

# ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE OUTLINE

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**NOTE:** Prepare your ashes ahead of time. Do not combine your ashes with water, which makes the elements caustic. If this is the first time your church is observing Ash Wednesday, consider creating a handout on the history of Ash Wednesday to give to people prior to the service.

## Call to Worship

Psalm 32, 95, or 143

## Invocation

*Merciful God, we come to you aware of our humanity. We are frail beings and have been witness to our frailty in sickness, in sin, and in death. Remind us once again that we are dependent upon you; that you alone are our stronghold; that you alone are our hope. Be present in the confession. Be present in the singing. Be present in the prayers. Be present in the midst of our grief at our own mortality and the mortality of those around us. May your Holy Spirit be felt in ways beyond our understanding as we humbly come before you and plead your grace once again. Amen.*

## Responsive Reading

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

## Old Testament Reading

*Jonah 3:1–4:11*

## What Is Ash Wednesday?

*Ash Wednesday is a day of repentance; of realizing our mortality, our sin, and our desperate need for Jesus. It is the start of Lent, a season of fasting, praying, and acknowledging our deep need for Jesus to breathe hope, life, and redemption into our lives. We remember Jesus's forty-day fast in the wilderness, and we too enter a journey into the wilderness for forty days. We must not rush through the fast to get to the feast, though we may be tempted to do so. We sit in the wilderness in order that we might draw closer to Christ, that we might emerge more humble and more holy than we began. So tonight we are going to sing and pray as we reflect on our deep need for a Savior.*

## Hymn of Reflection and Repentance

*\*Options:*

"Cleanse Me"

"Lord, I Need You," by Matt Maher

## Responsive Reading

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

## Hymn of Reflection and Repentance

*\*Options:*

“I Surrender All”

“Give Us Clean Hands”

## Gospel Reading

Luke 18:9–14

## Sermon

## Imposition of Ashes

Congregants will come forward as a response to the message. As you put the ashes on their forehead or their hand, say to each individual, *“Remember that from dust you were formed, and to dust you shall return.”*

## Prayer

## Hymn Preparing for Communion:

*\*Options:*

“How Great the Father’s Love for Us”

“There Is a Redeemer”

“He Is Worthy”

## Communion

## Benediction

*Go in the humble knowledge of your humanity, your mortality, 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

*\*Choose music of reflection and promise*