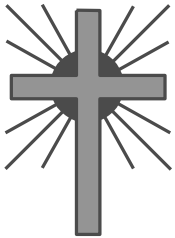


# Renew Your Faith This Easter

## Joining Jesus on the journey to the cross and beyond...



The seven weeks leading up to Easter are rich in celebration, symbolism and remembering. From the earliest days of the Church, Christians have carefully observed the events leading to Jesus' death and the celebration of his resurrection. It became the custom of the Church to prepare for the Easter celebration with a season of penitence and fasting. At first, this season was observed by those who were preparing for baptism at Easter and by those who, having been excommunicated, were to be restored to the communion of the Church. Today, we are encouraged to spend this time before Easter being honest with ourselves before God and committing ourselves once more to the life of discipleship – following Christ wherever that may take us. What would help deepen your relationship with God and one another this season?

### *Shrove Tuesday - Pancake Day! - 21 February '23*



The day before Ash Wednesday is known by a variety of names:

- *Shrove Tuesday* – from the Old English, meaning “to have confessed” because people were urged to go to confession prior to Ash Wednesday
- *Mardi Gras* – French for “fat Tuesday” because of the custom of using up fat, butter, and other rich foods prior to the Lenten fast
- *Pancake Day* – a more recent nickname, given the tradition of eating pancakes on this day as a way to use up sweets and rich foods prior to giving them up for Lent.

Whatever it is called, this is a day of fun and celebration before Lent begins. In many places, Shrove Tuesday is a day of costumed parades, noisemakers, pancake races, and fun.

Why not make some pancakes at home? There are lots of simple recipes on the internet. They are yummy with jam or lemon and sugar!



## *Ash Wednesday - 22 February '23*



The season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday – it is a solemn day for fasting, repentance and prayer. After all the pancakes have been eaten, we begin our preparation for Easter. *During the service at Kiama on Wednesday evening* we hear the call of Christ to turn back to God and to embrace God's kingdom which is amongst us. The sign of the cross is placed in ashes on our foreheads or the back of our hand as a symbol that we acknowledge that we haven't always been on the path God has shown us, and of our turning back to God's path. Wearing ashes was an ancient Hebrew way of expressing grief or repentance. Our ashes are made from the burning of the palm crosses we made last year, mixed with a drop of oil, an ancient symbol of healing.

## *Lent: 22 February - 8 April '22*



The 40 days of Lent reflects the time Jesus spent in the wilderness before he began his public ministry – proclaiming that God's kingdom is near and calling people to turn towards God (Matthew 4:1-11). In the Western church, Sundays are not included in the 40 days because all Sundays are celebrations of resurrection!

Lent is a season of deep reflection. It is a deepening time, a time for us to reconnect with what is most important in our lives, to think about our relationship with God and with others. It is a time to look honestly at our lives and make any necessary changes. Often people will observe Lent with something the church calls spiritual disciplines such as prayer, meditation, fasting, and service to others. It is a time to clear out the cobwebs and recommit ourselves to lives of worship, witness and service.

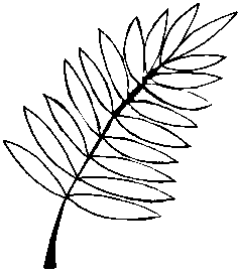
Just as Jesus went without food or drink for the 40 days he was in the wilderness, some Christians undertake a fast of some kind during this time, for example, not eating meat, not eating during daylight or giving up something special like chocolate or wine or social media.

And this is where the idea for Lent Event comes from. Lent Event encourages us to give up some luxury and set the money aside for people who have very little. In the giving up, we experience something of the sacrifice that the Lent journey points us to, as well as reminding us that simply by living more simply, we can help many people in other parts of the world.

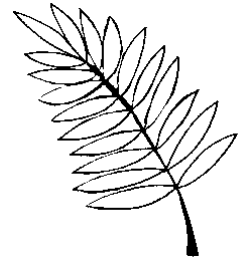
Even though we begin with ashes and sackcloth, Lent is not a time to wallow in self-pity or to drown ourselves in darkness. It is a time to turn towards the way God has shown us and to try to develop new practices or habits that reflect the way of Jesus or drawing closer to God.

The colour for the season is purple: the colour of repentance (turning towards God) and of preparation.

### *Palm / Passion Sunday - 2 April '22*



For centuries, the Sunday prior to Easter has been known as Palm Sunday. It is the day we remember Jesus' entry into Jerusalem – riding into the city on the back of a colt as the crowd waved palm branches and laid their coats on the



road before him. This is the day we make our palm crosses to carry with us through the week and year ahead.

Some churches remember the whole of the story of Jesus' arrest and death on this day. However, for us, the journey towards the cross and beyond is experienced through the various gatherings through Holy Week and Easter.

### *Holy Week: 3 April-8 April '22*



Many Christians consider this the holiest week of the Christian year. Many spend the week in prayer and fasting (if they haven't already been doing so throughout the Lenten season). It is a time to reflect on Jesus' last week in Jerusalem, and his final steps towards his death.

The readings, gatherings and services held during Holy Week, each reflect on different aspects of Jesus' journey towards the cross and beyond. We are invited to enter the story and journey of Jesus fully – to experience and share together the journey of life and faith in its many expressions and stages.

This year, we are planning an interactive series of "stations" in and around the Kiama church. Why not plan to spend some time exploring?



### *Maundy Thursday - 6 April '22*

The word "Maundy" may come from a Latin word *mandatum*, meaning "command", recalling the new commandment Jesus gave to his disciples to love one

another. Another possible meaning is the Latin word *mundo*, meaning “wash”, referring to when Jesus washed the disciples’ feet at the Last Supper. See John 13-17.

*This evening at Jamberoo* we will gather to remember that special evening where Jesus washed his disciple’s feet and shared a meal with them, the same evening that he was betrayed. We also include a service of “Tenebrae”, meaning “shadows”, in which candles are extinguished during the reading of the gospel, signifying those who have deserted Jesus and the way in which people tried to snuff out Jesus’ light.

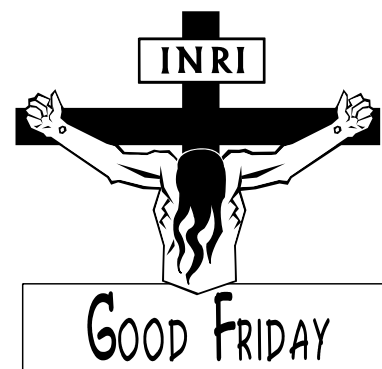
## *Good Friday - 7 April '22*

It may be that the somewhat ironic name for this day comes from a mispronunciation of “God’s Friday”, although scholars are uncertain.

The central part of our worship today is the reading of the story of Jesus’ trial and death mainly from John’s gospel. And we are challenged to remain with the very real grief and uncertainty that confronts us in Jesus’ death.

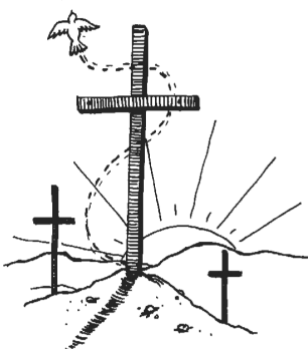
While it is tempting to move quickly to the celebration of resurrection (after all, we do know the story doesn’t end with death!), it is worth spending some time in the loss, loneliness and uncertainty experienced by Jesus’ disciples that first Easter.

Some churches might also walk “the stations of the cross” which involves spending time reflecting on each of 12-14 specific points along the journey Jesus took, ending with his death on the cross.



## *Easter Day - Sunday 9 April '22*

Hopefully we will be able to gather at dawn to celebrate with our Christian brothers and sisters from other churches in our community. And then we will gather at Kiama church to celebrate together!



All the preparing, all the waiting and praying, culminates in the celebration of new life – a new life offered to us through the resurrection of Christ! Alleluia!

*BUT THAT’S NOT ALL... The celebration of Easter is not just a one-off day in the year: every moment of every day lived in the presence of the living Christ is reason enough to celebrate all the time!*