



that we may serve you as you have blessed us -  
with the dew of heaven, the food of earth,  
plenty of bread, and more to share. Amen.

### OBSERVATION FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

**SCRIPTURE** Matthew 4:1-4

Leader:

Suddenly the carnival atmosphere comes to a close, as we step into the wilderness to begin 40 days of our Lenten fast, not merely a fast for the body but a spiritual fast for growing closer to God. An early Christian tradition on Ash Wednesday was to bury the word "Alleluia," and not sing it again until Easter morning. And so, during the next song you may write the word "Alleluia" and hide it, then bring it out at your Sunrise Service. (*You might print "Alleluia" on slips of paper for the bulletin.*)

**HYMN FOR OUR FINAL "ALLELUIA" "Praise God, from Whom all Blessings Flow" UMH 94**  
(*write Alleluia*)

**SCRIPTURE** Matthew 6:1-6

### CONFESSION AND PARDON

Leader: As we approach our own wilderness, let us confess our sins or any wrong doing...  
*All offer prayers of confession in silence.*

Almighty God desires not the punishment of a sinner, but that we turn away from all that comes between us and God.

**Merciful God, forgive us and renew us. You know our nature and our failings.  
Enfold us in your arms that we might daily know  
your forgiveness and healing love.**

During these 40 days may we know God's forgiveness  
and be restored by the Holy Spirit to newness of life. **Amen.**

### PRAYER FOR THE LENTEN JOURNEY

Merciful God, you called us forth from the dust of the earth;

**You claimed us for Christ in the waters of baptism.**

Look upon us as we enter these 40 days,

And bless our journey through the desert of Lent to the waters of rebirth.

**In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.**

### THANKSGIVING AND IMPOSITION OF THE ASHES

Leader: As we enter these 40 days of Lent, we remember Jesus' journey to the cross with these ashes:

*Holding bowl of ashes*

**God of desert places,**

**pray for us now and throughout these forty days.**

**Grant that these ashes may be a sign  
of your presence with us in each season of life,  
that when the final Easter dawns,  
we may join with you in everlasting joy,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

Leader: For our service on Zoom, the sign of the cross may be made on the forehead or hand, with or without ashes, or offer your silent prayers:

"Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return." (*sign of cross is made*)

**Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth, and you walk with us through the deserts of our lives. As we step into the wilderness of Lent, grant that the mark of these ashes may be for us a sign of our mortality and the promise of new life in you. Amen.**

**SCRIPTURE    Joel 2:12-13**

### **INVITATION TO A LENTEN DISCIPLINE**

Leader: The Lenten fast is not a commandment it is a voluntary practice. Some "give up" a certain food or habit, some "take on" a spiritual discipline or ministry, I invite you to pray and plan your fast, be intentional and consider how you will prepare for Easter. This need not be something difficult but rather something that will remind you of God's presence in your life. Place it where you will see it every day and let it remind you to turn your thoughts to God.

Then on Easter morning, break your fast at a Sunrise breakfast and celebrate by singing ~~[alleluia]~~ that word we just buried.

Fasting during Lent is a sacred and holy observance. But there is one tradition that might make things easier - it is said that our fast could be broken on Sundays during Lent, because Sunday was considered a "little Easter," a little reprieve from our daily struggles.

During the next song you are invited to write your fast (or simply pray in silence).

**SONG OF COMMITMENT    "Lord, I Need You"    Matt Maher et al**  
*(write your "fast")*

**PRAYER OF COMMITMENT**  
*(holding our "fast" cards)*

As we reflect on what we have written on our cards, let us also pray that we may be open to ways that God may speak to us during Lent. There are as many ways to pray as there are to live.

Sometimes we look for a quiet place, as Jesus did in the garden; and sometimes we want to be with a friend or in a crowd, as Jesus did with his disciples. Sometimes we may read a book or listen to music. Sometimes we may use words and sometimes silence. Whenever and however we pray, we are turning to God. Let us pray,

**May our commitment to a Lenten discipline guide us through these 40 days of Lent, and remind us to turn to God and away from all that separates us from God.**

**HYMN FOR BEGINNING OF LENT    "Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days"    UMH 269**

## **BLESSING FOR THE LENTEN JOURNEY**

May our merciful God, bless our journey through Lent:  
May our fasting be hunger for justice;  
Our alms, an offering of peace;  
Our prayer, a walking with humble and grateful hearts.  
**In the name of Jesus the Christ, we pray. Amen.**

**Postlude**      **"Just a Closer Walk with Thee"**

**TFWS 2158**

*Service may end with Communion (see Great Thanksgiving for Early in Lent, and Service of Worship for Ash Wednesday, BOW); all may stay for quiet prayer or leave in prayerful reverence.*

## **Lenten resource:**

### **THE JOURNEY BEGINS**

*You might use the following liturgy, "Words for the Lenten Journey," with extinguishing 5 candles on the altar entwined with a purple ribbon or a strip of woven or burlap cloth. The readings and candles might be used separately on each Sunday in Lent; reflections may be offered in the bulletin for personal devotion.*

### **WORDS FOR THE LENTEN JOURNEY**

#### **FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT: Forgiveness**

**Luke 23:34**      "Father, forgive them: for they do not know what they are doing."

#### **Prayer**

**Holy Jesus, your forgiving love saves and disturbs me. Without it I am lost. Yet with it, I must practice it. Help me show mercy and to forgive as I have been forgiven. Amen.**  
*(extinguish one candle)*

#### **For Reflection: Forgiveness**

*In what ways have you been tempted? How did you respond? What word of forgiveness do you need to hear or give to have peace of mind? Where does this word most need to be spoken in our world, in your life? Whom and what are you being called to forgive? Forgiveness, of course, does not mean you will forget actions or words that have wounded your body and spirit. At the core, it means that you will forgive yourself and ask God to forgive others.*

#### **SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT: Believe**

**Luke 23:43**      "Today you will be with me in paradise."

#### **Prayer**

**Holy Jesus, love held you to the cross for my sake, but not mine alone. Enlarge my heart to make space for your friends. Let me love as one who believes in your love. Amen.**  
*(extinguish candle)*

**For Reflection: Believe**

*Instead of refusing to accept God's love, especially when life is a struggle or the world is in turmoil, what would it mean for you to say, "I believe, heal my unbelief." At times, we all have doubts about our faith and the presence of a living God. Spend some time thinking about what you do believe about God and Jesus' journey to the cross. Rest and allow your thoughts to wander. What do you need to demonstrate your belief? Even as Jesus offered mercy on the cross, what small act of hospitality might you offer today or during the week? ]*

**THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT: Thirst**

**John 4:11** "Where do you get that living water?"

**Prayer**

**Holy Jesus, the longing for your love cries out to us through the ages, from the cross and from the world. Give me a heart to hear that cry and a thirst to share your love.**

*(extinguish candle)*

**For Reflection: Thirst**

*Pour some water into a clear glass. Think of Jesus on the cross and the woman at the well. What thirst does the woman long to quench? What thirst do you have in your life? Think of Jesus' thirst on the cross, and how God thirsts for your love. How do you respond? What connections to water can you make in thinking about your faith, and your own responsibility to God's creation?*

**FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT: Loneliness**

**Matthew 27:46** "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

**Prayer**

**Holy Jesus, I fall silent to your suffering. There are no words, only worship and prayer for the loneliness and suffering that continues in your world. Amen.**

*(extinguish one candle)*

**For Reflection: Loneliness**

*We are created in the image of God, a part of God is in each one of us. Our challenge is to be open to the Spirit of God moving in our lives. Take time to be alone and sit in silence. Be aware of the Holy Spirit within and around you. Think of a past sorrow or a time when you felt lonely, and search for one positive outcome. Look for at least one way to show gratitude today to yourself or someone else.*

**FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT: Death**

**John 19:30** "It is finished!"

**Prayer**

**Holy Jesus, your work is done. The world has done its sinning and you have done your loving, each beyond limit. And yet, your limitless love prevails. Your death becomes my hope and the hope of the world. Amen.**

*(extinguish last candle)*

**For Reflection: Death**

*Death is a part of life. It is the great equalizer because all people will die. Sadly, though, it does not bring all people together to honor the gift of life. Ironically, the moment Jesus dies, the promise of Easter's light begins. To what in your life can you apply Jesus' last words, "It is finished"? What struggle do you need to give up in order to trust in God's saving grace? How completely have you committed your life to this resurrection God? Or are you still waiting at the Good Friday cross?*

**Sources:**

*Adapted from: Listening at Golgotha: Jesus' Words from the Cross, Peter Storey, (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2004);*

*A Lent Sourcebook: The Forty Days, (LTP, 1990);*

*Lectionary Worship Workshop, Amy C. Schifrin (Lima, OH: CSS Pub. Co. 2007);*

*A Book of Blessings, Ruth Burgess (Glasgow, UK: Wild Goose Pub., 2001);*

*UMC Book of Worship; [www.umcdiscipleship.org](http://www.umcdiscipleship.org) (Worship Planning).*