

## Minister's Letter

February 2010

The month of February brings us to the start of the season of Lent in the church calendar. As a church with no building (but, see below,) we currently find it difficult to organise special services and events mid-week. So there are no public activities we can invite you to attend in the village of Great Notley. But can I remind you to think about what you will be doing about the start of Lent as an individual. Will Shrove Tuesday be a family celebration with pancakes and syrup and all the trimmings? And will you use the occasion to remember that this is the day before Ash Wednesday and can be a powerful reminder that Lent is just about to begin?

Lent is used by Christians as a season of preparation for the coming of Easter. Every Easter Christians remember with thankfulness the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross. The annual remembering of the death and resurrection of Jesus is at the very heart of the Christian faith as the central sign of God's love for the world and the hope that we can have that God's love overcomes all the evil and hatred and sin in the world. This is such a challenging and life-changing thing to proclaim and celebrate that Christians have discovered that it is a great personal aid to prayer and worship to use the season of Lent to contemplate the meaning of Easter and to spend some time, physically and spiritually and mentally preparing for the coming of Easter each year.

Many people give something up for Lent. If giving something up involves saving money, the money is usually given to a charitable cause. If giving something up results in a release of time, the time is usually devoted to Bible study or prayer. So the question is: have you chosen a charity to support for Lent, or have you chosen a book to read or to pray with for Lent? A visit to a Christian book shop will show you how many different resources are available. Increasingly there are on-line resources available for you to use during Lent. You will certainly be able to find an answer which suits you.

Try these examples:

The United Reformed Church's Commitment for Life, Lent scheme can be found here:

[www.urc.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/commitment\\_for\\_life/commitment\\_for\\_life](http://www.urc.org.uk/what_we_do/commitment_for_life/commitment_for_life)

Tear Fund organises a Carbon Fast for Lent, with resources for prayer and reflection, helping us to consider how a lower carbon lifestyle might help improve the situation for the poor of the world:

[www.tearfund.org/Campaigning/Carbon+Fast.htm](http://www.tearfund.org/Campaigning/Carbon+Fast.htm)

If you would like a weekly video to inspire you during Lent, try this joint production by the Evangelical Alliance and Methodist Relief and Development Fund (MRDF):

<http://www.eauk.org/media/ea-and-mrdf-collaborate-on-lent-videos.cfm>

If you can travel outside the village, Lent lunches are being organised jointly by all the churches in Braintree, every Wednesday from **17 Feb to 31 March**, 11.45am -1.15pm at Braintree Baptist Church, off Coggeshall Road, Braintree. The cost is £2.30 for adults and £1 for children, the proceeds to go to BRAINTREE STREET PASTORS and TABOR CENTRE FOR THE PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED.

Finally, Lent isn't the only thing that happens at this time of year. It is great to see how our building work on the new church site is progressing. Because it is a steel-framed building it goes up very quickly. Every day there is something new to look at on the site. The cold weather in January held up progress for quite a few days, but the builders on site were efficient at adjusting their work plan to enable work that could take place in the snow and ice to go ahead as far as possible. We are still expecting the building to be finished on time before the end of July 2010.

Yours in Christ

Revd. Mike Shrubsole