

A DIFFERENT WAY TO OBSERVE LENT AND RAMADAN?

The Islamic month of fasting - **Ramadan** – and the Christian fast – **Lent** - both begin on

Wednesday February 18th .

Sharing space together in the University Spirituality Centre has made us aware of this . It won't happen like this again for several years because of the cycles of the moon. So we are suggesting a memorable way of observing the discipline and, hopefully, making a practical difference. The attached document explains more fully.



Obviously Ramadan only lasts one month and Lent lasts forty days but the principle is the same – we take a serious look at material possessions and also our responsibility to other people especially those who are poorer.

It is also worth noting that, this year Pesach/Passover and Maundy Thursday overlap. Obviously this happens often but still noteworthy that decluttering is part of the process of preparing for Passover, removing all leavened foodstuff and thoroughly cleaning the home in order to make a fresh start. The article *The Spiritual Value of Decluttering* in *Jewish Action.com* is particularly good.

We thought that, in these days of such religious conflict and misunderstanding, it would be good to encourage a principle that all three monotheistic faiths believe – that our lives are a gift from the One God and accountable to God. That principle of ‘life as a gift’ is one we share not just with people of faith but all human beings and so we confidently share this idea of ‘a spiritual spring-clean with everyone, whatever their spirituality or beliefs.

We are just making the suggestion. Use and Adapt it as you will.

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Lent and Ramadan 2026

Periods of fasting and self-discipline lies at the heart of religious experience. In the monotheistic faiths it is a reminder that we are not in control of our lives but are inspired by, and accountable to, God. For Christians the period of Lent reminds of the story of Jesus fasting in the wilderness for 40 days before he began his ministry which would lead to his death on the cross in Jerusalem. Muslims fast during the month of Ramadan to draw closer to, and become more conscious of, God. In the process undergoing a form of spiritual detoxification from the residue of busy modern day lives.

This year those two fasting times begin on the same day 18 February 2026.

Lent traditionally is a time for giving up things as self-discipline but some Christians now acknowledge they are not going to give up chocolate or whiskey for 40 days and so have another approach.....Jesus gave up everything, left his home and work and went into the empty space of the desert and prayed, spoke with God for guidance.....it is that vast empty space which is the inspiration...we live in a world of accumulationdid you know that if no more toddlers' clothes were manufactured no-one would notice for 3 years because there are already warehouses full of enough toddlers' clothes to clothe every toddler in the world for 3 years....While half the world accumulates the other half starve.....

Hoarding is now a recognised medical condition. But we can hold on to more than possessions - relationships, the club we joined 20 years ago and just keep going, the role we agreed to take 10 years ago and really want to give up, downsizing so we can move on..... A very simple idea some Christians have adopted is that every day during Lent they get rid of one thing they no longer need. This starts off quite painlessly as decluttering but becomes harder as it goes along as you start to get rid of something you might still care about. But that is the discipline. Drawing nearer to the cross, painful self-sacrifice sets in. The beginning of Lent actually reminds us of reality. On Ash Wednesday we are told, 'Remember O man, O woman, you are but dust and to dust you will return.' We can't take any of it to the grave. So we might as well practice now!

The month of **Ramadan** is seen as the pinnacle of spiritual cleansing which is achieved by not just physical deprivation of food and drink during daylight hours, but also increased mental and emotional discipline throughout the month. With all combined, a sense of holistic purification and well-being is achieved, which Muslims feel unparalleled to none. During Ramadan, it is also common practice for Muslims to discharge their yearly charitable obligations to the poor and needy, of their surplus wealth in their possession over the previous year. Known as Zakah, which loosely means purification, it aims to purify not only one's spiritual self but also that of their material wealth. Some Muslims express that as a kind of decluttering. 'If I have not used or worn something for a year, I do not need it. I will sell it and give the money to the poor'.