



Jane Willis

Lent, Holy Week and Easter

Following Jesus' journey through suffering and death to new life

[scroll down](#)

Lent and Easter are an important part of the Christian calendar.

The season of Lent lasts for forty days (not including Sundays). It is a time when Christians reflect and prepare for the celebrations of Easter.

Some people fast, eat frugally or give up treats following the example of Jesus, who fasted for forty days in the wilderness.

People also give to charity, set aside time to study the Bible and meet with other Christians to reflect on Jesus' life and prepare for the events of Holy Week and Easter.

A Prayer for Lent

Holy God,
our lives are laid open before you:
rescue us from the chaos of sin
and through the death of your Son
bring us healing and make us whole
in Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen.

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent. Ashes made from palm crosses are blessed and are used to make crosses on people's foreheads. The custom dates back to the middle ages.

Ash Wednesday services set the tone for Lent, with sombre readings and hymns and a focus on penitence (saying sorry for and turning away from sin).

"Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ."



Holy Week is the name given to the week beginning on Palm Sunday and ending on Easter Sunday.

Walking the Way of the Cross, [a podcast series](#) written and recorded by Archbishop Stephen Cottrell, Dr Paula Gooder and Bishop Philip North, is now available that will take people on the Holy Week journey by exploring and reflecting on the fifteen biblical Stations of the Cross.

'Women of Holy Week', written by Paula Gooder, explores Holy Week through the eyes of nine female characters she imagines accompanying Jesus during these momentous days, with artwork by Ally Barrett. [Available as a book or e-book to purchase, or free audio](#). Also featuring daily on our Instagram account [@churchofengland](#) from Palm Sunday 2022.

On Palm Sunday Jesus arrived in Jerusalem to crowds and cheers. His triumphant entry into Jerusalem has been celebrated on the Sunday before Easter since the first centuries of Christianity.

The crowds waved palm branches and covered his path with them. Churches remember this with crosses made from palm leaves and hold processions like the one that Jesus experienced - sometimes with a donkey, too! There will also be a [national online service](#) and many local churches are holding onsite or online Palm Sunday services and events. [Search all local events](#).

The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting,

"Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—

the King of Israel!"

John 12:12-13



opper with his disciples before his death.

Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

Luke 22:19-20

Maundy Thursday gets its name from the Latin word *mandare* meaning to command. We remember Jesus' command: 'Love one another as I have loved you'.

At the Last Supper Jesus washed the disciples' feet. Some churches recreate this act of service at special services and events. This is not only an important reminder of the nature of Jesus, who we serve, but also the kind of service we are meant to demonstrate in our love for one another.



Father,
on this the night he was betrayed,
your Son Jesus Christ washed his disciples' feet.
We commit ourselves to follow his example of love and service.

Good Friday is the day when Christians remember the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ. It is a sombre day. Usually, churches meet, pray and reflect on the sacrifice Jesus willingly paid for all our sins.

This year, many churches will be streaming their Good Friday services as well as meeting in person. [Find an online or onsite service to join.](#)

Walk of Witness

Many churches take part in a Walk of Witness. Churches gather (often with other local Christian denominations) to walk through the streets of their locality together. They do this to remember that Jesus had to carry his cross publicly through the streets of Jerusalem. It is a public statement of their faith, a retelling of the crucifixion story and a reminder of Jesus' words in Matthew 16 verse 24: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

John 3.16

Easter Vigil

The Easter Vigil is the first service of Easter and begins sometime on the evening of Holy Saturday (the day before Easter Day). It begins with a symbolic expectant waiting (usually outdoors around a fire) for the resurrection of Jesus on Easter morning, and this is represented visually by a large Easter candle, which is lit from the fire and brought into a darkened church. This depiction of new life and light represents Jesus' resurrection on the first Easter morning. The congregation then light their own candles from the Easter candle, representing their own new life as followers of Jesus. The service will contain a number of readings from the Bible, and also an opportunity for all the participants to renew the promises made at their baptism. The Easter Vigil is usually a quiet and thoughtful service, but one full of joy.







ed for our sins and then rose again.

Jane Willis



On the third day after being crucified, Jesus' tomb was found to be empty. He had risen from the dead. Life triumphs over death! The joy of
d it.

James Atkinson

Some churches celebrate Jesus' bringing life from death by making and blessing an Easter garden. Could you make an Easter garden with your family at home?

Many churches live stream their Easter Day service, as well as meeting in person.

You can find out more about our national online services through Lent and Easter [here](#).



Find an Easter service or event

Search churches

Submit

Easter Eggs

The eggs we usually give and receive at Easter have many different symbols attached to them. They represent new life and some people suggest that they resemble the stone at the entrance to Jesus' tomb.

Easter Day marks the beginning of 50 days of celebrating Jesus' resurrection. The final 10 days begin on Ascension day where we celebrate Jesus' ascension into heaven. Churches around the country mark the day with services, sometimes outside or on church roofs. Finally, at the end of the 50 days, we celebrate Pentecost (sometimes called Whitsun) when Jesus' disciples received the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is often referred to as the birthday of the Church and is celebrated with parties and Whit walks (processions through town).

Lent

A season (from Ash Wednesday until Easter Eve) of self-examination, penitence, self-denial, study, and preparation for Easter. Its duration (forty days plus Sundays) recalls the temptation of Christ in the wilderness.

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