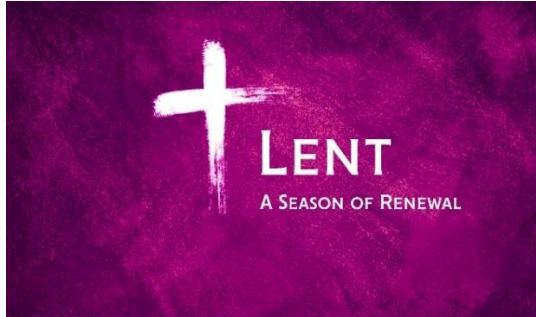


# MAGAZINE OF UNITING CHURCH SKETTY : MARCH 2026



The challenges of wilderness and the promises of Spring



**Uniting together - Caring for all-  
Seeking God**



**Minister:** The Revd Louise Gough

**Senior Elder:** Pat D

**Senior Steward:** Maggie C

**Church Related Community Worker:** Adella P (Swansea Region of URC Churches)

**APRIL 2026 MAGAZINE [EASTER EDITION]:** All items for inclusion in the next edition of the Magazine to be sent to Noel D by 17<sup>th</sup> March at the latest, but sooner if possible. Issue date: Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Sketty, Dillwyn Road, Sketty, Swansea SA2 9AH. Website:**  
[www.unitingchurchsketty.org.uk](http://www.unitingchurchsketty.org.uk)



---

**The building development was funded by the following**

The **Methodist Church**



Ariennir gan  
Lywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Funded by  
Welsh Assembly Government



**The refurbished hall was funded from the sale of the Bethel building**

---

## LETTER FROM THE MANSE

### Dear friends

I confess that in all my years of ministry, I have never improved a manse garden. Nature is... natural! With it comes winter's decay, weeds and unsolicited growth in springtime. This manse garden, like the three others before it, thrives on neglect.

A visit to the National Botanic Garden of Wales encouraged me no end. Their central grassy areas had been left to grow long and wild, with a tamed short mown edge, just like my garden! My decision to have a no-mow April, May, June, July, August, September (I could go on) policy felt



wonderfully validated! (Thanks to our Green Friends for the no-mow May suggestion.)

I will have to do something at some point soon, but for now, what comes up through the soil will come up.

By the time you read this, Lent will have begun. It's a season for growing and also for clearing the way.

The old English word for Lent is related to 'lengthening' – possibly referring to the longer days of springtime. With its emphasis on spiritual preparation for Easter, Lent is a time to grow in faith – to stretch and lengthen our inner selves. The Methodist Worship book describes Lent as a period for prayer, self-denial, charitable giving, self-examination and repentance, and reading and meditating on God's word.

Fasting has often been a feature of Lent – but compared to our Muslim neighbours observing the month of Ramadan, we get off quite lightly! We might often 'give up' something for Lent – as a discipline but also a way of loosening the bonds of those harmful habits that might have a hold over us, so that we can focus on God's place in our lives.

This year, the Methodist campaign for Lent explores these ideas and invites us to ‘Let go and be open’. It says that *“Lent is bigger than giving up chocolate. It’s about letting go of what weighs us down and being open to what lifts us up. The benefits last longer than forty days – it’s a way of life, and we do it together. Lent is a season of invitation. It calls us to loosen our grip on what holds us back – habits, assumptions, fears – and to open ourselves to the transforming presence of God. We explore a mindset shift: letting go of something that limits us and becoming open to something that brings life. It echoes the experience of the disciples who again and again had to let go of what was familiar in order to follow Jesus more deeply.”*

You can find more about this, and lots of resources, on the website:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/lent/>

So we are invited to do some ‘Lenten gardening’ - to explore what is growing in our hearts and lives... and to take some time to consider what needs to be cleared, rooting out the weeds that choke and smother, in order for the good plants, the seeds and shoots that are of God, to thrive. This will lead to a transformation!

John 15 reminds us that God is the Gardener – and God *“removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit God prunes to make it bear more fruit. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit.”*

I pray that Lent will be a true gardening season, where we might meet God the gardener, let go of all that weighs us down, and embrace the paths that lead to life.

May God bless us as we continue our Lenten journey, and may we grow together in love and discover more of God’s purpose and blessing, for us and for the world.

With prayers and love

Louise



## WORSHIP SERVICES DURING MARCH

March	1	Revd Louise Gough: Communion
	8	Heather Coleman
	15	Revd Louise Gough
	19	Thursday Communion, Revd Louise Gough
	22	Revd John Atkinson
	29	Revd Louise Gough: Palm Sunday

All services are in UCS at 10.30am.

Evening Prayer is held on Zoom from 7.00 – 7.30pm every Sunday, unless otherwise stated.

## MISSION AVIATION FELLOWSHIP



**Our communion collection for March** is for Mission Aviation Fellowship. This is the World's largest humanitarian flights

operator, flying medical staff, supplies and missionaries to places no one else can reach. They operate in 27 developing countries. MAF developed out of the ashes of World War II, with people seeking to use their aviation skills for God.

## PASTORAL CONCERNS

- We remember those who are in hospital, in care homes and nursing homes, those who are awaiting treatment and those who are convalescing. We pray that they will know God's strength and peace, and be able to trust in God's presence with them.
- We pray for those who are recently bereaved, especially during the Christmas period. May they know 'the peace that passes all understanding', through Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord.

## CELEBRATION BANNER

As mentioned in the previous magazine, the Craft Group is making a new banner to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Church building. We would like everyone to be involved in this project by decorating a leaf in any

way you choose – examples will be on display to inspire you. We are also encouraged to add the name of someone in the life of the church over the years who has been significant for us. We started giving out the leaves on February 1<sup>st</sup> and we would like them returned by March 1<sup>st</sup>.

Many Thanks

The Craft Group



(Wesley Chapel, Sketty, from the UCS website)

## **WESLEY CLUB** (from Rosemary B)

---

On January 12<sup>th</sup>, at our Wesley Club meeting, we had a very interesting and informative talk by Dr. Don Williams entitled '**Decoding Dementia**'.

As we aim to be a dementia friendly church, we thought we would share with you some of the facts we learnt about dementia. The term 'dementia' is used for conditions of widespread mental deterioration including loss of memory, feelings and judgement. It can also be a change of personality. It is a progressive condition caused by a physical condition of the brain.

The most common cause of dementia is Alzheimer's disease. It begins with memory loss and other problems follow. After a few years, patients require help with daily living. Nerve cells (neurones) are being lost and there is a build-up of abnormal proteins in the brain. A less common cause can be as a result of TIAs (small strokes) which impair the supply of blood to the brain. This is Vascular Dementia. There is also the case of numerous brain injuries over a long time such as sports people suffer. When the players receive a blow to the head it causes the brain to vibrate within the skull causing damage to the nerve cells.

How can we prevent dementia? We should all try to avoid repetitive brain injuries as the brain is so fragile – it is like blancmange or soft butter! Also, we should aim to have a good lifestyle and address things like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, diabetes, smoking and excessive

alcohol consumption. Doing regular brain activities like crosswords and puzzles and learning new skills all help. Having a positive attitude and socialising are all beneficial.

When visiting someone with dementia it is worth considering going alone as too many people can be confusing for them. Always introduce yourself and talk about things you have in common with them. Don't ask them any questions and don't correct or contradict what they are saying. If necessary, try and sidestep any awkward issues. Perhaps expand on a topic that they are able to remember.

This talk helped us understand more about this debilitating disease.

Do not ask me to remember,  
Don't try to make me understand,  
Let me rest and know you're with me,  
Kiss my cheek and hold my hand.  
I'm confused beyond your concept,  
I am sad and sick and lost.  
All I know is that I need you  
To be with me at all cost.  
Do not lose your patience with me,  
Do not scold or curse or cry.  
I can't help the way I'm acting,  
Can't be different though I try.  
Just remember that I need you,  
That the best of me is gone,  
Please don't fail to stand beside me,  
Love me 'til my life is done.

*Owen Darnell (submitted by Carol H and copied from Do  
Not Ask Me To Remember - Words on Life)*

## **IN MEMORY OF UNA G (22.1.1940 to 22.1.2026)**

Una was born in King William's Town in the Eastern Cape of South Africa (now called Qonce) where she taught children with special educational needs. She met her husband, Ron, when he was in South Africa while in the Royal Navy, but it was not until 1977 that they moved to Britain, first to London and Kent, before settling in Swansea with daughter Sian.

She was unable to teach here but worked in the hospital, first as a "Ward Hostess" and then as a "Housekeeper". She was a Member of Bethel URC and a regular attender who would often arrange church flowers and, with other members of the congregation and friends, was a member of Quilters. One of Una's stepdaughters wanted mention made of a quilt which Una made for her daughter, with whom Una had a particularly close relationship. Josie rows, and Una went to all the trouble to make her a special quilt not only with rowers on it but a red dragon to show that the quilt had come from Wales!

Una was such a lovely, quiet gentle person, always willing to help others; thoughtful and kind. All who knew her use these words to describe her. She bore her decline from Parkinsons with great dignity, rarely speaking of her illness but always interested in news of old Bethel friends, for whom she was always grateful. We talked of books, the changing politics of South Africa, the times when - as a child - she played after school with children of all colours, and about apartheid, the hope of the Mandella years and the current situation. Una's daughter Sian was an amazing support to her mother during the years that she became increasingly incapacitated. A visit to Una was always a positive experience.

Una died on her birthday; a release from suffering but leaving memories of goodness and kindness for all who knew her.

**Pat D**

### **COFFEE MORNINGS WILL BE HELD IN THE WESLEY ROOM AS FOLLOWS:**

- **Saturday, 7<sup>th</sup> March**, 10am -12noon. Proceeds for Pettifor Trust
- **Easter Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April**, 10am -12noon. Proceeds for Church Funds.



### **UCS GETS MESSY**

---

After a break during the month of January UCS held their first session of 2026 on February 14<sup>th</sup>.

The theme, February Fun, included lots of craft hearts and thoughts of love when celebrating Valentine's Day.

The date unfortunately fell on the first weekend of half term for our schools and five of our regular children were unfortunately away on holiday.

However, the six children who attended had lots of fun icing heart shaped biscuits, printing, weaving and folding heart shapes. The story, told on a Powerpoint, was “Guess How Much I Love You”. We learned the song “Jesus’s love is very wonderful”. A treasure hunt in the church involved finding paper hearts. Some of the craft work will be displayed on the board in the hall.



The children also decorated leaves for inclusion in the new banner celebrating 150 years of the church building.



Our next session, theme Spring, is planned for Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March. We offer a warm welcome to children aged between 4 and 11 years, as well as any parents/grandparents who may wish to stay.

**Linda J**



**‘Messy Church values are about being Christ-centred, for all ages, based on creativity, hospitality and celebration. It helps children, and people of all ages, to encounter Jesus as Lord and Saviour, and has a creative, hands on approach to finding God, and being a church community together.’**

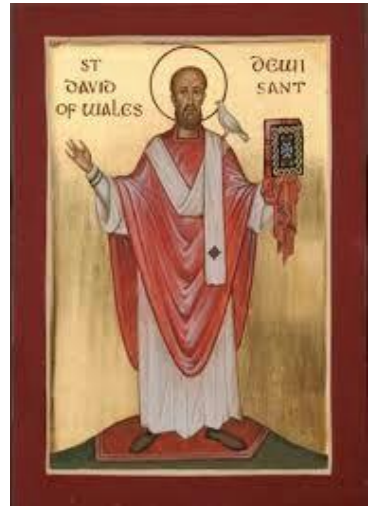
## DYDD GŴYL DEWI : SAINT DAVID'S DAY [MARCH 1<sup>ST</sup>]

What does Dewi, the patron saint of Wales, who lived during the 6<sup>th</sup> century, bring to us, as people of faith in Wales today? He was nurtured within a



committed and faithful Christian family. His mother, Non, is cherished as a Saint. St Non's chapel in Pembrokeshire (see *image*), celebrates her faith. So today we remember:

- A spirituality deeply rooted in the Celtic monastic tradition of the early Christian centuries in Wales, that itself drew on the Eastern monastic traditions, especially in Ancient Egypt and its neighbours.
- A calling to a simplicity of lifestyle that challenges social expectations today. (He was called *Dewi Ddyfrwr* – Dewi the Water Drinker.)
- A commitment to sharing and living the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus, rooted in the Scriptures, and to inviting others to believe and follow.
- A vocation to travel around Wales, within Menevia, in South West Wales, and beyond, to nurture the communities of faith that were already in existence here, and to establish and encourage new communities of faith.
- A legacy of humility that challenges any arrogance and pride, and calls us always to rejoice in God's gift to us in Jesus through the Holy Spirit, and to be faithful: "Arglwyddi, frodyr a chwiorydd, byddwch lawen a chedwch eich ffydd a'ch cred, a gwnewch y pethau bychain a welsoch ac a glywsoch gennyf i' (*Lords, brothers and sisters, be joyful, keep your faith and creed, and do the little things that you have seen and heard in me.*)



May we be faithful to his example and live as obedient disciples of Jesus.

**Noel**

# **FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP FOR LENT**

**Our Lent course this year begins on February 24<sup>th</sup>. But if you missed the first session, don't worry. You are still most welcome to join us.**

**We have agreed that, rather than follow the traditional themes of Lent, we are going to think about**

## **THE BOOK OF AMOS.**

**Amos was a prophet working in the eighth century before Christ. He had some sharp words of judgement and hope for those who heard him, both the influential and powerful, and ordinary people like us. His message is as relevant to us today as it was then.**

**If you would like to prepare for these sessions, read the Book of Amos, slowly and carefully, and think about what it says to you. How do you respond to it today? For some notes on Amos, see the February magazine. A study guide will be available for the sessions.**

**Five sessions, led by Noel D, will be held as follows (all from 10.00 until 11.30am in the Wesley Room):**

**February 24, March 3, March 10, March 17 and March 24**

## WARP AND WEFT

by John A

I consider the fabric of life  
Spread out on the loom  
Warp is stretched  
The vertical foundation  
Waiting to interact  
The denim blue awaiting the white.  
No life.  
No pattern beyond stretched lines  
– each line an end –  
Awaiting the throw of the shuttle.



The weft is thrown  
Side to side  
Colour varied  
Pattern forming  
Imperceptibly  
What it will be, clear only to the weaver.  
Creation from mind to finished form.

Is my life that finishing form?  
Or is it the warp on which the weft is patterned  
Growing in beauty at the shuttle throw of the Spirit?

Or again  
Have I mis-imagined?  
Is the warp the fixed frame of life  
Onto which I weave my own design  
Sometimes a thing of beauty  
Sometimes full of mistakes  
Snagged fibres  
Spoiled even?



But the warp remains receptive, steady.  
Perfection is at best unlikely.

Mistakes, errors, meld into new unanticipated patterns  
Serendipitous creativity  
Which some would say – IS God.

**‘Noddfa’, 7th January 2026**

*[Images from [denimhunters.com](http://denimhunters.com) and [northouse.org](http://northouse.org) from WikiCommons]*

## **SWAP WASHDAY BLUES FOR GREENS**

---

Laundry is no longer the laborious task it once was thanks to advances in technology so why feel blue? Washing machines can use a lot of energy to operate, the chemicals in detergents can be damaging and contain microplastics, and fibres released in the washing process often contain microplastics.

### **Energy**

Typically, washing machines use between 0.5 and 2.5 kWh per cycle depending on the size of the machine and the cycle chosen. Tumble dryers use between 2 and 5.3 kWh.

To optimise consumption, try using a lower temperature for washing. An intensive cycle at 60° uses 1.3 – 1.7 kWh, while a Quick Wash at 30° uses 0.3 – 0.5 kWh. For drying, solar and wind power combined is best (ie a washing line). If using a tumble dryer, heat pump models are best for energy consumption. When buying a new appliance, look for an A energy rating. The new A rating is equivalent to A+++ in the old system To save money and help reduce demand on the grid, off peak times are best. High demand times such as 4pm - 7pm can cost more than double the rate of off peak times.

### **Detergents**

A detergent needs to do many things. It removes dirt, breaks down stains, softens water and makes fabrics appear brighter. To achieve these aims, they contain a complex mix of chemicals. Some can be harmful to people and the environment. For example, phosphates cause excessive nutrients in water which in turn causes algae overgrowth and damages aquatic ecosystems.

Skin and respiratory irritations can be caused by preservatives in fragrances and dyes. Microplastics are often used in laundry sheets and fabric softeners and fragrances.

A safer, greener alternative to the most toxic brands is to choose those which are labelled as biodegradable, plant based or eco friendly. It is wise to check the label as some are not as green as they suggest. Another alternative could be to try completely natural products like soap nuts.

### **Microplastics**

Microplastics are omnipresent in our rivers. In the UK they have been found in every river tested. They enter our waters through road and agricultural runoff, industrial waste and from wastewater treatment plants. Modern fabrics contain microplastics. These microplastics pass through the filters in wastewater treatment plants. It is estimated that up to 700,000 fibres are released per wash with up to 2,900 tonnes ending up in UK rivers annually.

### **What can we do?**

Firstly, we can follow Janet's advice from last month's magazine and wash our clothes less frequently. Please note, I'm not advocating we wear dirty clothes but I do encourage you to think if washing is really necessary and to maybe give some items a bit of an airing on the line for a freshen up.

Secondly, we can use a gentle cycle when using the washing machine. These release fewer fibres. Some manufacturers are now promoting some programmes with this in mind.

Lastly, when buying clothes or bedding etc consider natural fabrics. I leave you with a laundry prayer:



Grant me the serenity to accept the stains I cannot get out; the courage to tackle the ones I can; and the wisdom to remove that one red sock from the load of whites.

**Jude, a Green Friend.**

## AS A DOVE

You'll have seen me many times lately.  
Symbol of peace on Christmas cards.  
All plump and white, olive branch in my  
beak.  
That's another sign of peace.



Me and my family, we tend to live near to  
people.  
So, you've observed us, seen our loyalty  
to our partners,  
Our tendency not to fight back.  
And you've linked us to harmlessness and peace.

What was it Jesus said?  
As wise as serpents and as innocent as doves?  
He knew, he'd watched us in Nazareth.

I don't appear that often in your Scriptures though.  
Mind you, when I do, I must say I have quite an honoured place.  
And have you noticed that I often seem to be around when there's a bit of  
water in the story?  
Oh, alright, in the beginning of things I'm not named as such,  
But the Spirit hovers over the watery chaos like a bird.  
That's me.

I was there at the flood too.  
Well, of course, all God's creatures were, two of each at least.  
We birds were able to fly around a bit.  
Must have been awful in the bowels of the ark with all the mooing, and  
braying,  
Not to mention the smell and the heat.  
No, I love to fly free.  
And Noah was pleased enough to send me off to find evidence of dry land.  
Backwards and forwards I went, several days running.  
I was getting a bit tired.  
And then I spotted it – a spot of land and an olive shoot.  
I took him a leaf back. What a moment! What celebration!

And you've read about my dramatic appearance over the River Jordan,  
When Jesus came out of the water of baptism.  
That's me. There at Creation and new creation.  
There when the waters parted, as the voice of God was heard.

Some of my relatives may have been there at another sea's parting,  
When the Israelites marched to freedom.  
We do represent freedom as well.  
And my cousins were there in the Temple,  
when Jesus tipped over the tables of those who were exchanging money,  
and selling doves to those who couldn't afford a lamb to sacrifice.  
My, what a fluttering there was as my cousins flew off, feathers everywhere.  
Jesus came to set prisoners free, and he certainly did that then.

He's been compared to old Moses, who led the Israelites to freedom.  
Makes you think doesn't it –  
How Moses walked through the waters and on into the wilderness  
and Jesus, he came up out of the water of Jordan and on into his wilderness  
too.  
Moses had a huge company with him – they were trying enough  
But Jesus, he was alone – and tried by the Devil.

You haven't got to that bit yet though.  
You're still thinking about my descent over the Jordan.  
Your artists often paint me shooting down like an arrow from the sky.  
Ever see a dove do that?  
No, I flew over, fluttering above him, and alighted gently on his outstretched  
hand.  
He'd seen me. Maybe John did too.  
Not sure how many of the crowd spotted me though.  
The light at that moment was strange, amazing.  
The sounds echoing and deceptive.  
You'd wonder how anyone could fail to see me at such a dramatic moment,  
But tricks of the light, flashes in time,  
You know how it is: blink and you miss it.

You might not see me fluttering gently  
over you on your journey.  
Next time you're in deep water, though,  
watch out for me.  
Listen for my wings flapping as you come  
up from the deep,  
As the waters of chaos part,  
As the word of God becomes real.  
I'll be there.



*This reflection was written by the Revd Pam C and read at the service she led at UCS on Sunday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, when the Gospel reading reminded us of the descent of the dove at Jesus' baptism.*

## HOLY WEEK AND EASTER AT UCS



# Holy Week

[Image from [Passion Week Images](#)]

**PALM SUNDAY – SUNDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 10.30am** – Journey to Jerusalem with Jesus, the road that takes him to the Cross

**MAUNDY THURSDAY – THURSDAY 2<sup>ND</sup> APRIL, 7.30pm** – a unique reflection for Easter, including communion, with Cardiff Methodist Community Choir, who will lead us through the story with a very special performance. This is our Maundy Thursday service, for us at UCS, so please do get there if you can, and also, bring a friend and invite others, as it's suitable for non-believers too! The choir has worked hard to prepare

this, and it's not to be missed! (Please note that is unlikely to be available on YouTube afterwards.)

**GOOD FRIDAY – FRIDAY 3<sup>RD</sup> APRIL, 2.30pm** – a quiet and thought-provoking act of worship for Good Friday

**EASTER SUNDAY – SUNDAY 5<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 10.30am** – celebrating the resurrection, with Holy Communion

## **A VERY SPECIAL MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE**

### **WITH CARDIFF METHODIST COMMUNITY CHOIR (CMCC)**

**UCS – THURSDAY, 2<sup>ND</sup> APRIL 7.30PM**

#### **Experience the Easter Story Like Never Before CMCC Easter Reflection 2026 – ‘I Shall Not Want’**

CMCC is a vibrant group of singers and musicians who bring the Christian message to life through music, drama, and reflection — in a way that speaks to both believers and non-believers alike. This Easter, we invite you to experience a bold and modern retelling of the Easter story, connecting ancient events with the realities of life today.

#### **A Story for Today's World**

We explore the characters involved in the days leading up to the crucifixion and relate them to the people and challenges faced by congregations in 2026. It's the Easter story — but seen through modern eyes, dealing with modern issues and modern questions.

#### **Music That Moves You**

Our music is exciting, powerful, and beautifully diverse:

- Worship songs
- Well-known popular hits
- Rock and roll
- Jazz and blues

Almost every piece has been specially adapted for CMCC, creating a sound you won't hear anywhere else.

## A Feast for the Senses

With the help of PowerPoint visuals, scripture, storytelling, and communion, the Easter message comes alive in a fresh and creative way. The result is a performance that is moving, evocative, and unforgettable.

## Not Your Typical Easter Reflection

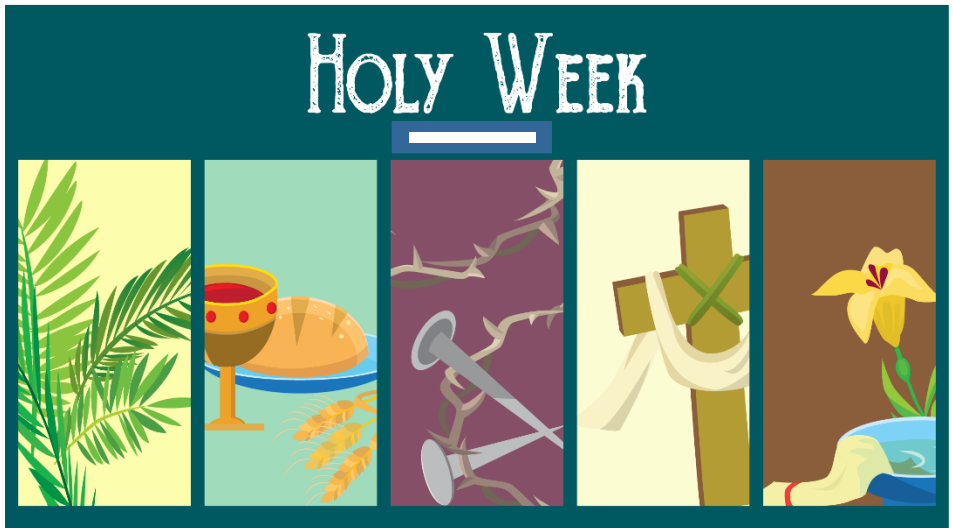
This is not a traditional service.

It's a dynamic experience that will challenge, inspire, and stay with you long after the final note is sung.

Come and see the Easter story told with:

- Music
- Modern themes
- Powerful visuals
- Heart and soul

Whether you have strong faith, little faith, or no faith at all — you are warmly welcome.



## AN AFFIRMATION OF FAITH FOR THE BEGINNING OF LENT [by Noel]

---



At the beginning of Lent, our journey starts in the wilderness and then we follow Jesus along the Way that ends in the cross and resurrection, in that place where there was the ultimate battle with the powers of evil, with demonic forces at work in the wilderness of our lives and in our world:

- There the powers are disarmed;
- there they are robbed of their power over us and over the world;
- there they are made a public spectacle;
- there they are led as captives in Christ's triumphal procession;
- there we are made 'more than conquerors through him who loved; us';
- there we know that 'we shall overcome one day!'

So we affirm our faith:

God, you know us in the secret places:

**We praise you that you love us to the end and beyond.**

God you search us and know us and to you we are accountable:

**We praise you that you are always ready forgive us.**

God, you have plumbed the depths of human failure, disobedience and depravity:

**But you lift us up to the heights.**

Christ, you were led by the Spirit into the wilderness:

**You are the One who is with us on our wilderness journeys.**

Christ, you were tested as we are:

**You are our companion on the way.**

Christ, you are our judge but save to the uttermost:

**'And on your Kingdom there shall be no end'. Amen.**