



Walk with me in Lent, dear Jesus, and guide me through the temptations of life. Teach me to desire only the living God and show me how best to serve, for you are all I want or need. Amen.

A greener church

Part 4 – celebrating the seasons

by David Shreeve

David Shreeve concludes his series on how churches can become greener.

The church year offers many opportunities to include an environmental aspect. For example, you might decide to leave the floodlights off during Lent – a reminder that this is a time to be doing without, taking stock and considering how much we consume. Then in Advent, the lighting might be gradually brightened week by week, in anticipation of the incarnation of Christ.

Other dates for the church calendar include Environment Sunday, which is celebrated on the Sunday nearest to World Environment Day, on 5 June. The period between 1 September and 4 October is marked as Creation Season, which is dedicated to God as Creator and Sustainer of all life. Many churches use this time to hold special services and events to give thanks for God's gift of creation, and to renew their commitment to caring for our one planet home. You can find out more at: www.churchofengland.org/about/environment-and-climate-change/season-creation 🍷

“To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than being alive without breathing.”

Martin Luther (1483-1546), German theologian, composer, priest and Augustinian monk

A change of direction

Georgina Byrne *reflects on* Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7 and Matthew 4:1-11

Temptation is only ever tempting because it offers us something we think we want. The woman and the man in the Garden of Eden want the fruit because it looks good, because it is a “delight to the eyes” and because they think eating it will make them wise. In pointing out the fruit, the serpent simply draws attention to their desires.

In Matthew's Gospel, the tempter invites Jesus to turn stones into bread when he is already famished. He invites Jesus to throw himself from the Temple to secure God's salvation and offers him the kingdoms of the world. Food, salvation and kingship might well have been on Jesus' mind – the tempter offers him a quick way to have all three.

Fruit, wisdom, food, salvation and power – none of these is necessarily bad. They only become problematic if they distract us from following God. The man and woman decide to take the fruit. Jesus, by contrast, ignores the desirable offers and turns back to serve God. The challenge for Lent is to notice what distracts us from God. Even the good and wholesome stuff of life can get in the way of serving God fully – if we let it. Lent gives us an opportunity consciously to acknowledge those desires that we sometimes allow to steer us – and then to change our direction back towards God. 🍷

Finding God on the smallholding

by Jeni Parsons

The Advent theme of “getting ready” lasts well into the new year on our smallholding. I'm getting ready to plant out broad beans that have been sprouting in the heated propagator. I'm putting together a heated box for some day-old ducklings coming next week and my husband is mending fences before two eight week-old-

piglets pitch up at the end of the month. Meanwhile the ewes are quietly growing their lambs in the dark warmth of their bodies. So much is on its way and there's so much to look forward to.

Jesus was being formed in the dark warmth of Mary's body, just as the lambs are. God is close in that secret process still on this little farm and throughout creation. It's easy to think of God as somehow “out there” but God is always “in here”, in the quiet processes of our noisy world. 🍷