



AN ADAPTABLE AT-HOME LITURGY FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

Written by Rev. Sarah Are

*We invite you to implement this liturgy as-is, or adapt it for your context. Please attribute credit as follows:
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INTRODUCTION

The beginning of Lent brings a new invitation—an invitation into a deeper life of faith, an invitation to renewed spirituality, and an invitation into deeper awareness of God and self. This liturgy is designed to carve out space for personal reflection and intention setting at the start, knowing that the more honest we are with our hopes for this season, the more meaningful this season can become. This liturgy was written to be used by individuals or young families at home, but it could be adapted for small group use as well. To adapt it for congregational use, we encourage the addition of Holy Communion, a longer prayer of the people with silent reflection time, and additional hymns.

SOME HYMNS & MUSIC THAT MIGHT BE FITTING ARE

- "All Belong Here"
Words and music by The Many
- "Come As You Are"
Words and music by The Many
- "Ash Wednesday Comes and, Lord, We Hear"
Words: Carolyn Winfrey Gillette; Tune: TALLIS' CANON 8.8.8.8 ("All Praise to Thee, My God, This Night").
- "Bless the Lord"
From the Taizé community, France. © 1991.
- "O God, As We Pause"
Words: Carolyn Winfrey Gillette; Tune: ST. DENIO 11.11.11 ("Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise").

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- A candle and lighter
- A Bible and pen
- Printed copies of our Ash Wednesday doodle page, one for each participant (*included with this download*)
- A device to watch a short video or project it on screens
- A journal (*optional*)

I. SET THE SPACE

The year 2020 taught us just how much our space matters. Many of us realized just how holy our sanctuaries are for us when we were unable to physically gather within them. However, this season has also reminded us that God does not reside in any one place, for God is everywhere—and God promises to draw near to us wherever we may be. And so, as you begin, we invite you to mark your space so that your soul knows: *this is holy ground*.

To mark your sacred space, we suggest lighting a candle. Maybe find a pillow on the floor to sit on, or settle yourself into your favorite chair. Brew some tea, turn on some music that moves your spirit (*you might begin by singing or listening to one of the songs suggested above*). Gather your supplies (*listed above*). Most importantly, turn your phone notifications off so that you can truly be present.

Take a few deep breaths in and out. Repeat to yourself:

I am here. God is here.

This space is holy ground.

TIPS FOR YOUNG FAMILIES

- Invite your kids to have a hands-on role in this liturgy by having them collect the needed supplies from around the house (*pens, Bible, candle, lighter, computer, etc.*), and inviting them to light the candle to set the space.
- Before you begin the liturgy, invite your children to create a special place for you all to sit and reflect. They can make a comfortable fort out of pillows for you to sit on the floor, or they can gather all the supplies needed to gather around the table.

II. OPENING PRAYER

Now that the space is set, begin with prayer. Read the following words as an opening prayer. To make this a kinesthetic prayer, circle or underline any phrases that particularly move you or stand out to you.

PRAY

Creator God,

There is a rumbling in us that won't let go.

It stirs in us like the wind stirs leaves—inviting us to move, drawing us forth.

When we're quiet, we know that rumble is the Holy Spirit,

Dancing love awake in us.

So we're here.

And we're still.

And we're quiet.

And on this first day of Lent, we're asking you to draw near.

As we hear your scripture read aloud, open the door for us to move.

Invite us in. Rumble us awake.

Gratefully we pray, Amen.

III. READ & REFLECT | Beginning With Honesty

READ GENESIS 3:19B

“From dust you came, and to dust you shall return.”

REFLECT

- This verse—spoken to us when we receive the imposition of ashes on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday—reminds us of our humanity. So in full honesty, make a list of 5-10 challenges you are struggling with, recognizing that life is messy and life is complicated. Name anything that is hard or heavy in this moment. Write them down in your journal or on the doodle page (*included with this liturgy*). Challenge yourself to think of the core emotion underlying each challenge. For example, instead of simply saying, “I’m busy,” perhaps you might confess: “I overcommit myself because I worry that others will think I’m selfish if I say no.” Name your challenges and your confessions, offering them all to God.