

Have you walked up to Findon Churchyard recently? The snowdrops are stunning this year, a real sign of hope and springtime! Thanks to the work of Findon Volunteers, they are finding it easier to grow this year too, with the fallen leaves having been expertly cleared away – thank you so much. The earliest primroses are also flowering now, but their glory will be at its height in a few weeks' time. As the days lengthen, the birds are starting their rehearsals for the dawn chorus which will be at its best in time for our Dawn Service on Easter Morning, but I am jumping ahead of myself – we are not quite in to Lent yet!

Speaking of being ahead of myself, how many of you spotted last month's deliberate mistake?! Shrove Tuesday, with the pancake frolics, wasn't 1<sup>st</sup> February but is 1<sup>st</sup> March, which is also St David's Day! Families coming to our Messy Church that day will be able to make daffodils as well as enjoy eating and racing with pancakes at Findon Village Hall, and the pupils at Clapham and Patching School will have their own pancake fun in a special assembly towards the end of their school day. Of course, the pancakes we enjoy are symbolic of using up rich ingredients in our pantries before starting the discipline of Lent.

Shrove Tuesday is a time of fun and frivolity, followed in the church by Ash Wednesday, the day when traditionally people went to confession to a priest and received absolution. Palm crosses from the previous year will have been burnt and the ashes from this are then used in the Ash Wednesday Service to mark each person with the sign of the cross for repentance. We have a Service at Findon and Patching Church at 10am that day.

Lent is traditionally a time of reflection, and some people like to 'give up' something they enjoy during these 40 days as a discipline. Another way to mark this period is to do something extra – perhaps setting aside a time each day to read or pray, or making a greater effort to support someone in need, or a charitable organisation. Lent reflects the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness alone, fasting and praying, before starting his earthly ministry and can be a time of spiritual growth for us all, as well as the opportunity to lay down the things that burden us as we review our daily lives. We are planning to run a Lent Course, based around beautiful images and stories, called 'Comfort Ye my People' over the five weeks, so keep an eye on our website for details and do join us if you are able. If you'd like a preview, look on the Diocesan website ([Lent 2022 - Diocese of Chichester \(anglican.org\)](https://www.anglican.org.uk/2012/02/28/lent-2022/)).

After Lent and Holy Week we come of course to the greatest festival in the Christian calendar – Easter – when we praise God with joy for the resurrection of his Son, Jesus, who died on the cross for us all. There are no flowers in church during Lent, so Easter Sunday is always a joy when the church is once more filled with beautiful flower arrangements, often using lilies. This year, we are asking people if they would like to sponsor a lily in memory of a loved one, or to give thanks for a special event (like a wedding anniversary). Details of how to do this can be found in the Findon News. We also welcome a donation towards flowers at any time of year to commemorate something. I'd like here to thank our dedicated and talented flower arrangers at all three churches for the beautiful displays they create through the year to adorn our churches.

Every blessing,

*Helena*