



Father Paul writes – 15th of FEBRUARY 2026

Sixth Sunday of Epiphany - Harvest

I welcome you on this last Sunday of Epiphany where we today celebrate Harvest Thanksgiving. It is a time where we give thanks for the blessings of God's creation through the harvest of food and other produce from our gardens, our church garden and from the wider world.

Harvest Thanksgiving is only two days before we celebrate Shrove Tuesday. It is an opportunity to come together and share pancakes along with savoury or sweet fillings. It is traditionally a time when we use up all the rich foods in the pantry and in the fridge before we begin the season of Lent. The evening will begin at 5.30 pm with Evening Prayer and at 6 pm in the church's meeting room. The pancakes will be supplied but if you could bring a filling, that would be appreciated.

The season of Lent begins the next day and lasts 40 days (excluding Sundays) from Ash Wednesday to Maundy Thursday. While you won't find any mention of Lent in the Bible, the season of Lent has been observed since the 4th century and is founded on Biblical principles. Forty is a significant number in the Bible and one that is usually associated with trial, testing, prayer and fasting. It is a time of preparation and spiritual growth for us towards Easter as Jesus himself fasted, prayed and battled the temptations of the devil for 40 days after he was baptized and before he began his ministry.

Lent should be a time for prayer, fasting, penitence and resolving to follow God wholeheartedly as we prepare to celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, with hopefully fresh eyes. Hence, I encourage you to begin this season by attending one of our services on Ash Wednesday at 10 am and 6 pm. The marking of ash from last year's palm crosses on our foreheads during these services firstly reminds us of a sign of human mortality (based on Genesis 3:19) and secondly based on Mark 1.15 that we are a sign of life "*the Kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.*"

In becoming closer to God during this season of Lent, I invite you to take part in our Lenten bible studies, starting on Wednesday after the service at 10.45 am in the meeting room and at 7 pm in St Stephen's Chapel. The Lenten Study is titled "The King has Come" and has been written by Bp Reg Piper. The study focusses on the Gospel of Matthew. The cost of the bible studies is 15-dollars. There are a limited number of copies available at the door of the church today.

Your friend and priest, Paul