

Parish of St Andrews  
Ash Wednesday 2021  
A dispersed act of witness & reflection



Ash Wednesday is an important day in the life of the church, this year it is on **February 17<sup>th</sup> 2021**. While we cannot gather physically, we can still mark the day and join in prayer together, taking time to reflect on what we would like to confess and be forgiven for.

Here are a number of activities that you might like to do to help you reflect and mark the start of Lent at home. There are a lot here because different people pray differently so there are ideas for you to choose from rather than do all of them!

*Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ.*

Lent is a time when we, as individuals and as a community of disciples, remember who we are; creatures with a mortal body, who are living in a world which is also limited by time and mortality, but called to a pilgrimage, following Jesus who was crucified but raised beyond this earth to eternal life.

A journey where we often stumble and sin, and yet can still be forgiven and grow closer to God.

The words used when we are marked with ashes (often from the Palm crosses of the previous year) remind us of the journey of our Lenten pilgrimage.

This year, though we cannot gather together on Ash Wednesday to be physically marked with Ash we can still share in the journey and seek to grow in our closeness to Christ. Let's walk this journey in faith and hope together, and in so doing, may we grow.

## *Suggested Activities*

### **Washing Hands**

This year we have been washing our hands a lot. Singing a couple of verses of a hymn might be a good accompaniment to this, here's one you might know.

#### ***Sing***

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,  
forgive our foolish ways;  
reclothe us in our rightful mind;  
in purer lives your service find,  
in deeper reverence praise,

Breathe through the heats of our desire  
your coolness and your balm;  
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire,  
speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,  
O still small voice of calm, O still small voice of calm!

This washing (which we have been doing all year as a commitment to preserve life) is also a sign of our sorrow for sins and mistakes and God's promise to wash away and forgive our sins.

As a prayerful activity you could pray from the psalms while you wash your hands:

#### ***Pray***

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.  
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin.  
Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your holy spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

**Amen**

[From psalm 51]

## Create your own ash

You can create your own ash, like you would get at church, if you burn an old palm cross. Please do it outside as it gets a bit stinky and take care to use an appropriate container!

Perhaps mark the back of your hand with the ash. (Do not mix the ash with water as it creates a substance which may burn your skin). In church we mix the ash with oil so it sticks.

If you are crafty you might want to mix the ash with PVA glue and paint a stone or a piece of card which can be left somewhere you will see it every day.

## A Walk

As we enter the season of Lent, we desire to follow Jesus, to grow in discipleship and in faith. It is not just personal sins we repent of, but also a recognition that being human means to be imperfect.

To be part of a community is to be part of a community that is not perfect.

If you are outside, or going for a walk, look for paths that others have trodden. See the footprints of different people, there might be more than one track, coming together then diverging, crossing over, or joining up.

*How will you choose which to follow?*

*Which footprints will be your guide?*

*How can we try to make sure it is Christ's footsteps we are following?*

## Planting Seeds

Find some soil and plants...

If it is in a garden or a park, look at all the dead leaves, plants, twigs which are part of the soil, and gradually breaking down to make it good to grow new plants. Our world depends on everything that has lived becoming dust and a fertile place for new life to grow.

If this is your garden, you may want to clear some weeds, or even plant a bulb, or sow some seeds. If you have a pot of compost you may want a plant to put in it and watch it grow during Lent. We are reminded of the cycle of life, that new life and hope can come out of mess and chaos, and that death is not the end.

*What do you want or need to grow good roots and be revitalised?*

*How might you help those roots to grow this Lent?*

## Dust

Run your finger along a windowsill or bookshelf, perhaps you will find some dust there? Or maybe you can scoop up some dirt from outside.

*As you look at your dirty hands, bring to mind those things you want to say sorry to God for,  
and offer them in prayer.*

Remember that you are human and will make mistakes, but God promises to hear and accept our repentance, and then forgive us, washing us clean and giving us a fresh slate.

Wash the dirt off your hands and give thanks for God's forgiveness.

## *At home lockdown Ashing Liturgy*

*You may wish to collect a little bowl of ash, mud or dust in advance.*

Greeting

We come in the name of God, +Father, Son and Holy Spirit

**Amen**

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

**And also with you**

Collect

*We pray:*

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing that you have made and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent: create and make in us new and contrite hearts that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may receive from you, the God of all mercy,

perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Readings & Reflection

### **John 8: 1-11**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+8%3A+1-11&version=NRSV>

*I wonder what Jesus wrote in the dust?*

*I wonder what you would have liked to read if you had been there. Or might it have been a sign, a symbol?*

Of this passage Rowan Williams says, in his book 'Writing in the Dust' (page 80-81):

*...When the accusation is made, Jesus at first makes no reply but writes with his finger on the ground. What on earth is he doing? Commentators have had plenty of suggestions, but there is one meaning that seems to me obvious in the light of what I think we learned that morning (11<sup>th</sup> Sep 2001) he hesitates. He does not draw a line, fix an interpretation, tell the woman who she is and what her fate should be.*

*He allows a moment, in which people are given time to see themselves differently precisely because he refuses to make the sense they want.*

*When he lifts his head there is both judgement and release. So this is writing in the dust because it tries to hold that moment for a little longer, long enough for some of our demons to walk away.*

Lent is time when we are allowed a moment, a time and space to see ourselves differently, and to allow words from God to become part of our lives.

This Lent may we have the courage to hold onto  
space,  
silence,  
uncertainty  
as we write in the dust, seek forgiveness,  
and allow God to be God.

Act of Penitence

*We pray*

We have not loved you with our whole heart.  
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.  
In your mercy forgive what we have been,  
help us to amend what we are,  
and direct what we shall be;  
that we may do justly, love mercy,  
and walk humbly with you, our God. Amen.

Imposition of Ashes

*Hold your ash, dust or mud as we pray:*

God our Father and Mother, you create us from the dust of the earth: grant that this dust may be for us a sign of our penitence and a symbol of our mortality; for it is by your grace alone that we receive eternal life in Jesus Christ our Saviour.

**Amen.**

*All are invited to take a moment to mark themselves with a cross (using ash, mud or even household dust):*

Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.

Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ.

Absolution

The Lord enrich you with his grace, and nourish you with blessings; the Lord defend you in trouble and keep you from all evil; the Lord accept your prayers, and +absolve you from your offences, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

**Amen.**

The Peace

Lord God, you have made us for love and for life,  
Mother God, you have tended us,  
you help us grow into people who receive, and give, love:

**We remember that we are dust  
We remember that we are loved  
We thank you for creation;  
We praise you for life, We receive your love  
We give thanks for your forgiveness<sup>i</sup>**

Holy God, our lives are laid bare 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**

Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us access to his grace. May the peace of the Lord be always with you:  
**and also with you.**

*Take a moment to pray for Peace and that we may find ways to share that hope with those around us. We may **sing**, listen to music or simply pause*

<https://youtu.be/7PjSO5Ihl0M>

This is love, not that we loved God,  
**but that God loved us and sent his Son.**

He is the sacrifice for our sins,  
**that we might live through him.**

If God loves us so much  
**we ought to love one another.**

If we love one another  
**God lives in us.**

## The Blessing

Christ give *us* grace to grow in holiness, to deny *ourselves*, take up *our* cross, and follow him; and the blessing of God almighty, the +Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among *us* and remain with *us* always.

**Amen.**

May we go in peace to share with others the Good News of God's gift of forgiveness.

**In the name of Christ.**

**Amen**

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<sup>i</sup> Responses adapted from "*Creativity*" Moot Community Little Services pocket liturgy 2009

This booklet has been adapted from draft resources by the Rev'd Rosalind Rutherford, via FB group: Church Covid Lent, Holy Week & Easter.