



GUILDFORD  
CATHEDRAL

# A HOLY LENT



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Each year, the Church invites us to make a journey. Lent is part of that journey – a pilgrimage of forty days leading us through the wilderness to the joy of Easter. It is a season of preparation, of stripping away, of honest self-examination, and of drawing closer to God.

The word ‘Lent’ comes from the Old English for ‘spring’ – a reminder that this is a season not of mere privation but of new growth. Just as the earth prepares to burst into life, so we prepare our hearts to receive afresh the resurrection hope that transforms everything.

This year at Guildford Cathedral, we have prepared a rich programme of worship and study to help you make the most of these holy days. You are warmly encouraged to commit to joining us for our Lent Talks after the Sunday Eucharist, and to walk the Stations of the Cross with us during the week. These are not obligations but invitations – opportunities to go deeper, to pray more intentionally, and to walk together as a cathedral community towards the Cross and beyond it to the empty tomb.

May this Lent be for you a time of grace, renewal and deepening faith.

## Why keep Lent?

In a culture of constant consumption, Lent offers a counter-cultural invitation: to stop, to simplify, to create space. We fast not because the world is bad, but because we have become cluttered – cluttered with distractions, appetites and anxieties that crowd out our awareness of God.

Keeping Lent is an act of solidarity – with Christ in his wilderness, with Christians across the world and through the ages, and with all who hunger and thirst, whether for bread or for righteousness. When we give something up, we make room. When we take something on, we stretch ourselves towards growth.

But Lent is not merely about self-improvement. At its heart is the mystery of the Cross: that God’s love is revealed most fully in suffering, that life comes through death, that in losing ourselves we find ourselves. The disciplines of Lent are meant to open us more fully to this mystery, so that when Easter comes, we may receive its joy not as observers but as participants in the risen life of Christ.

## What might you gain from Lent?

**A deeper prayer life** Lent invites us to be more intentional about our conversation with God. Whether through daily scripture reading, attending additional services, or simply sitting in silence, this season offers the opportunity to establish habits of prayer that may last long beyond Easter.

**Greater self-knowledge** The honest self-examination of Lent can be uncomfortable, but it is also liberating. In acknowledging our weaknesses, we discover that we are loved not because we are perfect but because we are God’s beloved children.

**Renewed compassion** When we fast or simplify our lives, we become more aware of those who go without not by choice but by necessity. Lent's call to almsgiving reminds us that our faith is never purely private but always reaches outward to our neighbours.

**Community** Lent is not a solitary journey. When we commit to attending services, study groups and special observances, we walk alongside members of our Christian family, supporting and encouraging one another on the way.

**A richer Easter** Those who have walked through the wilderness arrive at Easter with a deeper appreciation of what it means to pass from death to life. The joy of resurrection is sweetest for those who have kept vigil through the darkness.

## Lent at Guildford Cathedral

This Lent, we offer two particular opportunities for worship and reflection, and I warmly encourage you to make them part of your Lenten discipline.

## Lent Talks

Following the success of our Advent series, we are delighted to announce that post-service talks will return for the first four Sundays of Lent. You are warmly invited to join us after the 9.45am Eucharist for reflection and discussion.

These talks offer an opportunity to explore our faith more deeply in the company of fellow pilgrims. Whether you come with questions, insights or simply a willingness to listen, you will find a warm welcome.

### The topics for this year's series are

Sun 22 February – Lent and Liturgy

Sun 8 March – Lent and Humility

Sun 1 March – Lent and Confession

Sun 15 March – Lent and Self-Discipline

## The Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross invite us to walk slowly through Christ's final hours, from condemnation to burial. During the service we reflect on images of Christ's Passion and, at each station, sing a hymn, hear a Bible reading and pray. There is something profoundly moving about physically journeying from station to station, pausing at each moment of suffering and love. We are not passive observers but pilgrims, allowing our bodies to participate in prayer alongside our hearts and minds.

The Stations of the Cross strip away distraction, drawing us into the story of redemption through simple images and ancient words. Whether this is familiar to you or something entirely new, you are warmly welcome to join us. In walking this way together, we discover afresh that the path to Easter leads through the shadow of the Cross.

## Services begin at 1pm on the following dates

Thursday 19 February

Friday 6 March

Friday 20 March

Thursday 26 February

Thursday 12 March

Friday 27 March

## A Lenten commitment

I invite you to make a commitment this Lent. Not a grand resolution that may be abandoned by the second week, but a simple, sustainable intention to draw closer to God through the life of your Cathedral.

Perhaps you might commit to attending all four Lent Talks, making Sunday morning a time not just of worship but of learning and fellowship. Perhaps you might plan to walk the Stations of the Cross at least once – or at each opportunity. Perhaps you might combine these with a personal discipline of prayer, fasting or generosity.

Whatever you choose, know that you do not walk alone. The whole community of Guildford Cathedral journeys with you, as does the great company of saints who have made this pilgrimage through the ages. And above all, Christ himself walks beside us – the one who entered the wilderness, faced temptation, and emerged victorious; the one who set his face towards Jerusalem and embraced the Cross for our sake.

May this Lent be a time of blessing for you, leading you through the shadows into the glorious light of Easter.

With my prayers and blessing,

**The Very Reverend Bob Cooper**  
Dean of Guildford



## A Prayer for Lent

*Almighty and everlasting God,  
you hate nothing that you have made  
and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent:  
create and make in us new and contrite hearts  
that we, worthily lamenting our sins  
and acknowledging our wretchedness,  
may receive from you, the God of all mercy,  
perfect remission and forgiveness;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*

