

## Lent 2026 Celebration of the word for primary schools

This liturgy can be used on Ash Wednesday or at another time to mark the season of Lent. It can be used as a whole-school liturgy or by individual classes.

### You will need:

- A table, crucifix, candle and Bible to create a central focus point
- Music or hymns
- Readers
- Paper (to write or draw Lenten promises and prayers)
- Baskets

If this liturgy is to be used as your Ash Wednesday service, you will also need:

- Ashes
- Volunteers trained to distribute the ashes

Suggested hymn: Hosea (Come back to me) (842, Laudate)

To find out more about this year's story and to join the Big Lent Walk, visit [Lent 2026 resources for primary schools](#)



Zunayed on a floating garden in Bangladesh.

## Gather

### Opening Hymn

Play some music or a hymn as pupils enter.

### Sign of the Cross

*Leader:* We begin our worship with a reminder that Jesus died and rose again for us and so we gather in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

*All:* Amen

### Lent explained

*Leader:* Lent is a time when we pray, do kind things for other people, give up things and give to others, as we prepare to celebrate the great feast of Easter.

For forty days, we accompany Jesus on his journey to Calvary and we see the mercy he shows towards others, despite his suffering. Just as God shows mercy towards us, like Jesus, we try to show mercy to others. So, this Lent, we will take our Lenten journey alongside families around the world living in poverty, especially those who are suffering because of climate change.

### Opening prayer

Loving and compassionate God,  
teach us to show love and mercy to each other.

As we begin our journey through Lent, inspire us to be generous and kind.

Through our joy, patience and kindness, may we help to build a better world. *Amen.*

## Word

### Scripture reading: Joel 2:12-13

*Leader:* Let's listen to our scripture reading.

*Reader:* A reading from the prophet, Joel (2:12-13)

'Now, now – it is the Lord who speaks – come back to me with all your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning.' Let your hearts be broken, not your garments torn. Turn to the Lord your God again, for he is all tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in graciousness, and ready to relent

The word of the Lord.

*All:* Thanks be to God.

## Response

*Leader:* In our reading, the Lord calls us to return to him with sorrow for the ways we have failed to act as we ought to have done. And God is always merciful, not wishing to punish us but to love us. Joel says "Let your hearts be broken, not your garments torn." In other words, let your heart be opened; it's not about how you look on the outside, it's all about what your heart is doing inside. God is full of love and wants us to have hearts filled with love because we have experienced his mercy.

The reading also asks us to fast. Fasting is one way to let God love others through us. When we fundraise for others, or give up fast food, snacks or some other treat, we stand in solidarity with people living in poverty. It's like saying, "I want to stand beside you in your hunger". During Lent, CAFOD invites us to support those who live in extreme poverty. CAFOD can turn the money we raise into something amazing that helps communities transform their lives.

As we continue our liturgy, let's remember our sisters and brothers living in poverty.

### CAFOD story

[Show the schools Lent video to share this year's story about the floating gardens in Bangladesh](#)

### Receiving of the Ashes and/or Lenten promises

*Leader:* We will have a minute or two for reflection when you are invited to write or draw your Lenten promise or a prayer for those who are experiencing poverty. *(These could be prepared in class beforehand, cut out, and decorated.)*

*Quiet instrumental music can be played during this time.*

<i>If ashes are being distributed:</i>	<i>If ashes are not being distributed:</i>
You're now going to receive your ashes. Please wait in silence until you are called forward and take this opportunity to speak and listen to God in your heart.	Please wait in silence until you are called forward to place your piece of paper in the basket and take this opportunity to speak and listen to God in your heart.
After receiving the ashes, place your piece of paper into the basket. Later, they will be	Later, your prayers and promises will be added to our CAFOD display as a sign

<p>added to our CAFOD display as a sign that, this Lent, you want to help build a better world.</p> <p><i>Have a basket on each side of the ashes. Pupils line up to receive ashes on their foreheads then place their paper into the basket.</i></p>	<p>that, this Lent, you want to help build a better world.</p> <p><i>Have two pupils holding baskets at the front. Pupils line up to place their paper into the basket.</i></p>
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## Prayers

Each prayer can be read by a different person. The response is: **Hear our prayer.**

Loving God, we pray for our school family as we begin this season of Lent. Help us to be generous in our actions.

Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Caring God, we pray for families who are suffering because of climate change. Through our fundraising, help us to support more families and help to build a better world.

Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Gentle God, we pray for those who work for justice all over the world. As we live out our school's Jubilee Pledge, let us never lose hope for a fair and just world.

Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Wonderful God, we pray for one another as we journey through Lent. As we pray, give things up, fundraise and think of others, inspire us to be kind and show mercy in our actions.

Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

## Send

### Final prayer

Loving God,  
Help us to work together  
to share what we have  
so that everyone has what they need.

Help us to build a better world  
where each of us can become  
the best person we can be.

Amen

*Leader:* In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

*All:* Amen

## Closing hymn

*Invite everyone to leave quietly.*