



**Please read this bit before the service**

*You might want to have with you paper and a pen for each person*

*This is a zoom call, unless you are reading, or contributing to the reflection,  
can I ask you to stay on 'mute'  
so that your dog or doorbell doesn't disturb the service.*

*Optional: After the service you can burn\* your piece/s of paper outside in a metal baking tin or a barbeque and use the ash, either by sprinkling it on your head or mixing it with oil (olive oil is best) and then making the sign of the cross on your forehead or on one another's foreheads. DO NOT MIX ASH WITH WATER IT FORMS LYE WHICH MIGHT BURN*

*\*only adults should burn the paper and it might be good to have a bucket of water to hand.*

We meet in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
**Amen.**

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ  
be with you: **and also with you.**

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent, the season when we prepare for Easter by thinking about where we are with God, and saying sorry for the ways we have not quite got things right with him and with all that he created. In the Old Testament, people would often show how sorry they were by tearing their clothes and putting ashes on their head (you could look up Esther 4:1 and Job 42:6 either before or after this service). In the Christian Church, it became the custom to use the first day of Lent as a time to focus on saying sorry to God, and to put ash on people's heads as an external sign of their turning away from sin and turning back to God.

**Holy God, our lives are laid open before you;  
rescue us from the chaos of sin  
and through the death of your Son  
bring us healing and make us whole  
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

### **Joel 2:1-2, 12-17**

Sound the trumpet in Jerusalem ! Raise the alarm on my holy mountain! Let everyone tremble in fear because the day of the LORD is upon us. It is a day of darkness and gloom, a day of thick clouds and deep blackness. Suddenly, like dawn spreading across the mountains, a great and mighty army appears. Nothing like it has been seen before or will ever be seen again.<sup>1</sup> That is why the LORD says, “Turn to me now, while there is time. Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Don’t tear your clothing in your grief, but tear your hearts instead.” Return to the LORD your God, for he is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. He is eager to relent and not punish. Who knows? Perhaps he will give you a reprieve, sending you a blessing instead of this curse. Perhaps you will be able to offer grain and wine to the LORD your God as before. Blow the ram’s horn in Jerusalem! Announce a time of fasting; call the people together for a solemn meeting. Gather all the people— the elders, the children, and even the babies. Call the bridegroom from his quarters and the bride from her private room. Let the priests, who minister in the LORD ’s presence, stand and weep between the entry room to the Temple and the altar. Let them pray, “Spare your people, LORD ! Don’t let your special possession become an object of mockery. Don’t let them become a joke for unbelieving foreigners who say, ‘Has the God of Israel left them?’”

### **John 8:2-11**

Early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd. “Teacher,”

they said to Jesus, “this woman was caught in the act of adultery. The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?” They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, “All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!” Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust.

When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, “Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?” “No, Lord,” she said. And Jesus said, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **A time for reflection**

Let us now call to mind our sin and the infinite mercy of God.

*Silence is kept during which we think about those things we have not got right in our lives, you can then write them, or draw them, on the paper, during which I shall pray and, if you are not writing or drawing, you can join in.*

God the Father, **have mercy on us.**

God the Son, **have mercy on us.**

God the Holy Spirit, **have mercy on us.**

Trinity of love, **have mercy on us.**

**Most merciful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
we confess that we have sinned in thought, word and deed.**

We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength.

We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.

We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven.

**Lord, have mercy.**

We have been deaf to your call to serve, as Christ served us.

We have not been true to the mind of Christ.  
We have grieved your Holy Spirit.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

We confess to you, Lord ...

All our past unfaithfulness: the pride, hypocrisy and impatience of our lives.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

Our anger at our own frustration and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves. **Lord, have mercy.**

Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts and our dishonesty in daily life and work. **Lord, have mercy.**

Our negligence in prayer and worship and our failure to commend the faith that is in us. **Lord, have mercy.**

Accept our repentance, Lord...

for the wrongs we have done,  
for our blindness to human need and suffering,  
and our indifference to injustice and cruelty.  
**Accept our repentance, Lord.**

For all false judgements,  
for uncharitable thoughts towards our neighbours  
and for our prejudice and contempt towards those who differ from us.  
**Accept our repentance, Lord.**

For our waste and pollution of your creation  
and our lack of concern for those who come after us.  
**Accept our repentance, Lord.**

Restore us, good Lord.

**Favourably hear us, for your mercy is great.**

Accomplish in us the work of your salvation,  
**that we may show your glory in the world.**

By the cross and passion of your Son our Lord,  
**bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.**

*Silence is kept*

**O God, our gracious Father,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
and done many things to grieve you.  
We have often been selfish,  
we have sometimes forgotten to pray to you,  
and we have not loved you as we should.  
For these and all other sins forgive us, we pray,  
through him who died for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

*(C S Woodward, adapted from The Children's Service (SPCK))*

*I am going to mark myself with some ash I made earlier, and I invite you to draw, with your thumb, the sign of the cross on your forehead and repeat the words. If you later burn your piece of paper then you can, at that stage, either sprinkle the ash on your head or re-mark your forehead with ash – please follow the instructions at the top of the front page.*



**May this mark be a sign of my sadness for disobeying God and a promise to keep this season of Lent.**

*After a moment of silence, everyone says together:*

**May the Lord enrich us with his grace, and nourish us with his blessing;  
the Lord defend us in trouble and keep us from all evil;  
the Lord accept our prayers, and absolve us from our offences,  
for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Amen**

(Isaiah 61:1-3 – the verses Jesus later quoted in the synagogue)

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me,  
for the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted  
and to proclaim that captives will be released  
and prisoners will be freed.

He has sent me to tell those who mourn  
that the time of the LORD's favour has come,  
and with it, the day of God's anger against their enemies.

To all who mourn in Israel, he will give a crown of beauty for ashes,  
a joyous blessing instead of mourning,  
festive praise instead of despair.

In their righteousness,  
they will be like great oaks  
that the LORD has planted for his own glory.

**God of compassion,  
through your Son Jesus Christ  
you have reconciled your people to yourself.  
As we follow his example of prayer and fasting,  
may we obey you with willing hearts  
and serve one another in holy love;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

*New Patterns for Worship (2002), and Common Worship: Times and Seasons (2006), material from which is included in this service, are copyright © The Archbishops' Council. Some elements of this service are adapted from Chris Leach, 100 Worship Activities for Children, (Eastbourne, Kingsway, 2000) Bible readings are taken from the New Living Translation. With thanks to Lisa Wigmore and Adam Ransom for some of the ideas contained here.*