

CLEANSING OUR HEARTS

Psalm 51 // Ash Wednesday

We begin the Lenten journey with Ash Wednesday, recognizing that dust, disaster, and deceit are all around us. We put ashes on our head as a sign of repentance, and we begin the journey with Jesus to the cross. Here are some materials to help you create your own worship service.

MAIN THEME: *What do you need to give to God?*

CHOOSING MUSIC // FOR SINGING

•✪ **Crags and Clay**

Text and Music: Michael Gungor

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•✪ **I Surrender All**

Text and Music: Justin W. VanDeventer

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•✪ **Once Again**

Text and Music: Matt Redman

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•✪ **Out of the Depths/By Grace Alone**

Text and Music: David L. Ward

© 2005 Thousand Tongues

(This whole CD is great for Lent. You can download the lead sheet, lyrics, and other materials for free on David's website [www.thousandtongues.org])

•✪ **We Will Run**

Text and Music: Lisa Gungor

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CREATING DRAMA // FOR HEARING

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 usually begins Ash Wednesday services. Have it read in a loud, dramatic way by one or two people from the back of the worship space. Do you have access to a Ram's horn? If so, use it with the Joel 2 reading. It will get worshipers' attention!

Check out videos on Lent to show after the reading. We suggest using Worship House Media as a resource. [www.worshiphousemedia.com]

FINDING ART // FOR SEEING

Use “Blessing the Dust” by Jan Richardson (below) as part of a silent confession time. Afterwards, invite worshipers to speak single words that came to their mind as they observed the painting (e.g.: black, dirty, rough, etc.).



Create a wall of repentance in your worship space. This can be an empty wall, a wall made from faux bricks, a wall made from chalk paint, a chainlink fence, or some other material. In a private moment of confession, have worshipers write, post, or clip prayers of confession on it.

LIVING WORSHIP // FOR DOING

In Lent, people often “give up” certain things like chocolate, soda, television, a meal, or some other thing they enjoy in life. But, Lent is not all about giving something up. It is also about adding something that is beneficial. Encourage worshipers to use extra time they may gain by not eating a meal doing something for Christian service. A good question might be “How can I put to good use the time/space/energy I am saving while giving up ... ?”

One way to answer this question is to encourage families to adopt a person, family, or organization during Lent and beyond. Serve them regularly, and share their experiences with those in the worshiping community.

MAKING SPACE // FOR WORSHIPPING

During Lent, it is customary to change the ethos of the worship space to reflect the solemnity of the season. Common fixtures might be neutral colors, burlap, broken clay pots, sand, rocks, dust, and other such materials. One year, a congregation we know used scrap wood and other materials from a house and themed their Lenten journey “Under Construction.”

If you have an old wooden cross, put it in the worship space throughout this series, and use it in worship each week to remind worshipers of the long road to the cross. Consider highlighting it in different ways each week. For example, one week you might drape it with purple. Another week, use it as a prayer exercise. If you have colored lighting in your space, highlight it with a different color each week.

For Ash Wednesday, you'll need ashes. Traditionally, these are made out of Palm Branches saved from the previous Palm Sunday.

WRITING POETRY// FOR PRAYING

Use an ancient prayer of confession by an early church father or mother. Here is one we like from St. Basil.

Almighty God, Lord of angels and all creation, who dwells on high yet cares for the lowly, who searches the heart and knows every hidden thing, eternal and unchangeable light, we trust in your great mercy to hear the prayer of our unclean lips.

Forgive the sins we have committed in knowledge or in ignorance, in thought, word or deed; and cleanse us, body and soul, from every stain. Allow us to pass through the darkness of this present life watchful and alert, always expecting the coming perfect day of Your Only-Begotten Son, our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He shall come in glory to judge all people and reward us according to our deeds.

Help us put away laziness, be full of courage, and be found doing his work ready to enter his glorious kingdom with joy; for you are the true light of every creature, and to you all creation sings. Amen.

SAMPLE WORSHIP SERVICE

Cleansing Our Hearts // Psalm 51 // Ash Wednesday

PRE-WORSHIP ACTIVITY

If you are doing this Ash Wednesday service with students or young families, consider making the ashes that will be used in your service before worship begins.

WELCOME

Say hi to other worshipers and welcome them in the name of Christ

WHAT IS ASH WEDNESDAY?

If Ash Wednesday isn't common to your tradition, you might explain it as the end of the welcome and the beginning of worship.

A TIME OF SILENCE

SCRIPTURE READING

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

SONG OF PENITENCE

Out of the Depths

CONFESSING OUR SIN TOGETHER

Almighty God, Lord of angels and all creation, who dwells on high yet cares for the lowly, who searches the heart and knows every hidden thing, eternal and unchangeable light, we trust in your great mercy to hear the prayer of our unclean lips.

Forgive the sins we have committed in knowledge or in ignorance, in thought, word or deed; and cleanse us, body and soul, from every stain. Allow us to pass through the darkness of this present life watchful and alert, always expecting the coming perfect day of Your Only-Begotten Son, our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He shall come in glory to judge all people and reward us according to our deeds.

Help us put away laziness, be full of courage, and be found doing his work ready to enter his glorious

kingdom with joy; for you are the true light of every creature, and to you all creation sings. Amen.

VISUAL MEDITATION

"Blessing the Dust" by Jan Richardson
[Project this image and allow worshipers to reflect on it during 1-2 minutes of silence.]

SONG OF SURRENDER

I Surrender All

READING SCRIPTURE TOGETHER

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10, Galatians 2:20

One: We implore you on Christ's behalf:
be reconciled to God.

All: **God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

One: As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.

All: **For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.**

One: We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited.

All: **Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses;**

One: in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger;

All: **in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love;**

One: in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left;

All: **through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as**

impostors;
One: known, yet regarded as unknown; dying,
and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not
killed;
All: **sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet
many rich; having nothing, and yet
possessing everything.**
All: **I have been crucified with Christ and I
no longer live, but Christ lives in me.
The life I live in the body, I live by faith
in the Son of God, who loved me and
gave himself for me.**

SPOKEN MEDITATION

*[A brief meditation on Ash Wednesday given by a
minister which concludes by inviting all worshipers
forward with the words below.]*

IMPOSITION OF THE ASHES

You may come forward at this time to receive and
render the imposition of ashes in the sign of the
cross. After you have received the ashes, please
moisten your thumb on the damp cloth and make
the sign of the cross with the ashes on the person
behind you saying:

*“Remember that you are dust, and to
dust you shall return.”*

CONFESSION OUR FAITH

The Heidelberg Confession

All: **I believe that every thing God reveals in
his Word is true. I also believe that true
faith is not only a knowledge and
conviction. It is also a deep-rooted
assurance, created in me by the Holy
Spirit through the gospel, that, out of
sheer grace earned for us by Christ, not
only others, but I too, have had my sins
forgiven, have been made forever right
with God, and have been granted
salvation. Amen.**

PASSING THE PEACE

*[Invite worshipers to greet those around them with the
words, “The Peace of Christ be with you.”]*

SONG OF HUMILITY

We Will Run

BENEDICTION

One: Go in peace to love and serve.
All: **With God’s help, we will.**