

For God So **LOVED**

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE **MARCH 6, 2019**

Before the Service

- The Lenten color is purple, and it is helpful to use these colors to illustrate a change in the season. Consider draping the cross in a purple cloth or using purple banners or linens throughout your worship space.
- Using candlelight or softer lighting can help set the tone for this more reflective service.
- Prepare your ashes. It is traditional to use last year's palms from Palm Sunday as the ashes. If you did not save your palms, you can purchase ashes from a church supply store. Note: do not mix ashes with water! That makes the ashes caustic, and they could burn members of your congregation. You may mix them with anointing oil.

PRELUDE

- *Have music reflecting on repentance and forgiveness playing. It may be helpful, if your congregation is unfamiliar with Ash Wednesday, to pass out a card or bulletin as they enter that contains a short description of why we observe Ash Wednesday.*
- Music Options:
 - "Lead us Back," by Sojourn
 - "Beautiful Things," by Gungor
 - "Pass Me Not," hymn #346 in *Sing to the Lord*

INVOCATION

God of mercy and grace, we come to you today to remember our humanity and our sinfulness; to acknowledge that we are helpless without you. We have heard your call to return to you with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. As we call out to you, draw near to us. Do not pass by us, but draw near to us as we seek after you.

Amen

RESPONSIVE READING

"Repentance," *Sing to the Lord* #342

OLD TESTAMENT READING

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

**Instead of displaying the text on a screen, have one person read it and the congregation listen to the words.*

WHAT IS ASH WEDNESDAY?

If you have never held an Ash Wednesday service before, this would be a great place to do a small introduction to what Ash Wednesday is and why you as a congregation are choosing to observe it. If you made small cards to hand out, this would be a great time to reference them.

HYMN OF REFLECTION AND REPENTANCE

"Cleanse Me," *Sing to the Lord* #516

EPISTLE READING

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

OR

RESPONSIVE READING

"The Offer of Forgiveness," *Sing to the Lord* #338

HYMN OF REFLECTION/REPENTANCE

"I Surrender All"

GOSPEL TEXT

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

SERMON

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Congregants come forward as a response to the sermon. As they come forward, say, "Remember that you were formed from dust, and to dust you shall return" or, "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the gospel." Ashes are placed on the forehead in the shape of a cross. If congregants do not want the ashes placed on their forehead, they may also receive them on the back of their hand.

PRAYER

HYMN PREPARING FOR COMMUNION

"There Is a Redeemer"

"Just As I Am"

COMMUNION

BENEDICTION

Go in the humble knowledge of your humanity and your need for a Savior, but go also in the hopeful expectation that God makes beautiful things out of the ashes and dust of this world. Go in peace.

POSTLUDE

Reflective music: "It Is Well with My Soul"

After the Service

- If this is your first Ash Wednesday service, you might consider setting aside a time to debrief following the service, either on your own or with your ministry team.
- You also might consider having Lenten devotionals and family activities available for your congregants to pick up as they leave the sanctuary.