

Ash Wednesday Service

This is an Ash Wednesday service with the imposition of ashes that also includes a remembrance of our baptism before communion.

--Gathering--

PRELUDE

GREETING, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND INVITATION TO LENTEN DISCIPLINE

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Designate who is Voice 1 and Voice 2 in the Corporate Confession. This could be by natural seating divisions, by male and female voices, or some other designation.

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the season in the church year known as Lent. Lent is a time to prepare for the celebration of Easter and to renew our life in the mystery of the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We begin this holy season by acknowledging our need for repentance, and for the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We begin our journey to Easter with the sign of ashes, a biblical symbol of mourning and penitence. This ancient sign speaks of the fragility of human life, and marks the penitence of the community of faith. I invite you, therefore, in the name of Christ, to observe a holy Lent by self-examination and penitence, by prayer and fasting, by works of love, and by reading and meditating on the Word of God,¹ beginning with this service today.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Joel 2:1-2, 12-14

If possible, this should feel like it is interruptive from somewhere outside the gathering. If you have a balcony, you may want to have the reader stationed there.

*HYMN 196 (*The Presbyterian Hymnal*) Psalm 51

CORPORATE CONFESSION OF SIN

Quickly designate who is Voice 1 and Voice 2 again, with gestures, if possible.

Single Voice: Creator God, you fashioned us out of dust,
breathing your Spirit into us,
so we might sing your praise.

*Voice 1: **But we have denounced your gift of life***

¹ Based on the *Book of Common Worship*, 223.

**in order to be our own gods,
clinging to death-dealing idols of our own making.**

**Voice 2: We have denied our creaturely status,
seeking to lord it over those we label “less-than.”**

**V1: We squelch all who are different
through ignoring, belittling, murdering, and bombing.**

**V2: We believe survival-of-the-fittest lies,
discounting the weak,
and profiting by others’ pain.**

SV: Not trusting in your providence,
we stop our ears to cries of those in need
because we’re afraid we won’t have enough.

V1: We have been unfaithful stewards, O Lord.

V2: We live in a state of sin among a people of sin.

V1: Save for your grace, we perish.

**V2: Remember our making, Creator God;
remember we are dust.**

**All: Have mercy on us according to your loving kindness.
Breathe new life into us once more,
so we might be the people you created us to be.
Restore unto us the joy of your salvation
that we might do justice, love kindness,
and walk humbly with the Lord Jesus Christ,
in whose name we pray,
Amen.**

SILENT CONFESSION OF SIN

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Those who so desire may come forward to receive an imposition of ashes as a sign of penitence not only for our individual sin, but also in recognition of our complicity in the sin of the world. Suggested music during this: “I Was There to Hear Your Boring Cry” 2051 in Sing the Faith.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Ezekiel 36:25-27

Hear the promise of God: “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you will be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body

the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.” Friends, the promises of God are true:

In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross

that we might be dead to sin and alive to all that is good.

In the name of Jesus Christ you are forgiven. Live now as new people, free to love God and neighbor.

--Word--

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Lord, of life, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us that as we hear these words they may becoming living Word for us to the glory of our living Lord Jesus Christ we pray.
Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 103

SERMON

“Baptized Dust”

--Eucharist--

INVITATION

Sacraments are embodiments of the good news of God’s Word, so you’re invited to stop by the font on your way to the table to remember that while you may be dust, you are baptized dust. You are so precious to God that our Lord has been broken so that you might know the wholeness of eternal life. He was baptized with the baptism of death, drinking to the empty dregs the cup God placed before him, so that we might know life in all its fullness. This bread of life, this cup of blessing are set before us to nourish us as the body of Christ’s blessing for the world. So come, let us join in this foretaste of the meal of God’s Kingdom, spread out for us as we serve and are served in Christ’s name.

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is truly right and our greatest joy to give you thanks and praise, eternal God, creator and ruler of the universe.

You hold all our days in your hand, the same hand that spangled stars in the sky and shaped dust into human form.

You breathed your life into us earthlings,
and set us in your world to love and serve you.

But we reject your love.

Yet you continue to woo us, calling us through prophets to return to a covenant of love with you. Therefore, with all of creation, the heavenly angels, and all saints, we lift our voices in praise:

(singing "Sanctus" 74B in Holy is the Lord)

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest.**

We praise you that you sent Jesus to capture us with your love.

Living as one of us, baptized in Holy Spirit, he taught us your Way.

Even as our sin was betraying him, he sat at table with his disciples and took bread and blessed it and broke it, saying, **This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.**

Then he took a cup, and said, **"Take this and divide it among yourselves, for I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."**

We remember your faithfulness unto death, O Lord, and look with awe upon your tortured love bleeding accursed upon a tree.

We celebrate Christ's rising that released us from bondage to sin.

Following you into the promised Dominion of God, we confidently sing the mystery of faith:

(singing "Memorial Acclamation" 75 in Holy is the Lord)

**Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.**

Thank you, for the gift of this table set as a sign of your Kingdom in our midst.

Come now, Holy Spirit, and move among us

that we might perceive your presence and our union with all the saints of all times and places as we partake of this covenant meal of your Dominion.

We offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice, devoted to following you and praying for the hungry world you call us to serve as your body . . .

Extemporaneous intercessions are included here.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

AMEN

(singing "Great Amen" 76 in Holy is the Lord)

Amen. Amen. Amen.

BREAKING THE BREAD

Is not the bread we break a sharing in the body of Christ?

LIFTING THE CUP

Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ?

REMEMBRANCE OF BAPTISM AND COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE

On the approach to the table, people will stop at the font to remember their baptism. Those who imposed ashes earlier will be there to trace the sign of the cross again on their forehead with baptismal water. White cloths may be needed as well to wipe smudges from foreheads. As this is done, leaders say:

Remember your baptism.

and/or

You are marked as Christ's own forever.

Then communicants proceed to stations to receive communion by intinction.

Remember that Jesus Christ, your Savior, died for you and the whole world, and be thankful.²

The choir partakes first in order to lead the congregation in singing. Some possibilities for music include:

"Broken for Me" 2263 in Sing the Faith

"As We Gather at Your Table" 2268 in Sing the Faith

"For the Bread Which You Have Broken" 508 in The Presbyterian Hymnal

"Now to Your Table Spread" 515 in The Presbyterian Hymnal

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION (*in unison*):

Thank you, gracious God, for the gift of life. Thank you for Christ and his indwelling Spirit among us. Help us discipline ourselves to walk in the Way of the Lord, that we might serve all of creation in love, to the glory of God, Christ, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

--Sending--

*HYMN 371 (*PH*)

"Lift High the Cross"

*BENEDICTION AND CHARGE

*POSTLUDE

² Based upon *The Liturgy of the French Protestant Church*, Neuchatel, 1732 and 1772 eds., trans. and arranged for the use of the congregation in Charleston, SC (New York: Charles M. Cornwell, 1869).