

1 Welcome

Welcome to this study

This study has been designed to be undertaken in two different contexts: by groups meeting in parishes or other ministry units (for example, schools or workplaces), or by people on their own to do at home. You might want to do it as a family.



There will be passages from the Bible or our Prayer Book to look at and questions to think about, and to answer in groups if that is the context you are using. Listen to the responses that others give, and rejoice in the diversity of views and experiences – it is one of the delights (and occasional difficulties) of church communities that we can be so different from one another, and yet come together to worship and pray and work, serving the communities around us.

There are six studies, which correspond to the six weeks of Lent. Each of them engages with some aspect of our identity as Anglicans – the values that have shaped us and our way of being in the world. As we go along we will meet some of the people that have also been part of the Anglican family, throughout the world and throughout history.

- 1 Welcome
- 2 Formed by Scripture
- 3 Shaped by Worship
- 4 Ordered for Ministry
- 5 Directed by God's Mission
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Welcome to Lent



Lent is the period of 40 days leading up to Easter. It begins on **Ash Wednesday**, the day when we are invited to receive on our foreheads a cross in ashes as we resolve to put aside the sins and failures of the past and seek a new beginning with God. Traditionally the ash is made from the burnt palm crosses of the year before. It helps us to face up to our own mortality, as we are encouraged to reflect on the love and redemption offered to us by Christ.

Lent is a period of preparation first undertaken in the early church by those getting ready for initiation into the Christian community through baptism, which happened at Easter. It helps all of us to get ready for the “Great Three Days” (the evening of Maundy Thursday to Easter Day) when we walk with Jesus through his betrayal, execution, and resurrection. Lent is a symbolic 40 days, which parallels the 40 days of testing and trial that Jesus spent in the wilderness between his baptism and the beginning of his public ministry. It’s our journey into the wilderness – always a place of encounter with God. Lent, therefore, is designed as a time for intentionally growing closer to God, through reflecting on Scripture, building community and caring for those who are in need.

Keeping Lent

Traditionally Lent is a time for fasting and self denial, and also almsgiving (giving money or other things to those in need). Sometimes people give something up for Lent, but another way to “do Lent” is to take something up. This could be a new way of reading the Bible, attending a Lenten service or study group, experimenting with a different prayer practice, or volunteering with a service group. I have known people who made a special emphasis on hospitality during Lent, inviting people into their homes to share a meal.

If you are wanting to “give something up” for Lent, here are some suggestions for a different kind of fasting:

- social media or use of certain devices (some people stay away from Facebook or Instagram for Lent)
- complaining
- missing one meal a week and giving the money you would have spent on it to a charity
- gossiping

❖ *How do you react to some of these suggestions?*

❖ *What other things can you come up with?*

❖ *How do you want the world to be different, when Easter comes, because of how you have kept Lent? (Will the world really be that different if we give up chocolate?)*

A useful reminder:

Lent is 40 days. If you count up the days between Ash Wednesday and Easter there are 46 days – what’s going on? The Sundays aren’t fast days – and that means that whatever you give up for Lent, you can do or have on a Sunday.



A text for Ash Wednesday: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

‘Beware of practising your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

‘So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

‘And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.



‘And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

This extract from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount is the Gospel reading for Ash Wednesday, and it takes up the traditional Lenten practices of prayer, almsgiving and fasting. It’s an interesting reminder, as we begin Lent, not to make a big show of what we are doing, not to go “practising our piety” before others. Notice that it doesn’t say “if you give alms / pray / fast /” but “*whenever*” you do these things. It assumes that these are part of usual Christian practice.

- ❖ ***What has been your experience of prayer, giving to others, fasting?***
- ❖ ***How might these things affect your relationship with God – and with others?***
- ❖ ***Where is your treasure, and your heart, at the moment?***

It's ironic, isn't it, that we hear this reading shortly before we have ashes placed on our foreheads and then go out into the world like that. What about that instruction to wash our faces? Context, as usual, matters. Jesus was speaking, and Matthew was writing, in times when some people made a big show of their spiritual practices in a way which implied that it was all external and their heart was not engaged. Is that the case in our context? If so, washing our faces might be a good idea. But if it's not, if living out a relationship with God isn't on the radar for most people, then wearing the ashes out into the street might just start some interesting conversations. (I can still remember the time when someone asked me if I had been grappling with the photocopier and got toner on my face.)

❖ ***What do you think about “wash your face” and keeping spiritual practices secret? Is there a place for talking about what we do?***

Other texts for Ash Wednesday:

Joel 2:1-2,12-17 OR Isaiah 58:1-12

Psalms 51:1-17

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Welcome to this theme

This is us: who we are as Anglicans

The idea for this study comes from two places: from my own lived experience with Anglicanism, which is mostly by choice and only incidentally by birth, and from what I have observed in the church over the last few years – a lack of confidence in who we are and what we have to offer. I have heard people speak enviously of other denominations which they think have the best tunes, the most enticing worship, and larger youth groups. Yet the Anglican church, here in Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere, has so much to recommend it in terms of our way of being church, in liturgy, values, and mission. My hope is that this study will help us get over “the mumble factor” and develop a sense of confidence in who we are.

Each of these studies invites us to engage with some aspect of our identity as Anglicans. We'll look at some of the values that have shaped us and our way of being in the world. Along the way there'll be a bit of history and a passages from

the Bible or our Prayer Book to think about. We'll have the chance to get to know some amazing Anglicans, people that have been part of the Anglican family, here and throughout the world, in the past and in our own day. As we go through, we can reflect on our identity as disciples and how being part of this particular expression of our faith might strengthen that.

❖ ***What is your initial reaction to this? Does it excite you?***

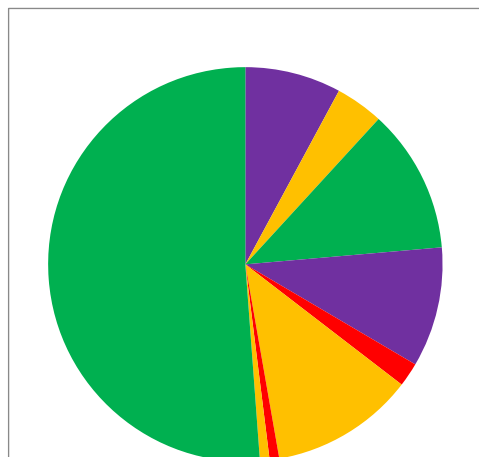
❖ ***How do you relate to being Anglican? Bored? Passionate? Uncertain?***

How we live in time

One of the features of Anglicanism, which we share with some (but not all) denominations is an engagement with time. The Church year is made up of a number of liturgical seasons, an annual cycle in which particular points of the life and work of Jesus are brought to our attention. In Advent we remember that Jesus is coming, at Christmas we celebrate his birth, and at Epiphany how he was and is revealed to people. Then comes Lent, Holy Week (the last week of Jesus' life before he was killed), and the celebration of his Resurrection in the Easter season. At Pentecost we remind each other of the coming of the Holy Spirit, on Trinity Sunday we honour the community that is at the heart of who God is, and then we move through Ordinary Time. That's the period which is neither feasting (Christmas and Easter) nor fasting (Advent and Lent), but settling in to grow closer to God and to one another. And then, back to Advent.

The colours we see on vestments and in the worship space change through the year, letting us know which season we are in.

- purple – quiet, subdued, preparation and penitence (Advent, Lent)
- white/gold – celebration (Xmas, Easter, Trinity, All Saints, feasts of saints)
- red – fire/Holy Spirit, hence ordination & installation; and blood (Holy Week, feasts of martyrs)
- green – growth (Ordinary Time)



(Start at the top, going round to the right.)

What this shows us is that *time matters*. There is a holiness about time, part of what God created and named as “good.” Our year doesn't simply map onto the calendar of the world around us; our New Year's Day is Advent Sunday (four Sundays before Christmas Day); we begin celebrating Easter in the evening of

Holy Saturday and continue for the next six weeks, long after the shops have finished selling Easter eggs. (Pro-tip: stockpile Easter eggs during Lent, and then you will have enough to last until Pentecost.) Christian time revolves around the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and the creeds that we say locate him in a particular time, in the historical governorship of Pontius Pilate.

Through the different seasons we not only observe but participate in a re-living of the events of the Christian story: time itself can bring us closer to God and what God has done for us and all the world.

- ❖ *What is your favourite season of the church year? And why?*
- ❖ *And your favourite festival?*
- ❖ *What can we learn from the difference between the seasons of Lent and Easter?*

We also mark time in another way, through the Maramataka, the Calendar, in which we remember the lives of particular followers of Jesus, the Saints, with an annual remembrance usually on the anniversary of their death, which is understood as a birth into eternal life. This keeps before us the fact that we are “surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses” and that the church is made-up not only of those who are alive today but also of those through whom the light of Christ has shone in the past.



- ❖ *Who is your favourite saint – and what have you learned from them about how to follow Christ?*
- ❖ *The liturgical seasons and the calendar of the Saints show us that time matters. What does this mean for how we use our time each day, each week, each year?*

THOUGHTS / QUESTIONS

Meet the Family

As we begin Lent, it seems appropriate to remember, amongst the amazing Anglicans who are celebrated in the calendar of the Saints, a number of people who were martyrs, those faith ultimately led them to give up their lives.

Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley were amongst the English reformers and martyrs of the Reformation period and were burned at the stake on 16 October



1555. Latimer was an outstanding preacher who attacked abuses in the church and social injustice, Ridley was a scholar at Cambridge University; both were bishops. Latimer's last words to Ridley at the stake came true: "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out."

Kereopa and Te Manihera, Martyrs at Turangi, 12 March 1847

Te Manihera was a chief and teacher of Ngati Ruanui near Hawera. In a few weeks of February 1847 he and Kereopa, also from Ngati Ruanui, travelled as peacemakers and missionaries to their tribal enemies around Taupo. They were ambushed and shot on 12 March near Tokaanu. Peace was later established, and many were baptised, "the fruits of Manihera's death."



The Seven Melanesian Martyrs, 2003



The Melanesian Brotherhood is the largest Anglican religious community in the world. As part of the peace process following violent ethnic rivalries in the Solomon Islands Brother Nathaniel Sado and then six others travelled to the stronghold of warlord Harold Keke on the island of Guadalcanal in April 2003. They were all tortured and murdered. They were: Brothers Nathaniel Sado, Robin Lindsay, Francis Tofi, Tony Sirihi, Alfred Hill, Patteson Gatu and Ini Paratabatu. The impact of their deaths stunned the nation and brought peace. Their feast day is 24 April.

❖ ***"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." How do we understand this, and what might it mean for us?***