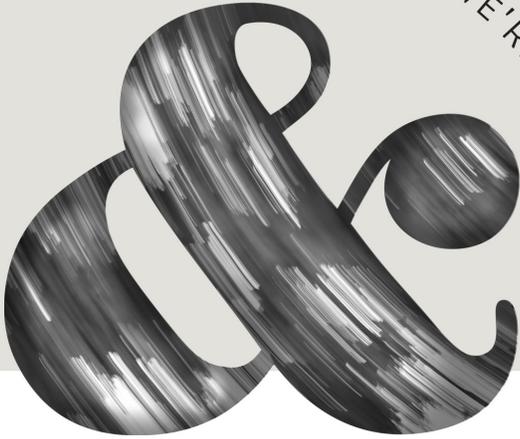


AGAIN & AGAIN WE'RE INVITED IN



AN ADAPTABLE AT-HOME LITURGY FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

Written by Reverend Sarah Are
Adapted by Reverend Taylor Fuerst

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 time of worship 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 can be used independently with no other assistance; simply work your way through the printed material, reading silently or aloud, pausing for reflection as you go.

Alternatively, we have provided a video of this liturgy, utilizing the voices of others, video, and music to guide you in this time of worship. This is available beginning at 6:00 a.m. on Wednesday, February 17, on the FUMC YouTube and Facebook Pages, as well as through the FUMC App.

Either way, know that as you worship, you are joined by others who are connecting with God around the world, stepping together into this season of Lent.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- A candle and lighter
- A Bible and pen
- Printed copies of our Ash Wednesday doodle page, one for each participant
- A journal (optional)
- Ashes (provided in your kit), or a small amount of dirt, mixed with a few drops of oil (we use olive oil; DO NOT use water with ashes, as it will burn the skin!)

SET THE SPACE

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 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 nest of pillows for you to sit on the floor, or they can gather all the supplies needed to gather around the table.

OPENING PRAYER

Now that the space is set, let's begin with prayer.

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.

READ AND REFLECTION | BEGINNING WITH HONESTY

Psalm 51:1-17

(See this psalm visually presented at www.theworkofthepeople.com/psalm-51)

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.

For I know my transgressions,

and my sin is ever before me.

Against you, you alone, have I sinned,

and done what is evil in your sight,

so that you are justified in your sentence

and blameless when you pass judgment.

Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
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.
Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.
O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if I were to give a burnt offering,
you would not be pleased.
The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

REFLECT

This psalm was written in a moment of full honesty and transparency before God. These words are an open door, an invitation for God to find us in our human weakness, fear, and sinfulness, and a plea for God to be gentle with us. God meets us in our vulnerability, when we acknowledge our true struggles.

So in full honesty, make a list of 3-5 challenges you are struggling with, recognizing that life is messy and life is complicated, and the past year has been particularly difficult. 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.

Take a moment to look over your list. Ask God for forgiveness for the things you can control. Ask God for grace for the things you cannot.

TIPS FOR YOUNG FAMILIES

Print enough doodle pages for each of your kids to have one. Help them write their challenges, if needed. When you are finished, display them in a visible place for the season of Lent. If it is difficult for them to think of challenges in their life, invite them to reflect on problems they see in the world that they hope to help change.

LISTEN

Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling

Words and Music: Will L. Thompson

READ “INVITED,” A POEM BY REVEREND SARAH ARE

Our God is intimately aware of our humanity
and the many ways we fall short
or get stuck in the weeds of our own problems.

Having confessed and written down some of the challenges that weigh heavily on you,
read the following poem as a reminder of God’s grace:

I like to imagine that each year,
God invites me to a party.

God drops me a note that says,
“No gifts, casual dress.
Come just as you are.”

I like to imagine that I am brave enough to go.
I like to imagine that I decide that I am worth it.
This was no pity invite,
there is no obligatory postage.
God wants me there.

So I get myself together,
smudged glasses, sensitive ego, wrinkled shirt, and all.
I ring the doorbell a few minutes late
on account of the fact that I lost my keys twice trying to get out the door,
and I almost turn back to hide in my car,
afraid that I might embarrass myself over appetizers or small talk.
But then God answers the door,
and God says, “You’re here!”
And I smile, because I am.

And with every step past that threshold,
I know that God is cheering me on.
It's the pride of a parent watching their child take their first step.
If I freeze,
God is not disappointed.
If I fall,
God is not mad.
But if I trust the invitation,
if I move closer,
I know God celebrates.

Friends, you've got mail.
It's an invitation to dust off your shoes,
to go deeper,
to trust that you're worth it,
to lose your keys and your faith,
and then to find them both,
along with your worth.
You are invited.
We are invited.
Again and again and again.
This invitation is for you.

RESPOND | INTENTION SETTING

The early Christians devoted themselves
to remembering Jesus' last days before death and resurrection,
and it became the custom of the Church
that before we celebrate Easter
we would spend forty days in spiritual preparation.
During this season,
newcomers to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism.
It was also a time when anyone who had committed serious sins
and had separated themselves from the community of faith
was reconciled by penitence and forgiveness,
and restored to participation in the life of the Church.
In this way the whole congregation was reminded
of the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ
and the need we all have to renew our faith.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church,
to observe a holy Lent:
by slowing down for self-examination and repentance;
by setting aside time for prayer, fasting, and self-denial;
and by reading and meditating on God's Holy Word.

To make a right beginning of repentance,
and as a mark of our mortal nature,
we begin with confession.

O God,
we are your people,
broken by the sin in us and around us,
willing participants in a culture that devalues human life
and fails to acknowledge our need for you.

We think we can do this life on our own,
but this moment in history has broken us again.

Find us in our struggles, we pray.

Open us to see and feel the anger and pain we are experiencing.

Sit with us in the ashes of grief.

Help us, this Lent, to gather up the grace
that you are still giving freely

that we might experience forgiveness, healing, and hope in days to come.

Guide us toward the cross,

that we might find resurrection on the other side.

Amen.

RECEIVE THE ASHES

Having mixed ashes or dirt with oil (not water!), you are invited to mark your forehead or hand with the sign of a cross. In doing so, we remember these symbols of death and mortality, through which God promises to bring new life. God meets us, marks us, and makes us whole.

WRITE

Having read scripture and poetry and named the challenges you are facing, now write down 3-5 hopes you have for this Lenten season. You can write your hopes in your journal or on your doodle page. As you write, consider these written hopes to be intentions that you are setting for the six weeks ahead. These are not intended to be aimless wishes on stars, but instead, thoughtful intentions for your one wild and precious life.

This is an allusion to the poem, "The Summer Day," by Mary Oliver

LISTEN

Be Thou My Vision

Words: Ancient Irish; trans. Mary E. Byrne; vs. Eleanor H. Hull, alt.

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Music: SLANE - Trad. Irish melody

CLOSING PRAYER AND BENEDICTION

God of open doors, open arms, and open conversations,
we know deep in our souls
that you are forever inviting us in.

Again and again,
you invite us to take another step closer,
another step deeper,
another step further,
in this journey of faith.

So with your invitation in our hands,
we pray for strength and wisdom.

Show us the next right step in this journey.

We are here.

You are here.

This is holy ground.

May this holy Lenten journey begin Once again.

Gratefully we pray, Amen.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Reverend Sarah Are, *Founding Creative Partner of A Sanctified Art*



Sarah (she/her) is the Associate Pastor for Youth and Young Adults at Preston Hollow Presbyterian Church in Dallas, Texas. She graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University with a degree in Social Work, and holds a Master of Divinity degree from Columbia Theological Seminary. Sarah loves to combine her love of all things creative with her passion for God. She believes that the Church has a responsibility to open every door to God, so that those of us who are visual, kinesthetic, or relational learners all have equal opportunity to

engage God to the fullest of our abilities. Sarah feels called to live her life welcoming people into the church by using her energy and passion for beautifully scripted words, raw and relevant liturgy, and hands-on worship experiences to engage our longing for God and the need for justice in this messy world.

AGAIN + AGAIN

Ash Wednesday

I AM HERE.
GOD IS HERE.
THIS SPACE IS
HOLY GROUND.



WE ARE INVITED IN

FROM TO DUST YOU CAME.
YOU SHALL RETURN.

START WITH HONESTY.
.....
WHAT IS HARD, HEAVY,
— CHALLENGING? —

intention
SETTING:

AMEN.

