

Lenten FAQs

Why does Lent move around the calendar from year to year?

Since Easter is movable, Ash Wednesday moves around too. Easter is always the Sunday after the full moon that occurs on or after the spring equinox on March 21. That's why Easter is never earlier than March 22nd or later than April 25th. The beginning of Lent, Ash Wednesday is the 40th day before Easter.

But, aren't there more than 40 days during Lent?

Yes, there are actually 45 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter. Since Sundays are celebrated as "little Easters" they're not counted in the 40 days of Lent.

When is Ash Wednesday next year?

Actually, you can figure out when Ash Wednesday and Easter occur for the next 70 years by reading the table on page 883 of the *Book of Common Prayer*¹. In 2021, Easter will fall on April 4th. And then Easter won't be on April 4th again until 2083! (When was Easter the year you were born? Check it out on this table, or, of course, you can just Google it.)

Do I have to do things differently during Lent?

Of course not! However, the gift of the liturgical calendar is that our observance of Jesus life and death and resurrection makes us more mindful of the great gift of salvation. Any practices of prayer, almsgiving, and fasting help us to be more focused on what God has done for us, and less on our own needs. That's why we're encouraged to give alms especially during Lent. According to the *Book of Common Prayer*, Ash Wednesday and Good Friday have been traditional days of "special acts of discipline and self-denial" – perhaps fasting. We may pick up some spiritual reading or set aside more time for prayer in our lives. These practices serve us in observing a holy Lent.

¹ The collection of prayers, psalms, devotions, and services that together make up the official liturgy of the Episcopal Church. Nearly all services in any Episcopal Church are printed in this book. In a church in which there is a wide range of interpretation of doctrine and of liturgical style, the *Book of Common Prayer* provides a unifying glue that places it at the heart of who we are both as Episcopalians and as part of the wider [Anglican Communion](#). The first English *Book of Common Prayer* was published in 1549; the classic version, which remained in use in England with minimal changes until well into the 20th century, was completed in 1662. The Episcopal Church revised its version of the *Book of Common Prayer* in 1928, and then essentially rewrote it amid considerable controversy, in 1979. Some services from the 1928 prayer book have been retained in the current prayer book as "Rite 1" services. Although each province of the Anglican Communion now has its own *Book of Common Prayer*, the similarities between them are far greater than their differences.