament (Rachael Newham) *SPCK Publishing*

In a life full of highs and lows, choice and challenges, the words 'and yet' can change everything. We are surrounded by darkness and yet there is light. We feel we are lacking and yet God provides. We are broken and bruised and yet there is hope.

In the depths of depression and plagued with suicidal thoughts, Rachael Newham never thought she'd find herself writing a book on joy. And yet, if her journey with mental health illness has taught her anything it is that true, deep, lasting joy can only be experienced when we allow ourselves to enter into lament and be honest about our pain before God.

Brighter Days (Patrick Regan) *SPCK Publishing*

You probably don't need to be told that the demands of modern living are taking their toll on our wellbeing. You likely feel it. Packed-full of practical tips alongside stories of struggle and strength, Brighter Days is for all of us who want tools to invest in our emotional, mental, physical and spiritual health so we can look forward to a healthier and more hopeful future.

Restore, Renew, Rebuild (Cris Rogers, Debra Green) *SPCK Publishing*

The Church is entering a season of change. Together, we need to restore, renew and rebuild to create a more hopeful, faith-filled future -and the book of Nehemiah shows us how. With contributions from Debra Green and Paul Weston, Cris Rogers explores how we can learn from Nehemiah's story and restore our hearts, our focus and our world so that the Church can thrive as we join in with God's heart for restoring all things.

Wild Lent (Rachel Summers) *Kevin Mayhew Publishing*

Wild Lent will change how we all experience and think about Lent. How? Simple! Instead of a nice cosy room, coffee, biscuits and lots of discussion about the meaning of Lent, you'll be wrapping up warm and heading off into the wilds! It's time to get up close and personal with creation and make a shadow clock, have a sunrise breakfast walk, go on a giant egg hunt, hug a tree, walk barefoot . . . and share God's creation with others.

The activities in Wild Lent include: Things to do when it's sunny, Things to do when it's raining, Things to do with others, Short and easy things to make and do, Even shorter and easier things to do, Things to do in the early morning, Things to do on the move

Journeying with God in the Wilderness (Mark Broadway) *IVP Publishers*

Jesus' forty days in the wilderness, which many Christians remember during Lent, echoes the story of God's people wandering for forty years in the wilderness. This book reflects on the wilderness journey using the Old Testament book of Numbers.

St David's Day



St David's Day nearly always falls in Lent, and that's quite appropriate, because, without dwelling on the details too much it seems that David lived a very frugal life –something we might associate with Lent.

I won't dwell on the history of St David because we don't know an awful lot, but we do know he lived in the 6th century and we know that he founded a monastery. It is thought that he came from a noble family... There is often discussion of people who have been well brought up having to remain in the manner to which they are accustomed – but this was not so for David.

David's lifestyle did not encourage comfort. The idea of remaining in the style to which he would have been accustomed was thrown out of the window... He seems to have believed that the world was tempting, and the less you indulged with it the more time you had to get closer to Christ. The lifestyle would have included times of pain such as wading in freezing water to pray and eating horrendous foods - all in the pursuit of the ultimate holiness and access to heaven.

It may not be a life which is very appealing to us at all but there is something important that we can learn from it and that is the need to continually try to get

closer to God in our lives. As we go through Lent we will be asked to challenge ourselves to follow the instruction of Jesus who said, 'If anyone would come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'

The whole sense that is being portrayed by Jesus is a sense that David understood well – that whatever material benefits we have and enjoy in our lives they ultimately mean absolutely nothing.

During Lent we are called to consider our own relationship with God – we are called to make changes where they are necessary. We are called to get closer to God through prayer and the study of his word in the Bible as we continue our journey through life.

As I mentioned we have few actual historical facts about David but many of the ideas have come from the writings of Bishop Rhigyfarch who was writing some 500 years after the death of David. He describes St David as :-

“the supreme overseer, the supreme protector, the supreme preacher, from whom all received their standard and pattern of living virtuously. To all he was their regulator, he was their dedication, he was their benediction, he was their absolution, their reformation. To the studious life he was instruction; to the needy, life; to the orphans, upbringing; to widows, support; to fathers, a leader; to monks, he was their rule; to non-monastic clergy, the way of life; to all men he was all things.”

It's quite an incredible tribute to a man but as we celebrate the life of St David we don't worship him but we use his example and his life to point us to the life of Jesus and the gifts that he offers to us today and every day.

St David helps point us to God for all of our support, our strength and our wisdom. We are dependant on God, whether we know it and accept it or not... As we think about Lent we think of the time Jesus spent in the desert being tempted by the devil. And we think perhaps of times of wilderness in our own lives. Times when God seems distant, or we just don't seem to be able to find peace in our lives...

And through Lent it's a chance for us to just evaluate again what we're doing in our lives with regard to Jesus – what prominence do we give him ? Is he just for Sunday, is he just for last resorts in prayer, is he just someone to think of occasionally day by day, or is he guiding us constantly on our journeys of life?

Are our lives transformed by knowing Him ?

St David put aside many of the material comforts of life – he tried to remove from his life anything that separated him from God, and we are called and challenged to do the same today...

As we rightly celebrate the lives of the Saints of the past, we recognise also that we are called to be the Saints of today, offering Christ's very relevant and life changing message of hope to all people.

The saints may have led exceptional lives and done incredible things, but they were however, and we must never forget this, normal people, but normal people who allowed themselves to be used by God for his service...

Are we willing to be those people today...?

Ven Ian Rees



St David's Day is sometimes neglected in our churches but at the diocesan conference when we discussed seasons it was recognised as a really good opportunity to engage with people who may not regularly be churchgoers.

Here are some suggestions of resources :

Liturgy resources:

[https://llandaff.contentfiles.net/media/documents/St Davids Day Resources Adnoddau ar gyfer Gwyl Ddewi.pdf](https://llandaff.contentfiles.net/media/documents/St_Davids_Day_Resources_Adnoddau_ar_gyfer_Gwyl_Ddewi.pdf)

<https://www.drqareth.info/DavidLiturgy.pdf>

For schools:

There are resources for schools on the East Cardiff site at

<https://eastcardiff.church/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Assempbly-plan-T2.pdf>

Morning Prayer:

[Morning Prayer for St David's Day](#)

Lent Appeal 2024



Our Lent Appeal this year will again be for our link diocese in South Africa, with the money being given to the Highveld Board of Social Responsibility. This will then be used for projects to support the churches' work in schools and nurseries, in alleviating poverty, and in developing work to combat violence and abuse, particularly against women and children.

During Lent, the mid-week mailing will feature reflections from the group who visited the Highveld in November. Each week will feature a specific project or area of need, which we hope will help people understand a little more the level of need out there, and where the money you raise through the Lent Appeal will go.

9 Days of Mission



You will have received the mailing about the 9 days of mission which you are invited to consider for your ministry areas between Ascension Day and Pentecost. More details will follow soon about that. As part of that we have a service where we hope as many people of all ages will come together for from across the diocese to celebrate the life of our churches. There will also be activities for children.

The service will be led by Bishop Cherry and held at **St Mary's Priory Church in Abergavenny at 11am on May 18th**. It would be lovely if churches arranged trips or carsharing for this special occasion. Abergavenny is also a great place to spend a lovely afternoon wandering around the shops or sitting in a coffee shop after the service!

For a downloadable and printable version of this email please click [here](#).



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