

Service for Ash Wednesday – 14 February 2018

Introductory Notes

This service has management and planning developed by an ecumenical group of ministers as being an appropriate means of marking the start of the Season of Lent in a way that is mindful of the situation of the Western Cape in the middle of a drought. It is hoped that each service will be arranged as an ecumenical gathering to remind us that we share together in the work of ministry to our local community.

The service follows a particular shape that is shared across our denominations and the text that follows needs to be adapted to the particular approach and needs of the congregation that will gather together in God's name on this particular day.

Underlying the material is a real awareness of the drought that is so real to all members of all communities within the Western Cape. As we gather at the start of the Lenten Season to acknowledge our individual and corporate sinfulness, we turn in humility to the God who longs to forgive us. The service gives ample opportunity for communities to hear the good news of God's forgiveness, and to find direction for living out the good news for which our Lord died and rose again.

The music that is sung at these services depends on the musicians available and the repertoire of the congregation gathered. The spaces for hymns or songs are indicated within the text and those preparing and leading the services should select from the local repertoire.

Background to the drought situation

The drought is a result of a number of factors:

- Lower than average rain over a period of three years;
- The massive increase in the population now living in the Cape
- Failures in planning and management at all three levels of authority
- Patterns of usage
- A lack of recycling in the Cape
- Climate change, possibly also in the micro-climate in Cape Town.

There are a number of aspects to the response needed in the current situation:

- In the short term, all should be praying for rain
- It is vital that we do this from an attitude of humility, recognizing that God has challenged followers to journey in faith – today is no different
- In addition, all should be praying for better management, planning and innovation in the development and distribution of resources
- It is important that the population develops a sensitive relationship with nature
- All of these aspects need to be drawn into the prayers of the people, in the regular services, in specific times of prayers outside of the services, and in the prayers of all Christians.

Additional background information is available in a number of sources:

- The liturgical suggestions for the day
- The Centre for Public Witness and in particular their report on the water crisis.

The Ash Wednesday Service

Gathering Rite

Greeting

The Lord be with you

And also with you

Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?

**Hope in God; for we shall praise him,
our help and our God.**

From Psalm 42:5

Call to Worship

Brothers and sisters in Christ,
every year at Easter,
during the time of the "Christian Passover,"
we celebrate our redemption
through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Lent is a time to prepare for this celebration
and to practice with discipline daily repentance,
our daily dying and rising in union with Christ.
We begin this season
by acknowledging our need for repentance
and for the mercy and forgiveness
proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Space here for a hymn of praise

Prayer for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in our worship

**Almighty God
to whom all hearts are open
all desires known
and from whom no secrets are hid:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit
that we may perfectly love you
and worthily magnify your holy Name;
through Christ our Lord.**

Collect for Ash Wednesday

**Almighty and holy God
your Son, in obedience to the Spirit
fasted forty days in the desert:
give us grace to discipline ourselves
that we may press on towards Easter**

**with eager faith and love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit
one God, now and for ever.
Amen**

A second hymn may be sung here, as an introduction to the Proclamation

Proclaiming God's Word

Prayer for illumination

O Lord, you have given us your Word
for a light to shine upon our path.
Grant us so to meditate on that Word,
and to follow its teaching
that we may find in it the light
that shines more and more
until the perfect day,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Worship Sourcebook: Second Edition: p143

Old Testament Reading	Joel 2: 12-18
Psalm	Psalm 51: 1-12
New Testament reading	2 Corinthians 5:17 – 6:2
Canticle or hymn	
Gospel reading	Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18
Sermon	

These are the standard readings for Ash Wednesday in the Revised Common Lectionary. The decision as to which of these should be read as part of the proclamation or whether to introduce a different reading that suits the conditions in the community is taken by the leadership of the community that will gather on the day.

Responding to God's Word

Reading and responding to the Ten Commandments

There should be a pause between each of the Commandments allowing for each to impact on the situation within this community as well as the region.

I am the Lord your God; you shall have no other gods but me.

Amen. Lord have mercy

You shall not make an idol of anything and worship it.

Amen. Lord have mercy

You shall not make wrong use of the name of the Lord your God.

Amen. Lord have mercy

Remember the Lord's day and keep it holy.

Amen. Lord have mercy

Honour your father and mother.

Amen. Lord have mercy

You shall not commit murder.

Amen. Lord have mercy

You shall not commit adultery

Amen. Lord have mercy

You shall not steal.

Amen. Lord have mercy

You shall not give false evidence.

Amen. Lord have mercy

You shall not covet the possessions of others.

Amen. Lord have mercy

Act of Penitence

Invitation to Confession

Genuine repentance involves two things:
the dying-away of the old self and the coming-to-life of the new.
The dying-away of the old self is to be genuinely sorry for sin,
to hate it more and more, and to run away from it.
The coming-to-life of the new self
is wholehearted joy in God through Christ
and a delight to do every kind of good as God wants us to.
Together, as Christ's body, we now confess our sin
and express our longing to live in joyful obedience to God.

— based on Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A's 88-90
The Worship Sourcebook: Second Edition: p143

Corporate Confession

Use a form of Confession that is familiar to the congregation. It will be important to allow for a time of silent reflection before the Confession itself. If it is used, the imposition of ashes follows immediately after the Confession with the Assurance of Forgiveness rounding off the whole Act of Penitence.

Imposition of Ashes

adapted from the Anglican Prayer Book 1989: page 163

A number of traditions prepare the ashes by burning the palm crosses distributed on Palm Sunday the previous year. Other possibilities include:

- *gathering ash from a veld fire that may have burned in the community*
- *taking dried grass from places within the community and burning that and using these ashes*
- *taking the ash from fires used for cooking in the community particularly if this is the regular way in which food is prepared*

- *giving people the opportunity to write their confessions on a piece of paper which can be burned in the service. Ensure that they have cooled down before the Imposition of the ashes.*

Where one uses ashes not burned palm crosses from previous years, it would be necessary to change the wording of the invitation that follows.

Dear friends in Christ, at the Christian Passover we celebrate year by year our redemption through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Since early days the Church has kept the season of Lent by remembering the need for repentance. These ashes have been made from the palms with which we greeted Christ our King with joy last Palm Sunday. They are a sign that we mean to prepare ourselves with penitence for Easter.

If the minister is to bless the ashes, the following may be added at the end of this introduction. The prayer that follows is then prayed.

So, let us ask God our Father to bless these ashes to our use.

Lord, bless these ashes to our use
and grant that they may remind us of our mortality

Amen

The Minister will then address the congregation

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

The Minister will then sign with the cross or a smear of the ashes on those who come forward saying to each one

Turn away from sin and believe the good news.

When all have received ashes, the Minister again faces the congregation and says

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

The Minister then washes his hands and then addresses the congregation saying

Return to the Lord with all your heart;
leave the past in ashes and turn to God with tears and fasting;
for God is slow to anger and ready to forgive.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Here are words you may trust,
words that merit full acceptance:
Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.
To all who confess their sins and resolve to lead a new life,
he says, "Your sins are forgiven."
He also says, "Follow me."
Now to the one who rules all worlds,
immortal, invisible, the only God,
be honour and glory forever and ever.

Amen. Thanks be to God

— based on 1 Timothy 1:15, 17

— *The Worship Sourcebook: Second Edition: p121*

The Prayers of the People

The Prayers of the people should be led in the regular way of the congregation

These might include:

- *Prayers prepared by an Intercessor*
- *Spontaneous prayers from individuals within the congregation*
- *Prayers in small groups within the congregation*
- *A litany with a congregational response as shown below*

In times of difficulty and despair

In God we trust

Our only comfort in life and in death is that we belong to Jesus Christ

In God we trust

Suffering works towards growth and develops perseverance

In God we trust

God is the Creator providing fountains of life and water

In God we trust

We can seek and find God's presence in suffering

In God we trust

We can seek and find the fellowship of others in suffering

In God we trust

We need not live in fear of times of testing

In God we trust

We shall not despair

In God we trust

We shall look to the Lord who is in control

In God we trust

We can rediscover our role as stewards of God's creation

In God we trust

Amen

Celebrating at the Table

Sharing of the Peace

Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The peace of the Lord be with you always.
And also with you.

Taking Bread and Wine

Bread and wine are brought to the table in the normal manner.

The Great Thanksgiving Prayer

From Unity in Worship – Services prepared by the Church Unity Commission

The Lord be with you

And also with you

Lift up your hearts

We lift them to the Lord

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God

It is right to give our thanks and praise

Blessed are you gracious God, creator of heaven and earth; we give you thanks and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord, who was tempted in every way, yet did not sin. By his grace we are able to triumph over every evil and live no longer for ourselves alone but for him who died for us and rose again; therefore, with angels and archangels and all who have served you in every age we raise our voices to proclaim the glory of your name.

Holy, holy, holy Lord

God of power and might

heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed be the one who comes in the name of the Lord

Hosanna in the highest.

We give thanks to you, Lord our God, for the goodness and love you have made known to us in creation; in calling Israel to be your people; in your Word spoken through the prophets; and above all in the Word made flesh, Jesus, your Son.

For in these last days you sent him to be incarnate from the Virgin Mary to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world. In him, you have delivered us from evil and made us worthy to stand before you. In him, you have brought us out of error into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life.

On the night before he was handed over to suffering and death, a death he freely accepted, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

After the supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks he gave it to them and said, 'Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.'

Therefore, Father, according to his command

We remember his death:

We proclaim his resurrection:

We await his coming in glory;

and we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to you, Lord of all; presenting to you, from your creation, this bread and this wine. We pray you, gracious God, to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the sacrament of the body of Christ and his blood of the new covenant. Unite us to your Son in his sacrifice that we, made acceptable in him, may be sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

In the fullness of time reconcile all things in Christ and make them new and bring us to that city of light where you dwell with all your sons and daughters; through Jesus Christ our Lord, the firstborn of all creation, the head of the Church, and the author of salvation;

By whom and with whom, and in whom, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory are yours, Almighty Father, now and forever.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

The Breaking of the Bread and Invitation to the Congregation

Distribution

The elements are distributed to the congregation in the normal manner.

Sending into the World

A hymn of celebration or praise may be sung here rather than after the dismissal

Thanksgiving for Worship

Almighty God,
you see that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves:
as we have been reminded that all of nature suffers at these times,
keep us both outwardly in our bodies,
and inwardly in our souls;
that we may be defended from all adversities
which may happen to the body,
and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Prayer of Self-Offering

**Father Almighty
we offer ourselves to you
as a living sacrifice in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Send us out into the world in the power of the Holy Spirit
to live and work to your praise and glory.
Amen**

Prayer for Africa

**God bless Africa.
Protect our children.
Transform our leaders.
Heal our land.
Restore our dignity,
and give us peace.
For Jesus Christ's sake.
Amen**

Blessing/Benediction

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness,
to deny yourselves,
take up your cross, and follow him
as you continue your journey in hope
as we look forward to the celebration of the resurrection;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you, and remain with you always.
Amen

Dismissal

To a troubled world
Peace from Christ
To a searching world
Love from Christ
To a waiting world
Hope from Christ
Go therefore in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ. Amen

