



Steps through Lent – Intergenerational Talk.

This short talk can be used / adapted to introduce the Steps through Lent footsteps. It can be used in Church, Children’s Clubs, Messy Church and even schools. Please feel free to change / expand as required. There are some ideas for Messy Church activities at the end of this document.

To help bring animation to the talk you can use props but this is entirely up to you.

Props: Rucksack, Teddy, (if you’re brave you can also have a pair of pants!)

Talk:

Has anyone here ever been on a walking holiday? Has anyone walked the Camino way, or any of the many wonderful trails in Ireland? There are many wonderful pilgrim paths through Ireland.

If you have been on a walking holiday you will know this – but for those who have never been, let me tell you, preparing for a walking holiday isn’t the same as packing for a normal holiday.

In the summer holidays if we are heading away for a week by the pool, we try to cram as much as possible into our suitcases don’t we? We sit on it, jump on it and try as hard as we can to zip it up.

We do that because we know we won’t have to carry it for very long, it will go from the car to a trolley to the plane and then into a taxi or bus and finally will sit in the hotel room for a whole week until we have to try and pack again – this time with the added souvenirs we’ve collected from our time. Then we face the other challenges – will we ever close it in time to catch the plane? Will it burst open and spill our undies all over the runway?! Quite a challenge!

Packing for a walking holiday, however, is a very different task altogether. This time you are packing a rucksack, a bit like this one.

In a rucksack your space is limited and unlike the suitcase you know you are going to have to carry it wherever you go. So, you actually have to do the opposite of suitcase packing – this time you start by looking at what you can *leave behind*, what you can *cope without*.

You find yourself asking questions like

“do I really need my iPad or all these books?”

“how many times can I get away with wearing the same pair of pants?!”

Or “is it time I stop sleeping with my teddy bear at night?” ...and I’m 49!



You might already be aware, but we are approaching the start of / in Lent – a time that lasts 40 days leading up to Easter. It is a time when we remember that Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness – away from his friends, away from lovely food, away from all the distractions of life, so that He could spend time with Father God. It was a time when He was tempted, but it was also a time where He prayed.

Lent is often described as a journey or a pathway because of how long it lasts. It is a time that is quite different to other times in the Christian calendar.

Unlike Advent in the build up to Christmas, Lent is not a time where shops can sell us stuff, they can't weigh us down with all the extra things they say we "must have" or do or in order to enjoy the experience.

Instead, it is a journey we choose to take. A time where we think about how we live, how we spend time with God and how we help those around us.

Just like packing for our walking holiday, it requires us to think carefully about the "stuff" we carry around with us in life. To examine every area and ask is this healthy, does it help me to be closer in my relationship with God or does it distract me and take up precious time?

One tip I heard for packing a rucksack was to get all the things we think we're going to need, lay them all out on the bed then divide it in half, because we only actually need half the things we think we do.

It can be a scary thing to do because we convince ourselves we NEED all these things. The reality though, when you are wearing the rucksack and walking your 7th mile, is you suddenly realise how heavy your clothes, hairdryer, toiletries and electrical devices actually are, and you start to question if you really do need them or are they just unnecessary weight that is slowing you down?

The same is true in life, and this time of Lent is a really good opportunity to do exactly that – to lay out in front of us all the things in our life, everything that requires our time, our energy or our money. Look at it and think, if you had to only take half this "stuff" forward into the coming year what would you choose? Is all of this really necessary? Is it time to get rid of some things? Some habits, some attitudes...

Many people talk about Lent as a chore, a grey time of sacrifice and doing without, but it really doesn't need to be that way. Instead this year I want to encourage you to see Lent as a time of opportunity. To use the walking holiday analogy as inspiration for you to see Lent in a whole new way.

When you are on a walking trail, you change your view. You stop to listen. You spend time away from the usual distractions of life and instead you focus on your trail guide. You listen to the one who knows the paths you are walking and who walks with you. You see things and



hear things you've never noticed before, and you get a whole new perspective on life around you.

How wonderful is that?!

The gospel of Matthew gives us direction when it comes to this time of Lent, or any time where we feel led to fast and pray: Matthew 6: 16-18

¹⁶ "And when you fast, don't make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and dishevelled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. ¹⁷ But when you fast, comb your hair^[d] and wash your face. ¹⁸ Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you."

Lent is not meant to be a grey and depressing journey, but a time of simplicity, a time of drawing close to God, a journey of reflection.

(If you are using the "Steps through Lent" footprints you can use this section to introduce the idea – if not move to the prayer)

To help us on this journey we have some footsteps we can use each week through Lent. Starting after pancake day (Shrove Tuesday) on Ash Wednesday, there will be a step available for each day – apart from Sundays.

Each day you can choose one of the following, a step of: Grace, Prayer, Giving, Love, Sacrifice or Change.

We encourage you to take as many steps as you are able to. Some of you will be able to take a step every day, others you will just do one each week – we all walk at different paces.

You will see there is a big footprint and a small footprint. That is because we are walking together, adults and children – whoever you are doing this with – whether you are parents, carers, grandparents, aunts, uncles or close family friends. No matter what our age we are all equal on this journey of faith and can teach, encourage and inspire each other.

Together, talk about each step and what you might do. For example with the step of Grace, you would think about something you might need to say sorry for or someone you need to forgive.

Each person then chooses to either write down or draw a picture of what they will do.



You can either do the week's steps in one go on the Sunday so you plan ahead the things you will do that week, or you can do them day by day as you are able, whichever is best for you.

On Sunday when we come together we encourage you to bring the footsteps you have completed that week, we will then stick them on the wall around the church / classroom to show our journey together / place them on the floor leading to the altar *

*(*choose whichever – if any – you wish to do in your setting. If you are not encouraging the congregation to bring them into church, instead encourage them to stick their steps up somewhere in their house as a reminder of the journey they have taken in Lent.)*

Prayer:

Lord God, we thank you for this season of reflection, a time to lay down the things of life that would distract and keep us away from your word and your guidance.

We thank you Lord Jesus for your example to us in how to live a life of simplicity, a life of love and a life of grace. Help us as we journey together through this time of Lent, may we hear your voice more clearly, love those around us with greater compassion and discover new ways to love and serve you.

In your precious name we ask. Amen

Messy Church Ideas:

1. Trays with kinetic or damp sand, toy animals of different types and sizes that can leave footprints in the sand.



2. Sensory walks or Chalk activity Footpaths



3. Footprint painting or toy footprint painting

