

It is a custom dating back centuries and a powerful sign of penitence at the beginning of Lent.

But amid restrictions to limit the spread of Covid-19, many Christians are seeking out different ways of marking Ash Wednesday this week.

Various people with the Lent Instagram ash filter on their foreheads.

Christians in many traditions attend Church services on Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, in which many choose to be marked with ash, made from burnt palm branches, in the sign of a cross on their forehead.

Although Ash Wednesday services can take place during the current lockdown, with some adaptations, if is safe to do so, many are not being held in their usual way this year.

Instead, many Christians will be marking Ash Wednesday at home or through virtual means. Some parishes have been distributing ashes to parishioners.

New resources from the Church of England include a simple [liturgy](#) for households – to use either as part of an online service with members of their local church or to mark the occasion together.

There is also [advice](#) for those holding Ash Wednesday services from the Church of England and a short Ash Wednesday service will be premiered from 11am on Wednesday on the Church of England website, Facebook page and YouTube channel.

And, for the first time, a special Instagram filter has been devised enabling people to be marked with an ash cross virtually. A separate Instagram filter also generates suggested Lent resolutions.

They can be accessed by following [thechurchofengland on Instagram](#) and choosing the filter icon.



This year the Church of England's Lent campaign - [#LiveLent](#) – *God's Story, Our Story* – explores how Christians can share their faith with others. The material is based on the themes explored in this year's Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book, [Living His Story by Hannah Steele \(SPCK\)](#).

The #LiveLent daily reflections are available through a booklet [available to buy from Church House Publishing](#), as well as a free app, by email, podcast, smart speakers, the Daily Hope telephone line and through the Church of England's social media accounts.

Lent is the 40-day period leading up to Easter marked with fasting or other forms of self-denial and reflection. It reflects the 40 days Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness as he embarked on his public ministry.

Read [more](#) about Ash Wednesday and Lent.

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