

# Calling all Diocese of Ely Schools!

## It's time for Bishop Stephen's Lent Challenge 2016





## A Lent Challenge from Bishop Stephen—

How are you going to observe Lent in your school? Lent is a time of spiritual discipline, a spiritually cleansing time, when many Christians try to devote more time to prayer and Bible Study, often in ecumenical groups. Sometimes other people in the wider community also get involved, talking about Lent as a time of abstinence (“I’m giving up..... for Lent”) and then, rather like some New Year Resolutions, feel guilty as they fail to go the full distance...again. It is appropriate in the school context to prepare for the key Christian festival of Easter in the same way as in your local church—with a strong focus on positive action and appropriate Lenten collective worship—and this is at the heart of this year’s Bishop’s Challenge.

The 2016 challenge is related to both local and global issues— it is in part a response to the Paris Climate Change Conference last year and to the Climate Change Consultation Day which will be taking place locally at St Ives Free Church on 18th June this year (watch out for publicity soon). **In October the annual Schools Days at Ely Cathedral will relate to these same themes of concern for the earth and our neighbours near and far and you will find a booking form for these days in this mailing.**

The conference at St Ives is a joint venture between the Churches of Cambridgeshire and the Diocese of Vellore in South India. You will also know that, because of this special relationship, a core unit on Christianity in the Diocese of Vellore forms part of the Cambridgeshire RE Syllabus for Upper Key Stage Two. As a result several of these challenges include summary materials on the situation in India which you could, if wished, link to your RE and this partnership.

### A Weekly Challenge

There are six weeks worth of challenges in this booklet covering the weeks of Lent which fall in the school term; this year term finishes on Maundy Thursday.

Examples are given to illustrate the kind of activities schools could undertake in the different weeks of the challenge—but these are examples only, the school can just as easily devise its own challenge to perform. In fact, we recommend that you involve the School Council in working out the challenges—they are sure to have a wealth of creative ideas!

When you have completed the challenge we ask you to grade your effort as worthy of a bronze, silver or gold award. There is a simple grid to help you do this which is based not on the action per se, but on the *commitment* that it took to complete it. It is thus perfectly possible that two schools might undertake very similar tasks, for example, but rightly grade themselves differently using the grid.

Challenges can be carried out by any grouping of pupils—a class, a key stage, a whole school, even an after school club or breakfast club. Different groupings could

undertake the challenges in different weeks on the whole school's behalf.

The Bible often talks of the Christian life as a race, but not a race with a few winners and a lot of losers, it speaks of a race in which everyone who perseveres claims a crown—the race of faith is not about beating other people, it is about *personal commitment*. We ask you not to think about this challenge as a competition (despite the fact that we are offering certificates) but as a time to commit to observing Lent together with your local churches and the wider Church family.

### **Telling Bishop Stephen and the Diocese about the Challenge**

We would love to hear from some of your children about what you have done in response to the Lent Challenge, so do send us some letters (or powerpoints or...) to let us know what has gone on. (We may use some of these materials for publicity purposes later, so please make sure that you screen all photographs before you send them to us.) Letters or e-mails should be sent to Shirley Hall at the Diocesan Office, who will collate them for Bishop Stephen.. [shirley.hall@elydiocese.org](mailto:shirley.hall@elydiocese.org)  
Diocesan Office, Barton Road, Ely, Cambs CB7 4DX.

### **Your Lenten Certificate**

The challenge involves assessing your commitment to observing Lent—when you send in your record at the end of Lent tell us what award you have been working for and you will receive your certificate from Bishop Stephen.

If you would like weekly certificates to display at school while the challenge progresses these can be downloaded and personalised from <http://www.stir-up.org.uk/>

### **Do we have to do follow each theme in the week designated?**

No! The challenges have been planned to follow Jesus' story from the wilderness to the cross, but only the first and last challenges are entirely week specific—others can be done at any time.

We recommend you take time to map out your route through the booklet before Lent begins as some challenges are likely to need more planning than others.

### **Collective Worship**

Powerpoint outlines of possible acts of collective worship to introduce the challenge each week can be also found on-line at <http://www.stir-up.org.uk/>

The powerpoints are broad worship outlines only and may need to be adapted by the worship leaders as appropriate for your particular school situation and the challenge you are undertaking.

### Charity Fundraising

It may be that as one or more of your challenge activities you choose to undertake charity fundraising. Undoubtedly you will have a variety of favourite charities that you already support, but if you would particularly like to support poor Indian farmers through the Vellore link (the Kassam Agricultural Institute) or Indian schools please contact [shirley.hall@elydiocese.org](mailto:shirley.hall@elydiocese.org) to discuss details.

You can see the Director of the Kassam Agricultural Institute in the Diocese of Vellore talking about climate change and about his work as part of the Lent Challenge at <http://www.stir-up.org.uk/>



## Lent begins

### Week beginning 8th February

**Shrove Tuesday : 9th February**

**Ash Wednesday: 10th February**

**Half Term 15th –19th February**

**“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And he fasted forty days and forty nights...”**

**Matthew chp 4 vss1f**

**Lent is an important preparation for Easter.** The celebration of Easter – the resurrection of Jesus – is the most important festival of the Christian Year; Christians need to be spiritually prepared for this event by renouncing their sins and demonstrating their penitence through physical and spiritual disciplines. *For more information about Lent and some of the ideas below see Appendix A on page 18.*

#### **What shall we do?**

The aim of this week’s challenge is to do something which will bring Lent to the attention of the whole school community (and beyond!), for example you could:

- Create a display in your school entrance hall or assembly hall explaining Lent to visitors
- Create a calendar for each classroom to count the forty days of Lent
- If you have an electronic rolling photo frame in the foyer you could create a display composed of Lenten images
- Dress the school entrance in purple!
- Talk about doing something positive each day for Lent and implement it (e.g. see booklets such as “Love Life Live Lent”)
- Spend time talking about mending relationships and supporting each other— make a list of related class promises which children (and adults!) can sign up to both in the classroom and at home
- Or....?

We have decided our Lent challenge is :

	Bronze	Silver	Gold
How many people were involved?	Less than one class	One or more classes	The whole school
How much time did it take to do the challenge?	A few minutes	More than half an hour	More than an hour
How much preparation time was there?	Very little preparation time was needed	Some things had to be done in advance	We spent a lot of time organising this

Was this a bronze, silver or gold challenge? Use the grid to help you decide on the level of commitment required:

*We agree that this was a bronze / silver / gold challenge*

## Week beginning 22nd February

### Food and Water

When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness the very first temptation was that he should turn stones into bread to assuage his hunger. Food and water are vital to human existence and they are also key symbols in the Bible: in John's Gospel Jesus is described as the Bread of Life and the source of Living Water, showing how vital belief in Him is to existence. In the Lord's Prayer we pray for our daily bread—enough basic sustenance that we can survive, but also our daily spiritual food. Not everyone automatically gets sufficient nourishment of either kind to live well...

#### In Vellore

The monsoons have failed in Vellore for many years. The Palar river, which should flow past Vellore, has not had any water in it for twenty years as cities upstream have used the water before it reaches Vellore. The water table is low and continually decreasing. This is having a detrimental effect on farming and on people's health. Farmers are using chemicals which strip the land of nutrients in order to grow crops and which affect the long term fertility of the land. The church institutes at Kassam and Palamaneer are pioneering ways to encourage small rural farmers to return to organic farming methods and cherish the land and its resources. Thousands of people live on a very basic and inadequate diet.

#### In our Diocese

We are also experiencing extremes of weather—the region is now one of the driest parts of England but also experiences flooding in times of heavy rain. If sea levels rise by as little as one metre much of our area will be inundated. Meanwhile farmers, particularly dairy farmers, find themselves squeezed by falling prices and their livelihoods in jeopardy. Many local families, perhaps some of those in your school, depend on foodbanks.

#### What shall we do?

Spread awareness of some of the issues by:

- signing up for Water Aid's Pupil Pipeline Challenge at <http://www.wateraid.org/uk/get-involved/schools/join-pipeline>
- Do you have leftover fruit at school? Don't waste it! Make some "black banana muffins" (see Appendix B) or fruit smoothies which can be sold to raise money for a charity –perhaps for Vellore
- having a "bring a tin to school day" to make a collection for a local foodbank, Jimmy's night shelter or similar
- finding out what happens to your school's lunchtime waste and discussing if anything more productive can be done with it...and do it
- signing up for a school and family challenge to use as little water as possible (within the realms of hygiene and safety) e.g. putting plugs in sinks rather than letting taps run or turning the tap off when cleaning your teeth until you need the water
- Or....?



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## Week beginning 29th February

### Education, Education, Education (World Book Day is 3rd March)

When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness two of the temptations offered him power and the opportunity to win supporters by inappropriate means—throwing himself off a high point to show people God would rescue him, and worshipping the devil. Jesus counteracted these temptations through his knowledge of the scriptures and quoted God's Word to the devil.

For pupils education itself is the vehicle for advancement and also a necessity to support themselves in future. What happens if they choose not to take advantage of the educational opportunities they are given? What happens in communities where children never have the opportunity for education?

#### **In Vellore**

Education was recently made compulsory to the age of fourteen in India (previously compulsory to the age of ten) and the state of Tamil Nadu has almost 100% enrolment in the primary phase—however, studies have found that only 32% of Y5 pupils (the top year in primary school) could read a simple story in Tamil; and 40.6% perform subtraction of two digit numbers. Many village children do not receive a complete education as poverty dictates that they join the workforce at an early age to support their family, while girls, in particular, may be required to look after their younger siblings while parents work. However, there are also many success stories where education has lifted pupils from poverty into careers in fields such as medicine and engineering. In Vellore the church runs several institutions which specialise in training poor students from village communities for careers in nursing and teaching.

#### **What shall we do?**

- Teach a lesson using a Tamil Nadu textbook—there are English versions online at <http://www.textbooksonline.tn.nic.in/> (“Standard” is the numerical equivalent of English year groups.)
- Make your World Book Day a Bible story character dressing up day
- Challenge everyone to learn a new skill or share a skill
- If you have a buddy system have a special shared reading day—perhaps on a theme of stories from around the world
- Or.....

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## Week beginning 7th March

### Mothering Sunday is 6th March

**Anyone who does God's will is my brother, and my sister, and my mother.**  
**Mark chp 3 vs 35**

Mothering Sunday is seen as the mid point of Lent. Traditionally it is the day on which servants were allowed home to visit their families—returning not only to their mothers but to their “mother church” i.e. the church where their family normally worshipped. The day is now more popularly known as Mothers’ Day and has become a celebration of family life.

The story of Jesus in the wilderness is the beginning of his public ministry as a teacher and preacher. His ministry resulted in his travelling around Galilee, spending time at the homes of friends, and frequently sleeping rough. Although he certainly had the support and love of his family members (they appear at various points in the Gospels), his public ministry and concern for the weak, the needy and the marginalised took priority. Jesus’ group of disciples became his family and, by extension, Christians too are brothers and sisters in Christ—the extended family of the Church.

In the week beginning with Mothering Sunday think about what you can do within your own wider family of the school or the local community. This could also be completed as an environmental challenge (looking after “Mother Earth”) and you may choose to link it with work already been done with Eco Schools or similar initiatives.

#### **What shall we do?**

Examples could include:

- Planting some flowers or seeds where other people will appreciate them.
- Tidying up the school’s natural environment by picking up litter, weeding etc.
- Launching a recycling initiative
- At least one class in the school undertakes a neighbourhood prayer walk around the school grounds to pray for the school’s geographical neighbours.  
*See Appendix C on how to organise a prayer walk.*
- Organising a fundraising breakfast at the breakfast club which parents and carers can book in for as well (bacon butties?)
- Arrange for the choir to visit a local care home / old people’s home
- Or.....?

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## Week beginning 14th March Palm Sunday 20th March

### On the Way

Jesus is on the way to Jerusalem this week, and on Sunday the Church will celebrate Palm Sunday and the beginning of Holy Week. The Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem was interpreted by many of those present as a political act, a claim to be king of the Jewish people, because it appeared to fulfil a prophecy about the coming of the Messiah (Christ) whom the assumed would become the nation's king. Jesus taught always about the Kingdom of God (Kingdom of Heaven) not a political kingdom, but his arrest and death were nevertheless linked with both the Jewish and Roman politics of the time.

#### In Vellore

India has the largest rate of migration in the world. Many of these migrants are farmers and their families, forced from their land by drought, failed harvests and debt.

Men, in particular, may spend years abroad in places like the Gulf in order to support their families back in India.

#### In Our Diocese

England is being challenged to discover new levels of hospitality to those escaping the effects of climate change and civil unrest.

In the East of England alone, over 200 people will be sleeping rough tonight and over 4,000 families will be in temporary accommodation.

#### What shall we do?

- Find out about and pray for those who are on difficult journeys with their families (e.g. refugees)
- Organise a whole school walking event to raise funds for.....
- Think about what it is like to “walk in another's shoes” e.g. <http://theashefoundation.org/about/> (empathy)
- Decorate tiles (or equivalent) with Christian symbols and create a route or a path—this can be around the school, around the classroom, or around the grounds—it can even lead you along the route to your church for next week's Easter service.
- Create palm crosses to take home for Palm Sunday <http://www.concordiasupply.com/Articles/How-to-Make-a-Palm-Cross> or make “palm leaves” to use in your worship.
- Or....

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## Week beginning 21st March

Term ends 24th March (Maundy Thursday)

**Easter Day is 27th March**

**But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**I Corinthians chp 15 vs 57**

It is the last week of term—how can we best prepare for Easter?

### What shall we do?

- The school term ends on Maundy Thursday—create a daily timeline of the events of Holy Week, ready to tell the Good Friday and Easter stories
- Fundraise as part of your Easter celebrations for someone other than yourselves
- Hold a family tea (or coffee morning) for the people who join you at your Easter celebration (remember to invite the local church community)
- Perform an Easter play or find a way to share the Easter story with your community (e.g. a story café using the book *The Tale of the Three Trees*—see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DjIOViJIM3U>)
- Learn a new thanksgiving song for Easter
- With your church community, put on an Experience Easter (Easter Stations) activity which can be used both by the school and members of the congregation
- Create Easter gardens
- Have an Easter Pause Day
- Or.....?

(See Appendix D for Easter Gardens and Easter Pause Day details.)



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# Appendix A

## About Lent

- Lent is a six-week (40 day) fasting period beginning on Ash Wednesday and concluding with Maundy Thursday (the Thursday before Easter). Traditionally Sundays are not included in the fast. It is a time of penitence and preparation and is linked to the forty days Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness. (Matthew chapter 4 verses 1-11, Luke chapter 4 verses 1-13)
- The day before Lent is Shrove Tuesday – its name comes from the custom of “shriving” (confessing) one’s sins and receiving a penance to complete over Lent.
- The fourth Sunday of Lent is Mothering Sunday when one traditionally returns to one’s “mother church” and servants visited their mothers.
- Many Christians use the opportunity of Lent to “give up” certain foods or observe a stronger spiritual discipline (e.g. Lent Bible Study Groups), although it is not common now in this country to follow a strict regime of abstinence. Lent is frequently associated with the giving of money to particular charities which will launch “Lent Appeals”. Lent is thus a time for: spiritual self-examination and penitence; fasting and self-denial; prayer; resisting temptation; self-sacrifice; new beginnings and making a fresh start; new challenges. The Lenten Challenge reflects some of these traditional disciplines.

### **Lenten customs include:**

- In the churches - vestments, altar cloths etc are purple, the colour of penitence and preparation. There will be no flowers.
- Shrove Tuesday is traditionally a time for feasting and eating up fats and delicacies in the form of pancakes – this includes the fun of pancake races, and in some countries colourful Mardi Gras street processions.
- Ash Wednesday includes a service of imposition of ashes when the congregation are marked with ash made from burning last year’s palm crosses.
- Mothering Sunday has been overtaken by a more secular “Mothers Day”, but the traditional gift for mothers – simnel cake – is still made.
- Nowadays the Church only recommends a strict fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

*Note: the name "Lent" has nothing to do with the Christian story, but is an ancient variant of "lengthen" to remind us of the lengthening Spring days.*

Things which could be included in a **Lenten display** are:

- a purple backdrop or drape as this is the traditional colour for the seasons of preparation in the Church calendar, and Lent is a preparation time for Easter
- An interactive section where people can leave (anonymous) notes on things they are doing for Lent, or things they are sorry for or are thinking about and praying for.
- Information about Lent researched by pupils— for example, look at <http://www.reonline.org.uk/specials/lent/>
- Bishop Stephen's Lent message and challenge to schools
- Information about what your local church(es) are doing during Lent

**Your Lenten calendars** can count up or down the forty days of Lent. Remember that Sundays do not count as part of Lent proper as Sundays are always a day of celebration in the Church, so if you are laying the calendar out by weeks there will be six days in the week! The calendars could take different forms and you may like to invite each child to make their own Lent calendar, rather like an Advent Calendar. As Holy Week and the preceding week of Lent do not fall in term time in 2015, individual calendars could be taken home.

Your Lenten calendar could be made by:

- If you google "Lent calendar" images you will find several examples of simple calendars to inspire you, many in block shapes or designed to follow a road—the road to Jerusalem. Some of these have suggestions for other tasks which could be performed each day.
- You could set up a calendar on your interactive whiteboard
- You could mark up a large candle and burn a section each day
- You could string a "fishing net" up in your classroom and add a purple fish for each day of Lent! The fish is an important Christian symbol as the Greek word for fish—*ichthys*— is a mnemonic for "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour".



## Appendix B

### Banana Muffins Recipe

This recipe makes 24 small sized muffins or 12 generously sized ones. 4 ripe bananas (or 4 dessert-spoons of cooked apple)

125 ml vegetable oil

2 eggs

250g plain flour

100g sugar

1/2 tsp bicarbonate of soda

1 tsp baking powder

### Method

1. Preheat oven to 200 degrees C
2. Peel and mash bananas
3. Measure oil into a jug
4. Crack the eggs into the jug and beat in
5. Weigh flour and sieve it into a large bowl
6. Weigh sugar and add to flour
7. Add bicarbonate of soda and baking powder
8. Mix in egg and oil mixture together with the mashed banana (or apple)
9. Line cake/muffin tins with 24/12 cases and spoon in mixture
10. Bake in oven for 12-15 minutes depending on size of cakes

When cakes are cooked, remove from oven and cover the whole tray with a clean tea towel so that the cakes cool down slowly.

## Appendix C

A **prayer walk** is when someone stops at various points on a walk to pray for people in that neighbourhood. This may mean, for example, praying for groups such as:

- The elderly people of the community and their needs
- The unemployed
- Local retailers or industry
- The local church community
- Other schools and playgroups
- Activities for young people in the neighbourhood e.g. clubs
- Community activities
- The sick and the local surgery

By focusing on the wider community the prayer walk could include countries in the geographical direction the class is facing and their particular needs, or, alternatively, particular areas of our own country.

To set up a prayer walk the class concerned can use their local knowledge and a map of your area to help them identify four or five groups within the community to pray for. They then plan a circuit of the school grounds picking out spots where they will stop to pray—here they can face the direction of those they are praying for. Who or what are they facing and should be praying about? What would God want them to pray about for these people and their needs? Is there someone or something to give thanks for? Should you simply say a blessing at each place? Prayers could be prepared in advance for the walk or delivered extempore.

The prayer walk could be the act of collective worship for that day for these pupils.

## Appendix D

Ideas for Easter activities:

**Easter Gardens**—This could be one large garden for the hall or smaller gardens for each classroom. An Easter Garden can be any size—for example it could be made on a tray. If you make a large garden more children can be involved in its creation. A traditional Easter Garden has two distinct halves. One half portrays the story of Good Friday with a hill and three crosses set in a bare landscape. The second half portrays Easter Day with the empty tomb and stone rolled away set in a landscape of greenery and flowers. The contrasting halves tell the story of the darkness and devastation of the crucifixion of Jesus, and the light and celebration of the resurrection. Instructions on making Easter Gardens can be found in many

places online including <http://www.just4kidsmagazine.com/rainbowcastle/eastergarden.html>

Run a reflective “**Easter Pause Day**” - materials available on the Diocese of Guildford’s website at <http://www.cofeguildford.org.uk/school-life/easter-pause-day/>