

Ash Wednesday Service Kit

A penitential service — Joel 2 call to return, Psalm 51 responsive reading, imposition sentences, and inserts on fasting and repentance.

When to use it: Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent.

Order of service

1. Prelude / gathering music
2. Call to worship (Scripture below)
3. Opening hymn
4. Invocation
5. Prayer of confession and assurance of pardon
6. Responsive reading
7. Scripture reading
8. Sermon
9. Response — communion, offering, or prayer
10. Closing hymn
11. Benediction

Hymn suggestions (public domain)

- Rock of Ages
- Just as I Am
- When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

Suggested preaching text

Joel 2:12-17 with Matthew 6:1-21.

Calls to worship

Read one aloud to open the service. Short is better than long — the point is to turn the room toward God before anything else is said.

Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful.

Joel 2:12-13 (KJV)

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Psalms 51:17 (KJV)

But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.

Habakkuk 2:20 (KJV)

Invocation

Holy God, we come to thee with nothing in our hands. Thou knowest the dust we are made of and lovest us still. Search us tonight, and let the ashes on our foreheads be true of our hearts. Amen.

Prayer of confession

Father, we have sinned against thee in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved thee with our whole heart, nor our neighbours as ourselves. Have mercy on us, and create in us a clean heart. Amen.

Assurance of pardon

As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

Psalms 103:12 (KJV)

Responsive reading

Psalm 51 — Create in Me a Clean Heart

Leader reads the plain lines; the congregation reads the lines in bold. Print this page in the bulletin exactly as it appears here.

Leader: Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

Psalm 51:1 (KJV)

People: **For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.**

Psalm 51:3 (KJV)

Leader: Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Psalm 51:7 (KJV)

People: **Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.**

Psalm 51:10 (KJV)

All: **The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.**

Psalm 51:17 (KJV)

Offering sentence

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:7 (KJV)

Benediction

Speak the blessing over the congregation rather than praying it — the biblical pattern is a word given to the people, not a request made on their behalf.

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (KJV)

Bulletin inserts — cut along the dashed lines

Photocopy this page, cut on the dashed borders, and slip one into every bulletin or visitor pack. Free to reproduce for church use.

BULLETIN INSERT 1 · BIBLE SUNDAYS

Dust and mercy

For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Genesis 3:19 (KJV)

The ash is honest: we are dust, and the years are short. But the same God who formed dust into a living soul is the God who raises the dead. Lent begins in honesty so that Easter can end in joy.

BULLETIN INSERT 2 · BIBLE SUNDAYS

A rule for Lent

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Matthew 4:4 (KJV)

Give something up, take something on, and give something away. Fast from one comfort, add ten minutes of Scripture a day, and set aside what you would have spent for someone who needs it more.

Service planning notes

Fill this in on the Thursday before and hand a copy to the musicians, the reader, and the sound desk.

Preacher

Sermon title and text

Reader / liturgist

Hymns

Communion / ordinance

Announcements

Notes

More free KJV resources for Sunday at biblesundays.com/sunday — sermon series plans, printables, hymn texts, and free Bible widgets for your church website.