

Shrove Tuesday Possibilities for the Church

Shrove Tuesday is the traditional feast day before the start of Lent, the following day, on Ash Wednesday. Lent is traditionally a period of self-denial, and at the end of Shrove Tuesday, Anglo-Saxon Christians went to confession and were 'shriven', meaning that they confessed their sins and were assured of the Lord's forgiveness. Shrove Tuesday gets its name from this ritual of shriving that Christians used to undergo.



a) A church bell was rung to call people to this shriving, and it is still rung today in many churches.

Could it be effective in your church to ring a bell on the Tuesday evening? If and when people asked, whether then or on a later day, why you were doing this on a Tuesday evening, it would provide an opportunity to speak about our conviction of the need for repentance and turning to the Lord.

b) Ringing a bell to call people to shriving could be followed by a short service of repentance and a renewal of commitment to follow Jesus in our lives.

Could this be an effective time for your church, or at least for some of its members?

Shrove Tuesday Possibilities for Community Outreach



a) Traditionally, Shrove Tuesday was the last opportunity to use up eggs and fats, considered luxury foods, before beginning the Lenten fast, and pancakes were an ideal way to use these up. It became a day of celebration, as the last chance to feast before Lent begins. And so the tradition began.

Could it be possible for your church to embrace this tradition in a missional context? It could be a reason to throw a pancake party in the church buildings, perhaps especially inviting families with children, and isolated people, from the wider community.

You could even consider *making* pancakes at the party, helping those who wanted to, to learn how to make them.

This could bring new people into the church, and conversations could be held about the Christian roots of the traditions.



b) In the UK, pancake races have become a popular part of the Shrove Tuesday celebrations. They involve large numbers of people, often in fancy dress, racing down streets or hills while tossing pancakes. One tradition for the origin of this custom is that a woman of Olney, in Buckinghamshire, heard the shroving bell while she was still making pancakes and ran to the church in her apron, still clutching her frying pan!

Could it be possible for your church to embrace this tradition? Perhaps especially inviting families, students and other young adults? You could be creative and have a tournament of competitions: family relay races, three-legged races, tossing pancakes over high jump styled bars, limbo races ...

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d) The need to eat up the fats before the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday gave rise to the French name 'Mardi Gras', meaning Fat Tuesday. As has happened with many Christian traditions, the roots of this custom became lost, and societies began to exploit them for more general purposes. In this case, many countries round the world today have Mardi Gras celebrations and carnivals. Some of the most famous are in Rio de Janeiro, New Orleans, Venice and Sydney.

Perhaps in collaboration with other churches, your church could organise a mini Mardi Gras parade, ending with a pancake party, as above?

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