

'Lent'

A reflection for the season



SLIDE ONE – HOLDING SLIDE

LEADER'S NOTES

Missio has a series of reflections focusing on Lenten words and themes. This reflection explores the word 'Lent' and its invitation to grow in God's love.

SLIDE TWO

There are some words we hear a lot during the season of Lent, like 'almsgiving', 'fasting', 'repent'! But do we really understand what they mean? Take the word 'Lent' itself. How would we define it?

Suggestions might include: 40 days of prayer, a time of sacrifice, preparation for Easter.

To understand fully the meaning of a word, it can help to go back to its origins. 'Lent' comes from an ancient German word that meant 'to lengthen' and it was used to refer to the lengthening of days in spring. It followed that, hundreds of years ago, 'lent' was the term used for spring.

Some of this ancient meaning has remained. Christians still recognise Lent as a time of spiritual growth – through prayer, fasting and charity. Lent is a time to grow closer to God and grow in understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ.

All of you here are also undergoing a time of growth, sometimes referred to as life's springtime! These are your teenage years. At no other point, other than when you were babies, will you grow so rapidly: physically, mentally, and emotionally. In these teenage years your brain and your body are constantly developing and changing to prepare you for adulthood.

For any living thing to grow well, certain conditions need to be met. For example, when gardeners plant seeds they must make sure the soil has enough nutrients, is well watered, and kept clear of weeds. If all this is done then the seeds will grow strong and healthy, like the mustard seed in Jesus' parable.

What are the conditions that you need to grow well, physically and mentally?

Suggestions might include: eating healthily, receiving an education, enough sleep, healthcare and sanitation, good friends, family, support.

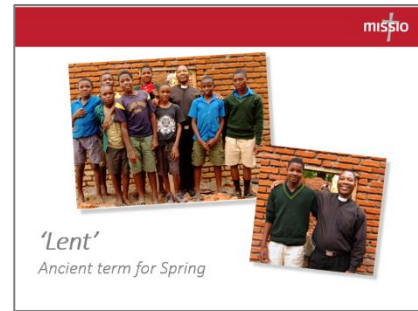
Tragically, for many teenagers around the world, conditions for growing well are not guaranteed.



SLIDE THREE

One such teenager is Andreas. Andreas is 15 and lives in Malawi, one of the poorest countries in the world.

In his early teens Andreas began to miss school, not because he wanted to, but because his parents were unable to pay for his transport and school fees. Lack of money at home also meant that Andreas often missed meals and went without medical care.



With no school and no work, Andreas began roaming the streets. There, he got involved with the wrong kind of company. Eager to impress peers who were not true friends, Andreas' life was heading in the wrong direction. Thankfully, his situation changed when Andreas was offered a place at the Pirimiti Boarding House.

The boarding house was set up by the local Catholic Church with the help of the charity Missio. It provides boys like Andreas with the conditions they need to grow well. Supported by Fr Henry (pictured) and a team of carers, Andreas and his housemates now have regular meals, are safe, attend school and stay healthy.

Being at the Pirimiti boarding house also helps Andreas to grow in faith. Through the care shown by the staff and by housemates who have become true friends, Andreas is growing in understanding of God's mercy and love for him. He has also seen how the followers of Christ have a responsibility to share God's mercy and love with others.

Andreas' best friend at Pirimiti is David. Since arriving at the boarding house, he has been a solid support for Andreas, encouraging his friend to grow in understanding and confidence. David explains that for him, "It's important to show God's love. If someone has done something wrong, we show God's love by forgiving."

Andreas and David remind us that, especially in our teenage years, we need certain conditions to grow well. We need food, shelter, education and security. But just as importantly we need care, friendship and faith. In these ways we grow in God's love and can shelter others in need of support. As is explained in the parable of the mustard seed, it grows to become a tree whose branches give shelter to all the birds of the air.

At the beginning of this reflection we heard how Lent is a time to grow well. Take the opportunity to think about your personal development. Are you getting enough sleep? Do you eat well? Are you paying too much attention to social media? Are you paying too little attention to true friends who want to support you?

In turn ask yourself: are you a friend who encourages others to grow well? Do you try to keep them safe? Do you help to build their confidence? Do you help them to forgive? Do you pray for them?

The charity Missio reminds us that the followers of Christ are called to reach out hands of friendship to all God's children. Missio encourages us to do this through sharing what we have and through prayer. Consequently, thanks to its supporters, Missio was able to pay for a new shower block at the Pirimiti Boarding House. Let's continue to support the Pirimiti boys now, and each other, in our closing prayer.

Lord God, like the mustard seed, you have stored in me great potential to flourish. Remind me that no matter how small I appear, you have created me to grow confident and true. You have created me to stand up for my neighbour in need and welcome those seeking to belong. We ask this prayer through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Missio's short film 'Pirimiti Boys', features Andreas and the support he receives. View the film via <https://missio.org.uk/films/>