Dear Friends

Lent this year will begin with Ash Wednesday on 5th March, and we will then work through the six Sundays of Lent before Holy Week.

There are three Ash Wednesday Services in the Circuit – will you plan to go to one of them?

What are you doing for Lent?

Are you one of those people who give up something, a small daily sacrifice, be it biscuits or chocolate, or social networking, or spinach (as one of my sons once declared)?

A book I have on my bookshelf – Barefoot Disciple, by Stephen Cherry – suggests giving up grumbling - described as ‘a negative, demoralising activity lacking in passion, maturity and wisdom’ - in favour of penitence (acknowledging responsibility) and protest (risky vulnerability). Now there's a thought, and something that could really transform our churches and communities.

Or perhaps you will try to live more frugally, and give the money you save to a charity. Or rather than giving up something, will you 'take up' something - a commitment to specific action, to highlight or combat poverty or injustice perhaps? Or maybe you will be working through one of the various Lent courses offered across the Circuit, in order to focus your thoughts on the season.

Or, the Methodist Church has some resources on its website which you might like to explore, based around the theme ‘Soul Food’.

https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/soul-food/

You can sign up for a daily email which will suggest a reflection or activity:

* **Monday**: A recipe video using easily available ingredients.
* **Tuesday**: A Bible study video, with discussion on questions from the week’s Gospel passage.
* **Wednesday**: A craft video, perfect for doing at home or in a group setting.
* **Thursday**: An inspiring story about how the Methodist Church and our partners work to ensure nourishment and care for all.
* **Friday**: A reflection on a classic soul song, revealing the good news within its lyrics.
* **Saturday**: *Soul Food Saturday*, our magazine-style video show, featuring a panel sharing weekly highlights and showcasing photos from across the church. We’d love to see what you’re up to during Lent!
* **Sunday**: No email, but we invite you to gather in worship, reflecting on the theme as you praise God together.

Whatever you decide to do, the reason for a Lenten observance is to journey through the days between Ash Wednesday and Easter Day with a willingness to change pace, to notice what God is doing in our lives, and to make more room for him to work.

A priest invited a well known speaker to come and preach at his church. 'What do you want me to talk about? she asked. 'Come and tell us what is saving your life now' he answered.

What is saving your life now? What gives your life meaning? What are those things that you cling to, that shape your life?

If we are not sure of the answers to those questions, then perhaps a Lenten practice will help us to find them. We have 40 days for a practice to become a habit, and for a habit to become a way of life.

Peace for the journey

Deborah