

Ash Wednesday



Ash Wednesday is a solemn day of prayer that begins the season of Lent. On this day we confess our sin in a litany of repentance. During Lent's forty days we are invited to carry out the Lenten discipline, practices of fasting, prayer, and works of love, even as we accompany people around the world who are preparing for baptism at Easter. On this day we may receive the sign of ashes. This ancient symbol of repentance reminds us of our mortality. Returning to God's mercy and grace, marked with the cross of Christ, we make our way through Lent, longing for the baptismal waters of Easter, our spiritual rebirth.

Gathering

The assembly gathers in silence.

The service begins with Psalm 51 or another penitential psalm, a Kyrie or another litany, or a hymn. Or, the service begins simply with the greeting.

Greeting

The assembly stands. The presiding minister and the assembly greet each other.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty and ever-living God, you hate nothing you have made, and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and honest hearts, so that, truly repenting of our sins, we may receive from you, the God of all mercy, full pardon and forgiveness through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

OR

Gracious God, out of your love and mercy you breathed into dust the breath of life, creating us to serve you and our neighbors. Call forth our prayers and acts of kindness, and strengthen us to face our mortality with confidence in the mercy of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

The assembly is seated.

Word

Readings and Psalm

An assisting minister reads the first and second scripture readings. The psalm for the day follows the first reading. The psalm is Psalm 51, or Psalm 103:8-14 if Psalm 51 is sung at the gathering or during the imposition of ashes.

Response after the conclusion of the first and the second readings: **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Acclamation

The assembly stands. The following or another appropriate acclamation may be sung. The psalm tone on p. 6 may be used.

Return to the ¹ LORD, your God,
who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger,
and abounding in ¹ steadfast love.

Gospel

Response after the announcement: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Response after the conclusion: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

The assembly is seated.

Sermon

Silence for reflection follows.

Hymn of the Day

The assembly stands to proclaim the word of God in song.

Invitation to Lent

The assembly is seated. The presiding minister may invite the assembly into the discipline of Lent.

Confession of Sin

The presiding minister leads the following or another confession.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

The assembly kneels or sits. Silence is kept for reflection and self-examination.

Most holy and merciful God,
we confess to you and to one another, and before the whole company of heaven, that we have sinned by our fault, by our own fault, by our own most grievous fault, in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven.

Have mercy on us, O God.

We have shut our ears to your call to serve as Christ served us. We have not been true to the mind of Christ. We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our past unfaithfulness, the pride, envy, hypocrisy, and apathy that have infected our lives, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to share the faith that is in us, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our neglect of human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our false judgments, our uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Restore us, O God, and let your anger depart from us.

Hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.

The assembly is seated.

Imposition of Ashes

People may come forward and kneel or stand to receive the ashes.

Ministers mark the forehead of each person with a cross of ashes, saying:

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

During this time, hymns or penitential psalms may be sung, or silence may be kept. Psalm 51 may be sung if it has not been used earlier in the service.

After those who desire ashes have received them, all may kneel or sit, and the minister continues.

Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation,

that we may show forth your glory in the world.

By the cross and passion of your Son, our Savior,

bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.

The presiding minister addresses the assembly.

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life.

Amen.

A service with communion continues with the prayers of intercession. The prayer, blessing, and dismissal below may be used after the communion.

OR

A service without communion concludes as follows.

Prayers of intercession may be spoken.

An offering may be gathered for the mission of the church, including the care of those in need.

“Create in me” may be sung after the offering is gathered.

The service ends with the following prayer, the Lord’s Prayer, and the sending.

The assisting minister leads a concluding prayer.

Merciful God, accompany our journey through these forty days. Renew us in the gift of baptism, that we may provide for those who are poor, pray for those in need, fast from self-indulgence, and above all that we may find our treasure in the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.