

Lent Challenge 2010 for schools

**Diocese of St Albans
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Introduction

The Bishop of St Albans, the Bishop of Bedford and the Bishop of Hertford have written a Lent course for use this year as part of their Challenge2010. Further details of this Challenge can be found on the website www.challenge2010.org. The Lent course follows the Lectionary readings set for the Sundays in Lent.

In addition, a set of ideas have prepared by Rev. Stephen Holroyd and Di Thomas, for use in Collective Worship in our church schools. They are all based on readings from Luke's Gospel. There is one for each week during Lent, the intention being that if these Collective Worship ideas are used on a Monday or Tuesday they could facilitate class-led assemblies and tasks in class that are more reflective. They are in outline only and would need developing for the appropriate primary or secondary context. A text is included to be taken back from the Collective Worship by each class that can then be put up in the class as a Learning Intention and as a basis for further informal discussion in class – functioning in a similar way to the Challenge 2010.

There are no specific music suggestions but why not consider using Star Wars with Week 1 (Don't give into the Dark Side!), something very gentle and classical for Week 2, Week 3 the theme tune to The Apprentice, Week 4 the Negro Spiritual "Going Home", Week 5 – on that theme you are spoilt for choice!

To begin, Bishop Alan recounts an experience adopted in a rural Wiltshire school he knew well.

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An Idea from Bishop Alan

Bishop Alan has given us permission to reproduce this extract from his book "God-shaped Mission: Theological and Practical Perspectives from the Rural Church". Teachers may find the actions below helpful.

Ali Jenkins, the Head Teacher at **Great Wishford Primary School**, with 100 pupils, talks about a sense of awe and wonder needing to be part of a school's atmosphere. Assemblies were relaxed, enjoyable and challenging: "There must be time to listen and be silent, to talk and to question, to sing, pray and reflect". On Shrove Tuesday there were "forgiveness pancakes". The children met in class and talked together about things in their lives they were not proud of. Then they drew pictures showing those things. Each picture was placed within a pancake shape and placed in a book of forgiveness.

On Ash Wednesday each class discussed pledge they might make, for example, helping someone with work or looking out for someone who was sad in the playground. The four classes in the school each chose ten pledges, marking the 40 days of Lent. On Good Friday, the pledges were arranged around a large cross.

During Lent, small stones were placed in a corridor along with a bowl of water. The stones could represent a worry: children - and staff - could hold a stone, think about the worry, and then drop it into the water, and move on. The previous Advent the school had joined parishioners in the local church, led the service and done the same thing, with the stones representing something they were not proud of. "The adults saw the genuineness of the children and felt humbled. One man said if a child took one stone, he'd need a handful. Every adult in the church took part." It is important to recognise the transforming potential and witness of children's spirituality and find imaginative way of allowing it to change the church.

Taken from:

"God-shaped Mission: Theological and Practical Perspectives from the Rural Church", Canterbury Press, Norwich (2008), ISBN 1853118079
by the Rt Revd Alan Smith ©

Week 1

Text: Luke 4:1-13

The story lends itself to a dramatic presentation, but not going overboard on the devil but “bigging up” the challenge to Jesus about his life priorities and how he should use his power.

Text to take back to the class: Luke 4:8

Jesus says: “The scripture says, ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve only him!’”
(GNB)

Theme: Temptation

Challenge: What do I worship – what is at the centre of my life? How do I use the power that I have – physical strength, influence, roles?

Reflection: What do I need to change in my life to have God at the centre? How can I use the power that I have to influence my class, my school, my family for the good?

This can deal with issues like bullying and taking responsibility – in class, in school, in community, in family.

Week 2

Text: Luke 7:36-50

You may wish to use this version of the story that works well in a primary context, but older children could still have fun with it:

Jesus anointed by a sinful woman

Set out six people in the way people ate in First Century Israel, lying down (on left elbow so they can eat with the right hand). One of them is Jesus. In those days no one wore shoes and socks so all at meal take their socks and shoes off. Another is a friend of Jesus called Simon. (Give Jesus and Simon their names on a sticky label.)

Whilst they were eating their meal (*give them a bowl of crisps to eat*) a girl came in carrying a flask of expensive perfume. She went round to Jesus and started to rub the perfume on to Jesus' feet. (*Choose a girl and give them something sweet smelling to put on to Jesus' feet.*) Everyone at the meal was horrified at what the girl was doing to Jesus, especially Simon, who was giving the meal.

Simon said: "What is this woman doing? Jesus - how can you let this women do what she is doing?"

Jesus said: "Simon, Simon, listen carefully. Answer this question: two men owed money to one of their friends, who was a money lender. One owed £500, the other owed £1,000. None of the two men could pay back the money, so the money lender decided to let them both off from paying him back. Which one would feel more cared for by their friend?"

Before we hear what Simon said – what would you say?

Simon said to Jesus: "Well, it would be the one who owed the most."

Jesus then said: "Simon, you are right."

Then Jesus pointed to the woman rubbing his feet with perfume. "Look at this woman, she is showing me care because she has been forgiven all the things she has done wrong by me." By pouring the perfume on Jesus' feet the woman was showing her respect for Jesus, for who he was. She was showing him respect by caring for him, because he had shown her respect because he had not looked down on her because of the wrong things she had done in her life, but treated her as the still beautiful woman she was. Jesus treated all human beings with respect, he never treated them as if they were an idiot, or weedy, stupid or weak – or an animal.

Then Jesus said to Simon: "And look at what you haven't done for me since I came to your house for a meal – you haven't greeted me or given me water to wash my hands and feet, or oil to refresh myself."

Comment: This story challenges out attitudes to others, on how welcoming and accepting we are, and the quality of our forgiveness. This really hits home when acted out in Collective Worship – some previous preparing of the children who would be asked to wash feet would be needed – using the ointment rather than tears and hair is a big help! (Mark14:3-9)

Text to take back to the class: Luke 7:47b

Jesus says, "But one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." (NRSV)

Theme: Attitudes to others

Challenge: How do I deal with the people around me in my class, at school, in my family?

Reflection: How accepting am I of people around me, especially those who might look a bit different, come from another culture, or have some form of learning disability? How willing am I to forgive people who have hurt me or neglected me? Do I really know what forgiveness is? Do I need forgiveness?

Week 3

Text: Luke 14:7-14

Feasting is something that all children seem to enjoy and setting up the collective worship as a meal – especially in the floor so that they have to lie down like they did in Jesus' day. This could be set up as an exercise with the children involved having titles/roles like Doctor, Vicar, Bishop, Simon Cowell, Cheryl Cole, David Beckham and poor people, disabled people etc and get the children to decide who should get the best seats before then going through the story – bringing out the point in v11.

Text to take back to the class: Luke 14:11

Jesus says: "All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." (NRSV)

Challenge: How big-headed am I?

Reflection: The value of love is crucial to making relationship work, but can it work if I put my own importance first. (Do I really want to go through life as Mrs Bucket from "Keeping Up Appearances"!)? Here looking at the life of someone like Mother Teresa could be worthwhile.

Week 4

Text: Luke 15:11-32

There is a good version of this story in the Hippity Dog series produced by CPAS in the 80s which is on video – it is the episode “Mr Goover’s last fling” – narrated by the late Willie Rushton. Here it is in text:

The Loving Father:

There was a man; we’ll call him Mr Moneybags. He had two sons, the eldest was called Sydney and younger was called Roger. Sydney worked very hard for his father, in the family business, Moneybags Sweets Emporium Ltd. Sydney was up as soon as it was light, he would have his breakfast, get dressed, and hurry down to the factory, and worked hard making sure there was enough liquorice in the dolly mixtures, and checking that there were the right number of raisins and nuts in the fruit and nut chocolate bars.

Roger was different, he did not get up early in the morning; in fact he sometimes never got up at all. He would ring for Mr Moneybag’s butler to bring him breakfast, which he always ate in bed. Mr Moneybags used to come into his bedroom every morning and say, “Come on son, why not be like your brother and come and work down the factory; after all, one day when I am gone, Moneybags Sweets Emporium Ltd will belong to you and your brother!”

But all Roger could say to his dad was, “Cool it, Dad, I just want to chill out for a while.” Roger used to like parties that went on to late in the evening, so he was always going out, dressed in his best gear, when his brother Sydney would come home after a hard day at the factory. Sydney would stand in the hallway and quietly grind his teeth in anger as he watched his brother go off to yet another party. “Dear old Dad is too easy on him – if it was up to me, darling Roger would not know what had hit him.”

Roger was really enjoying chilling out, and the parties were incredible – but he needed more money, more money than Mr Moneybags gave him as pocket money. So one day he went to his dad and said, “Hi Dad, how’s things? Look, I’ve been thinking about my life and I’ve decided it lacks one very important ingredient.” “What’s that?” said Mr Moneybags.

“Money, daddyo, you know what I mean, I need some folding, some dosh, some wonga – I need some pound signs in my bank account. You said that one day Moneybags Sweets whatever would one day be mine and Roger’s; well, I want my share now.”

Mr Moneybags didn’t know what to say, but he loved his son so he eventually said, “OK son, I’ll go and see the bank, and I’ll give you your share of the business.” “Great!” said Roger, and then he went out to another party.

A few days later, whilst Roger was in bed enjoying eggs, bacon, cornflakes, orange juice, coffee, toast, croissants, chocolate biscuits and a grapefruit, Mr Moneybags' butler brought in an envelope on a silver tray. When Roger opened the envelope, there was his share certificate that said he owned half of Moneybags Sweets Emporium Ltd. Immediately Roger sprang out of bed, got dressed, and rushed off down to the bank, where he sold his shares for a great big pile of money. Then he went home, packed his bags and left for the airport, leaving his dad a note saying, "Hi Dad, thanks for the shares. I have cashed them in and gone on holiday. Love, Roger."

Mr Moneybags was very upset that Roger had gone away, and Sydney ground his teeth so hard that he had to go and see his dentist, and when he could talk again, the only thing he said for ages was, "That selfish, good for nothing – he's no longer a brother of mine." Meanwhile Roger was sunning himself by the sea in the South of France, he was surrounded by loads of pretty girls who were always ready to receive the presents he bought them. Roger always had friends who were always ready to come and eat with him at his expensive hotel so long as he paid for their meals. Roger would get up every morning and say to himself, "This is great, this is the life!"

But one day everything started to go wrong for Roger. He got a phone call in his hotel room from his bank saying that his money had run out. Then the hotel asked him to leave because he could not pay his bill. Then all the pretty girls ignored him and went away, and none of his friends who had come to dinner returned his calls. Life was getting difficult for Roger. He had nowhere to live, no food to eat, and no friends. He got a job washing up at a Transport Café, but he was too slow at washing plates so he got the sack. So eventually he ended up working on a pig farm, looking after the pigs. As he had no more money he shared the pigs' shed, and he ate their food.

By now, Roger did not feel cool but only cold and miserable. He thought to himself, "Even my Dad's workers at Moneybags Sweets Emporium Ltd are better off than me. They all have food to eat, and a nice warm house to come home to at the end of the day, and they have friends and family who care for them – and I have got nothing and nobody." Roger then decided the time had come to go home. "I know," he said, "I'll go home and say to Dad that I'm really sorry, that I know have done wrong, just let me work in the factory - no more handouts." So he got hold of enough money doing jobs for others to find the money for his airfare home.

Meanwhile Mr Moneybags had been missing his son. Every day he just sat around day at home, he stopped going to work, and let Sydney run Moneybags Emporium Ltd. One day, half way through the afternoon, the front door bell rang. Mr Moneybags left it to his butler to answer the door, but within seconds Roger was bounding into his room. Mr Moneybags jumped up from his chair and gave Roger a really big hug. Roger just kept saying, "I'm so sorry for everything I did Dad – I'm not good enough to be your son."

“Rubbish!” said Mr Moneybags.

Then he started giving orders to his butler. “Order Mr Roger some new clothes, and get onto the cooks, we are going to have the biggest party ever tonight, because I thought my son was lost for ever, but he has come back”. Mr Moneybags had not been so happy in ages.

At 5.30 pm precisely Sydney came home from work, and as soon as he came though the door he knew something was up. People were rushing around with trays of the best glass and china, and he could hear a disco being set up in the ballroom. He wondered what on earth was going on. He found the butler and asked him what was happening. “Oh, Mr Sydney, your father is so pleased – Mr Roger has come home.” At that news Sydney threw down his coat, umbrella, and briefcase and stormed off to find his father. He found his father in the kitchens supervising the icing of a big cake, on which the head chef was writing, “Welcome Home Roger”.

“Dad,” said Sydney, “What do you think you are doing? I have worked for you for years, I have worked all the hours under the sun, I have laboured for hours on getting the liquorice right, and checking on the fruit and nut. But what has Roger done – nothing. All he’s done is waste his life and your money and you welcome him home with a party. I have never left you, I have been a faithful son, and what have you give me – not so much as a peanut!”

Mr Moneybags answered Sydney, “My son, you have always been here with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be happy, because I thought your brother was gone for ever, but now he has come home and said he is sorry and I have him back.” So the party went ahead and Roger was so pleased that his Dad was not angry, but ready to let him make a new start as his son.

Text to take back to the class: Luke 15: 32

“We had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.” (NRSV)

Challenge: Do I know how much God loves me? Do I know that I am loved?

Reflection: If I am going to make a difference then I need to know that I am loved, above all loved by God – otherwise I will end being like a toy with no batteries or a bottle of coke (or champagne depending on your post code) that has no fizz. The useful prayers here could be from CW Order 1: “Jesus Lamb of God” or “Father of all, we give you thanks and praise” which is based on the Luke story and could be usefully adapted to be a more general prayer.

Week 5

Text: Luke 24:44-49

Lent must bring us to the Cross and the challenge of the self-giving of Christ on the Cross – this is the ultimate challenge to the direction and purpose of our lives. There are plenty of powerful ways this can be put across – it could be fun getting class to present their own passion story.

Text to take back to the class: Luke 24: 46

Jesus says: "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and rise from the dead on the third day". (NRSV)

(and I know it is not Luke but also Romans 5:6-7: "While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly, Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die." (NRSV))

Challenge: Who or what would you be willing to die for?

Reflection: Why did Jesus die for you? A useful tool here could be the Miracle on the River Kwai.
