



OCCIDENTAL UNITED PRESBYTERIAN

ASH  
WEDNESDAY  
AT HOME

FEBRUARY 17, 2021

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**Ash Wednesday** emphasizes a dual encounter:

We confront our own mortality &  
confess our sin before God within the community of faith.

The form and content of the service focus on the dual themes of sin and death in the light of God's redeeming love in Jesus Christ.

The use of ashes as a sign of mortality and repentance has a long history in Jewish and Christian worship, and the Imposition of Ashes can be a powerful nonverbal and experiential way of participating in the call to repentance and reconciliation.

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# Welcome to Ash Wednesday @ Home Ash

Wednesday is the day when we gather to begin our 40 day retreat called Lent. Every year we gather at church on this day to remind ourselves that we are not eternal. Yet, this year we are continuing to socially distance ourselves while we wait for vaccines to become available to all. Because of this, many of us will find ourselves in our homes unsure how we might mark the beginning of Lent.

Or will we?

Below you will find a simple liturgy that works well with one person or many.

## To Get Started: Ashes

If you still have your palms from last year's Palm Sunday, burn them. You may also mix the ashes with a little bit of olive oil.

**DO NOT MIX ASHES WITH WATER: this makes a caustic form of lye.**

## No Ashes? No problem.

Write a particular sin or hurtful or unjust characteristic on a small piece of paper. They may then be burned instead of the palm branches for the ashes. At a minimum, you may simply use olive oil to trace a cross on your forehead.

## Liturgy

Have someone read the rubrics *red letters* or read them in solitude. If you are praying in solitude, pray and read the entire liturgy.

If you are praying with family or friends divide up the readings and prayers so that everyone has a role.

There are four parts to this at-home liturgy: Gather, Word, Respond,

Send. Your Ash Wednesday @ Home Liturgy begins on the next page.

Peace+

# GATHER

\*WE ARE CALLED TO WORSHIP

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**And also with you.**

Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins.

**God's mercy endures for ever and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.**

\*WE PRAY

O God, maker of everything and judge of all that you have made, from the dust of the earth you have formed us and from the dust of death you would raise us up. By the redemptive power of the cross, create in us clean hearts and put within us a new spirit, that we may repent of our sins and lead lives worthy of your calling; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit: one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

# WORD

WE ASK GOD FOR ILLUMINATION

**Holy God, our lives are laid open before you: as we hear your word tonight, rescue us from the chaos of sin, and through the death of your Son bring us healing and make us whole in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

WE READ FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church:

Blow the horn in Zion; give a shout on my holy mountain! Let all the people of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming. It is near—a day of darkness and no light, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness spread out upon the mountains, a great and powerful army comes, unlike any that has ever come before them, or will come after them in centuries ahead. Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your hearts, with fasting, with weeping, and with sorrow; tear your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord your God, for he is merciful and compassionate, very patient, full of faithful love, and ready to forgive. Who knows whether he will have a change of heart and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord your God? Blow the horn in Zion; demand a fast; request a special assembly. Gather the people; prepare a holy meeting; assemble the elders; gather the children, even

nursing infants. Let the groom leave his room and the bride her chamber. Between the porch and the altar let the priests, the Lord's ministers, weep. Let them say, "Have mercy, Lord, on your people, and don't make your inheritance a disgrace, an example of failure among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"

The grass withers and the flower fades.

**But the word of the Lord endures forever. Amen.**

WE READ FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT 2 Corinthians 5:20–6:10

So we are ambassadors who represent Christ. God is negotiating with you through us. We beg you as Christ's representatives, "Be reconciled to God!" God caused the one who didn't know sin to be sin for our sake so that through him we could become the righteousness of God. Since we work together with him, we are also begging you not to receive the grace of God in vain. He says, I listened to you at the right time, and I helped you on the day of salvation. Look, now is the right time! Look, now is the day of salvation! We don't give anyone any reason to be offended about anything so that our ministry won't be criticized. Instead, we commend ourselves as ministers of God in every way. We did this with our great endurance through problems, disasters, and stressful situations. We went through beatings, imprisonments, and riots. We experienced hard work, sleepless nights, and hunger. We displayed purity, knowledge, patience, and generosity. We served with the Holy Spirit, genuine love, telling the truth, and God's power. We carried the weapons of righteousness in our right hand and our left hand. We were treated with honor and dishonor and with verbal abuse and good evaluation. We were seen as both fake and real, as unknown and well known, as dying—and look, we are alive! We were seen as punished but not killed, as going through pain but always happy, as poor but making many rich, and as having nothing but owning everything.

A lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

**Thanks be to God.**

WE READ THE GOSPEL Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21

This is the Holy Gospel of the Lord according to Saint Matthew.

**Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

*Trace a cross on your forehead, lips, and heart.*

"Be careful that you don't practice your religion in front of people to draw their

attention. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. “Whenever you give to the poor, don’t blow your trumpet as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets so that they may get praise from people. I assure you, that’s the only reward they’ll get. But when you give to the poor, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that you may give to the poor in secret. Your Father who sees what you do in secret will reward you. “When you pray, don’t be like hypocrites. They love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners so that people will see them. I assure you, that’s the only reward they’ll get. But when you pray, go to your room, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is present in that secret place. Your Father who sees what you do in secret will reward you. “And when you fast, don’t put on a sad face like the hypocrites. They distort their faces so people will know they are fasting. I assure you that they have their reward. When you fast, brush your hair and wash your face. Then you won’t look like you are fasting to people, but only to your Father who is present in that secret place. Your Father who sees in secret will reward you. “Stop collecting treasures for your own benefit on earth, where moth and rust eat them and where thieves break in and steal them. Instead, collect treasures for yourselves in heaven, where moth and rust don’t eat them and where thieves don’t break in and steal them. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The Gospel of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

*Trace a cross on your forehead, lips, and heart.*

WE ENTER INTO A HOLY SILENCE

## RESPOND

WE ARE INVITED TO OBSERVE A LENTEN DISCIPLINE

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ: the early Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord’s passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church that before the Easter celebration there should be a forty-day season of spiritual preparation.

During this season converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism. It was also a time when persons who had committed serious sins and had separated themselves from the community of faith were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to participation in the life of the Church.

In this way the whole congregation was reminded of the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ and the need we all have to renew our faith.

We invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to observe a holy Lent: by self examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's Holy Word.

To make a right beginning of repentance, and as a mark of our mortal nature, let us now kneel or bow before our Creator and Redeemer as we are able.

## WE CONFESS OUR SIN AND REMEMBER GOD'S PARDON

*We pray Psalm 51:1–17.*

Have mercy on me, God, according to your faithful love!

**Wipe away my wrongdoings according to your great compassion!** Wash me completely clean of my guilt;  
purify me from my sin!

**Because I know my wrongdoings,  
my sin is always right in front of me.**

I've sinned against you—you alone.

I've committed evil in your sight.

That's why you are justified when you render your verdict,  
completely correct when you issue your judgment.

**Yes, I was born in guilt, in sin,  
from the moment my mother conceived me.**

And yes, you want truth in the most hidden places;  
you teach me wisdom in the most secret space.

**Purify me with hyssop and I will be clean;  
wash me and I will be whiter than snow.**

Let me hear joy and celebration again;  
let the bones you crushed rejoice once more.

**Hide your face from my sins;  
wipe away all my guilty deeds!**

Create a clean heart for me, God;  
put a new, faithful spirit deep inside me!

**Please don't throw me out of your presence;  
please don't take your holy spirit away from me.**

**Return the joy of your salvation to me**

and sustain me with a willing spirit.

**Then I will teach wrongdoers your ways,  
and sinners will come back to you.**

Deliver me from violence, God, God of my salvation,  
so that my tongue can sing of your righteousness.

**Lord, open my lips,  
and my mouth will proclaim your praise.**

You don't want sacrifices.

If I gave an entirely burned offering,  
you wouldn't be pleased.

**A broken spirit is my sacrifice, God.**

**You won't despise a heart, God, that is broken and**

**crushed.** *We all confess in silence.*

WE GIVE THANKS OVER THE ASHES

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence, so that we may remember that only by your gracious gift are we given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

\*WE IMPOSE THE ASHES

*Dip a thumb in the ashes and make a cross on the forehead of each person.  
As they make the sign of the cross, they say:*

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.  
Repent, and believe the gospel.

Let us pray.

**May the almighty and merciful God, who desires not the death of a sinner but that we turn from wickedness and live, accept our repentance, forgive our sins, and restore us by the Holy Spirit to newness of life. Amen.**

# SEND

WE PRAY THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,**

**Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth, as in  
heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive our sins  
As we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever.  
Amen.**

**\*WE ARE SENT OUT WITH A BLESSING**

May the Lord Almighty grant us a restful night, and in the end,  
peace. **Amen.**

**WE GO FORTH**