

Will you join me in a Lent Event?

Recently I registered as an individual to take part in the Lent Event in 2009. Now I'd like to invite all of you who want to to join me.

The idea is simple. During Lent we give up a luxury or two and donate the money saved to projects that offer a better future to some of the world's neediest people. This year the money raised by Lent Event will support six projects of Uniting Church Overseas Aid in South India, Zambia, Timor Leste (East Timor), Papua New Guinea, Sudan and the Solomon Islands.

Lent Event was the inspiration of Sarah White. As a follower of Christ, Sarah felt moved to respond to extreme hardship faced by families, particularly children, in the Third World. With a team of supporters, Sarah has developed the concept so that it can be shared by any community that wishes to be involved.

Step 1: Reflect on your lifestyle and daily spending and then decide on an item you will forgo for the forty days of Lent such as fast food, coffees, sweets, treats, newspaper/magazines, entertainment etc. Make note of the money you will save by going without this item and contribute this money to Lent Event so that others may have a better chance at life.

Step 2: Use the Lent Event resources for worship, bible study and daily prayer and reflection to deepen your experience of Lent.

Step 3: At the end of Lent send your tax deductible donation to Lent Event.

I haven't yet decided what I'm going to give up for Lent. In previous years I've given up chocolate and fast food, but if I want to save some serious money and donate hundreds of dollars, then I think giving up buying books is the way to go. I'll get back to you on this.

More about the Lent Event

Lent was originally a time when the faithful rededicated themselves, and when new Christians were instructed in the faith and prepared for baptism. Lent is therefore a perfect time for intentional reflection and repentance. We are reminded of the huge sacrifice God made for us, and how easily we forget to sacrifice ourselves to help our neighbours.

Lent Event is not just a fundraising venture, but a spiritual journey. Being invited to set aside some non-essential item or activity for 40 days sets us on a journey. Firstly we must think about the many things that make up our life, and which we mostly take for granted, and decide which ones we can do without for forty days. This almost inevitably leads to some soul-searching. The exercise begs so many questions: what are those things that I consider essential in my life, and why do I imagine them to be so important? Why does giving them up for forty days feel so difficult? What do I really need for a meaningful life? What would I be well-advised to give up for good? The questions are almost endless!

Lent Event is also an educational and community-building resource. It offers us a way to go more deeply into the tradition of Lent, and to reclaim or even reinvent the tradition for today's church. Churches that participate in Lent Event are encouraged to do so as a community. Communities are to be encouraged to share with one another about what they are giving up personally and to support one another during the period of Lent.

Lent Event is a powerful evangelistic tool. It is a great opportunity to share our values with both Christian and non-Christian friends and it provides an opportunity to talk about the Christian faith in an easy and comfortable way.

Lent Event is about doing with less, rather than giving more. Because Lent Event invites participants us to do without something that they usually spend money on and donate that money, it should not pose an extra financial demand on them, nor should it detract from other giving. Lent Event therefore stands alongside other charitable causes without being in competition with them.

During Lent I will be leading a six part lectionary-based Bible study prepared by Lent Event, in which we will look at the way Jesus faced his testing times and what that might mean for the way we live our lives. What have challenging times meant for their faith journey? And we put ourselves to the test by asking “What does it mean to be Christian?” and “What is a Christian response to injustice?” More details about times and places will follow.

So, what do you think? Would you like to join me?

For more information, including about the projects, see <http://www.lentevent.com/welcome>