

Worship Resources for Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday Service *The service begins with the sound of the trumpet or the sound of the Jewish shofar.*

Leader: Get ready; get ready to return to God. Place your trust in God and God alone!
(*Trumpet or shofar is played again.*)

Leader: Return to the Lord!

People: It is not always easy to return to God; we have had our way for so long.

Leader: Blow the trumpet. Sound the alarm. Call the young and the old; tell everyone that the Lord is coming.

People: It is not easy to talk about the Lord to people who have heard our preaching so many times.

Leader: Call for a fast.

People: Fasting is not easy; we hunger for so many things.

Leader: Nobody said it would be easy. But we must return to the Lord. The Coming of the Lord is near!

People: We commit to turn from our old ways.

Leader: Nobody said it would be easy.

People: We will turn our lives over to the One who makes a way.

Leader: Nobody said it would be easy.

People: Nobody said it would be easy.

All: Nobody said it would be easy, but we must return to the LORD!

Liturgical Dance and Scripture Reading:

Have one dancer or several dancers dance to an instrumental rendition of "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen." In the background, have someone read the Joel reading from "The Message."

Silence

Collect

We praise you, God, for your grace and mercy. We praise you for another opportunity to return to you with warmed hearts, a willing fast, weeping eyes, and mournful souls. Accept our worship, ever-present and way-making God, as we worship and seek your wisdom during these forty days.

Music Suggestions

- "How Great Thou Art," 77 *United Methodist Hymnal*
- "I Don't Feel No Ways Tired," 175, *Songs of Zion*
- "Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days," 269, *United Methodist Hymnal*
(*Consider accompaniment with guitar, sax, or wind instrument instead of piano or organ*)

Prayer and Imposition of Ashes

Preparation: As the people are seated, provide note cards for worshipers to write one to three things they will fast from for the forty days of Lent. During the prayer time, those who desire may come to the Communion Rail to deposit their note cards in an offering basket before they receive the imposition of ashes in the sign of the cross as a sign of their Lenten journey. [Note: The ashes of imposition are traditionally made by burning branches saved from the previous Palm Sunday. Do not mix these with water! (See Dan Benedict's: "Water and Ashes Do Not Mix!") Instead, grind the ashes to a fine powder or mix with olive oil or vegetable oil.]

As ashes are imposed, these words may be spoken:

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

(United Methodist Book of Worship, page 323).

After all have received ashes:

Pastor: You are spared to serve the Lord.

People: Lord, we return to you today.

Prayer of Confession

**O gracious and merciful God, we are wounded, wayward and often wearied;
we need a real God.**

We have gathered to acknowledge our desperate need to return to you.

Reveal yourself to your people as we turn our hearts to you.

Silence for forty seconds

Words of Assurance

Blessed are the young and old who return to God.

Blessed are the ones who believe that all blessings come from the Lord.

Optional Words of Assurance

God is gracious and merciful and does not turn a deaf ear to those who turn their hearts to God.

Benediction

You have heard the sound of the trumpet;

you have heard the sounded alarm.

God is near.

Go from this place with symbols and reminders of God's mercy.

Go to serve and to share the love of a most merciful God with others.

Amen.

At the end of the service, blow the trumpet or the shofar for forty seconds.