



Ash Wednesday at Home

This short time of prayer is suitable for all households, whether you're living alone or within a busy family. There's a bit of preparation needed, to gather what you'll need. If your family includes children, have them help to prepare a space to gather, and to gather the pens, paper, candle, etc. Where there are "reflecting" words, try to share them in a way that your children can understand.

If you have kids who can read, let them read any of the parts.

For pre-readers/non-writers, involve them in the drawing, ripping, and (careful) burning, and in the ash-making and marking.

Wednesday, February 14, 2024

*Find a quiet space,
prepare a candle and a lighter,
some paper to write on, a pen,
and a dab of olive oil.*

*If you would like to make ashes from your paper,
have a safe vessel (and space) in which to burn it.*

Centering

You can simply breathe quietly and intentionally for a moment or use the Cedar Park United centering practice you may be familiar with, as outlined below.

Focus for a minute on each action, until you feel grounded and centred.

Feet – on the ground

Hands – open, empty, receptive

Breath – deep and slow

Heart – enfolded in God's love

Eyes – open to world and wonder

Lighting a Candle

I/we light this candle for prayer,
and as a reminder of the Light of Christ,
guide of my/our life.

Opening Prayer

HOLY ONE, we know you are not bound by a sanctuary,
so I/we welcome you into this home.
We listen for you to invite us, again and again,
into this Season of Lent,
where you will challenge us, again and again,
where you will guide us, again and again,
where you will forgive us, again and again.
We pray as friends of Jesus Christ,
and as followers of his Way. Amen.

Reading from Scripture: Genesis 3:19b

God spoke to the humans, "From dust you came, and to dust you shall return."

Reflecting on the Text

Did you know that the word for the first human in Genesis, "Adam," is the same as the Hebrew word for "dust" or "soil"? The story of God, taking dust of the earth, and shaping it into a human, and then breathing life into "Adam" so that he lived, is a reminder that we are indeed "made of the Earth." Science also tells us that our atoms are formed with the same matter as stars, planets, earth.

Reading from Scripture: Psalm 51 (a contemporary paraphrase)

HOLY ONE, you who are gracious and kind
beyond my imagining,
will you, in your lovingkindness
erase, wash away, burn to ashes
the messes you know I've made,
the sins you know I've done,
the ways you know I've strayed
from the Way of your Holy Dream?
I can't remember a time when I haven't
messed up in some way,
and yet, you are always willing,
wanting to forgive,
and help me start over again, and again.
.... Let my words, my thoughts, and my actions
be filled with joy, again and again,
for the gifts of your gracious goodness and mercy,
for me and for everyone.

Activity/Reflection on the Text

- Take your paper and a pen and write down some of the things you're not proud of, things you wish you could do over again, or about something in your life where you crave God's healing or forgiveness.
- Now doodle, creating a number of ampersands (&&&) on top of the words you've written down. (You can use coloured pens/pencils if you wish.)
- As you do so, imagine each one as God's healing, forgiveness, or strength given to you. Cover your "faults" with a blanket of God's again-and-again blessing.
- When you've finished your writing and drawing, you can tear up your paper into small pieces to place on the table near your candle, or you can place them into your fireproof vessel, to burn them until the paper has become ash.

Marking with Ashes

Ash Wednesday is the day when we remember that our human lives are temporary, that we are part of Creation's great ongoing cycle of birth, life, death, return. We remember this, not to be miserable or scared, but to cherish everything and every moment we have to live on this Earth.

It's also a day when we take stock, recall times when we've messed up, or missed the mark, or not cherished love, hope, and life. We turn to God to seek forgiveness, or courage, or hope to make every future moment count. The Psalm above is one poetic way to express our trust that "again and again" God does help us to start over.

*If you made ashes, now add a drop of olive oil to them.
If you choose not to make ashes, just use the oil by itself.
Read this poem blessing by Jan Richardson, and afterwards (or during),
make a mark with the ash/oil upon your forehead, or your hand
(a heart, or a cross are good symbols to make).*

Blessing the Dust for Ash Wednesday: Will You Meet Us, God?

Will you meet us in the ashes,
will you meet us in the ache
and show your face within our sorrow
and offer us your word of grace?

That you are life within the dying,
that you abide within the dust,
that you are what survives the burning,
that you arise to make us new.

And in our aching, you are breathing;
and in our weeping, you are here
within the hands that bear your blessing,
enfolding us within your love.

© Jan Richardson, from
Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons

Ash Wednesday Prayer for the World

Take your time with this prayer, let each of the lines of the prayer provoke your memory or imagination. Add your own names, and words, as God's Spirit moves you.

(Note for families: share the reading, or pause after each phrase to let your kids name something or someone that connects with that phrase)

We pray to you, Holy God,
as companions of your Son, Jesus Christ,
as companions with all creatures of your good Earth,
Hear our prayers, again and again,
 for your creatures who are wounded and broken...
 for your creatures who have no home, no safe habitat...
 for your people who are rejected because they are "different"...
 for all who challenge hypocrisy and injustice,
 and pay a high price for their courage...
 for all who live, seeking peace, building community, bridging divides...
 for all whom we have hurt in any way...

Again, and again, remind us, Holy God,
 that you come close to the hurting with healing,
 that you make and remake the world with abundance to share
 that you welcome EVERY ONE, calling each "Beloved,"
 that you are the life, the peace, the unity we crave,
 that you reach out to heal hurt again and again with your eternal grace. Amen.

Blessing for Ash Wednesday

Marked by ashes we accept God's invitation
 to journey again with Jesus into the wilderness of Lent;
 to seek holy wisdom again and again;
 to choose, again and again, hope and generosity, and love.

Marked by ashes, we take hold of this one life,
 to live as Jesus taught us, the Dream of God.

Amen.

Credits: Lent Graphic @A Sanctified Art LLC. Used by license.
Prayers, liturgy, unless specified, by Elisabeth R. Jones © 2024



Lent @ Cedar Park United, 2024

Check the website: cedarparkunited.org for details and news of ways you can worship and gather in community during the Season of Lent (February 14 – March 31).

Sunday Morning Worship and Children's Worship

10 AM onsite and online via YouTube

Lent 1 (February 18)	Again & again, God meets us.
Lent 2 (February 25)	Again & again, we are called to listen.
Lent 3 (March 3)	Again & again, we are shown the Way.
Lent 4 (March 10)	Again & again, God loves first.
Lent 5 (March 17)	Again & again, we are reformed.
Palm Sunday (March 24)	Again & again, we draw on courage.
Good Friday (March 29 at 10:30 AM)	Again & again, we find ourselves here (at the cross).
Easter Sunday (March 31)	Again & again, the sun/Son rises.

Midweek Midrash for Lent (on Zoom)

Thursdays, Feb. 15 – March 21 from 9:15 – 10:45 AM: An exploration of the Scripture texts for upcoming worship. Newcomers are always welcome! [Register on the website.](#)

Wednesday Community Connections

Wednesday, March 6 from 11:30 – 4 PM: Pay-as-you-can homemade soup lunch (11:30 – 1 PM) followed by activities to serve our community together (1 – 4 PM), including sandwich-making for Bread and Beyond, cookie-making for our upcoming radio play, preparing materials for Lenten worship...). [Sign up on the website.](#)

Lenten Labyrinth Workshop

Thursday, March 14 from 10:30 – 12 noon. With other UCC churches. ALL are welcome to this “beginners” and friends workshop which explains and explores Labyrinth meditation and prayer on our indoor labyrinth in the Sanctuary. Bring indoor footwear.

Doing Easter Differently (for families)

Saturday, March 23, from 3:30 – 6:30 PM: Food for soul and body with hands-on activities for all ages and time for discussion, play, and reflection. We’ll spend time together exploring this familiar Christian celebration of Easter from some very different, life-giving, guilt-shedding, eye-opening angles. \$25/family. [Register on the website.](#)

Community Action

Throughout Lent, we’ll be collecting items for Bread and Beyond (Wednesdays, 9 – 12 and Sundays, 9:30 – 10 and 11 – 12) and stocking our Comfort Food Freezer and Comfort Pantry. [Find out more here.](#)

Cedar Park United Lenten playlist

[Bookmark this Spotify playlist](#) to accompany you through this Lenten season (Note: you don’t need to have a subscription to listen).

Follow us on social media for Lenten reflections and inspiration

Take a moment to “Like” or “Follow” Cedar Park United to bring us into your daily feed. [Facebook](#) [Instagram](#)

Subscribe to our YouTube channel

Get notifications from our [YouTube channel](#) (just click on the little bell at the top-right corner of the page) so you won’t miss upcoming worship livestreams and new videos.

Subscribe to Sunday Soul Food

[Sunday Soul Food](#) is a digital extension of our Sunday morning worship experience, allowing you to engage with, and be nourished by, that morning’s worship content whenever it fits your life, and wherever you happen to be.

