

## ASH WEDNESDAY and LENT

The Lenten season is among the earliest observances of the Christian year. Lent began as a fast in preparation for the celebration of the Triduum or “Three Days” of the Christian Pasch - Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday. In some reckonings the liturgical day began at sundown, so some have included the Eucharist on Holy (Maundy) Thursday in the Triduum. Over time it was expanded as a preparatory retreat for catechumens prior to their baptism at the Easter Vigil to its current forty day length. The forty days were designed to correspond to the Lord's forty day fast in the wilderness and to Israel's forty year Exodus. In the Western tradition the Lenten observance begins on Ash Wednesday and ends with the Triduum.

While our Congregational ancestors eschewed the keeping of “so-called holy days” and the seasons of the church year, there has been a renewal of interest among churches of our Way in Lenten observance. The journey motif in the Lenten observance provides an opportunity for people to take time to examine the conscience, take stock of one's growth in faith, and then make a positive movement forward. Even the very name of the season, ‘Lent,’ from the Saxon word for ‘spring,’ ‘lencten’ as in the lengthening of the days, invites one to renewal. The original purpose of Lent as a time apart, or a retreat, can also provide the basis for a faith community's corporate observance of the season and occasion a time of spiritual and educational renewal.

In the Western Tradition, Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent. It is appropriate to observe the day with a service either at noon or in the evening. The Lord's Supper may also be celebrated on Ash Wednesday to remind the people of our need for “food for the journey” that is properly sought from Word and Sacrament. The *Book of Common Prayer* and the *Book of Common Worship* - PCUSA both have excellent resources for Lent and particularly for Ash Wednesday. Both the BCP and the BCW liturgies for Ash Wednesday include a “call to penitence” that beautifully expresses the nature and the scope of the Lenten season. It is important to remember that the day, and the season itself, is more positive than negative. So even though one may have “give ups” (the traditional Lenten observance of abstaining or curbing something) it is also good to have “take ups” (some special observance, e.g. more frequent prayer, more Bible study, etc.). While Ash Wednesday got its name from the imposition of ashes on the foreheads of the people, there are other ways in which penitence may be expressed. An “offering of ashes” where sins to be forgiven, faults to be corrected, and positive aspirations can be written on a piece of paper and burned in a fire at the back of the meeting house is one way. Another is to have a large rough wooden cross at the front of the meeting house and invite the people to come forward, to pray, and then pound in a nail as a sign of their Lenten observance.

What follows is a sample Ash Wednesday service based upon the BCW:

## **A Thought to Worship By**

Fasting is the soul of prayer, mercy is the lifeblood of fasting. If we have not all three together, we have nothing. *Peter Chrysologus, fifth century*

## **The Church Gathers** [*in Silence*]

### **The Call to Worship**

*Minister:* Let us worship God. God sent Christ into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

*People:* God's love endures forever.

*Minister:* God is our refuge and strength, a present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth should change, though the mountains should shake in the heart of the sea; though the waters rage and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

*People:* God's love endures forever. Amen.

### **\*Opening Prayer (unison – please stand if you are able)**

Gracious God, out of your love and mercy you breathed into dust the breath of life, creating us to serve you and our neighbors. Call forth our prayers and acts of tenderness, and strengthen us to face our mortality, that we may reach with confidence for your mercy; in Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## **The Church Hears the Word**

### **The Old Testament Lesson - Joel 2:1-2,12-17**

### **Psalm Response - Psalm 51**

### **The New Testament Lesson - 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10**

### **The Gospel Lesson - Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21**

## **The Sermon**

### **Invitation to the Observance of the Lenten Discipline**

*Unison Prayer:* Holy and merciful God, we confess to you and one another and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth, that we have sinned by our own fault in thought, word and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

To each petition please respond: *Have mercy on us, O God.*

*{when the prayer is about to conclude the minister will say:}*

*Minister:* Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation.

*People:* That we may show forth your glory in the world.

*Minister:* By the cross and passion of our Savior,

*People:* Bring us with all your saints to the joy of Christ's resurrection.

## **The Church Offers the Great Thanksgiving**

### **Invitation to the Lord's Table**

#### **The Great Thanksgiving**

*Minister:* The Lord be with you.

*People:* And also with you.

*Minister:* Lift up your hearts

*People:* We lift them up to the Lord.

*Minister:* Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

*People:* It is right to give God our thanks and praise.

*{following the words, "...who forever sing to the glory of your Name." all say:}*

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest.**

### **The Lord's Prayer {debts/debtors}**

#### **Communion of the People**

*Minister:* Jesus, Lamb of God,

*People:* Have mercy on us.

*Minister:* Jesus, bearer of our sins,

*People:* Have mercy on us.

*Minister:* Jesus, redeemer of the world,

*People:* Grant us peace.

*{Please come forward and receive the Bread and the Cup at the table.}*

## **The Prayer Following Communion**

## **The Sending Forth of the Church**

### **\*Charge and Blessing**

Those who wish to are invited to make an “offering of ashes” following the service. Writing down something one wishes to improve or change during Lent and offering it to the Lord. A small fire will be available at the chapel.

## **MAUNDY THURSDAY**

### **A Maundy Thursday Liturgy**

(Adapted from the United Methodist Book of Worship)

**Gathering** (\* please stand if you are able)

\* Call to Worship

\* Hymn

\* Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Pardon

### **Proclamation and Response**

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture Lessons

Sermon

### **Responses to the Word**

\* Hymn

[Footwashing]

Prayers of the People

The Lord's Prayer

Offering

Thanksgiving and Communion

### **Sending Forth**

\* Hymn

Dismissal with Blessing

## **Calls to Worship**

As your people have gathered for so many feasts, O God, so we gather this night  
To celebrate your grace, and be awed by your power; to feel the blessing of your Spirit as  
we remember your mighty acts of deliverance.

Join us at table this night, O God, and empower us to tell the story of your goodness and  
grace.

Open our hearts to embrace others and welcome them into this fellowship of love.

## **Prayers**

O Holy and Merciful God, we gather here this night to confess our sins and seek your  
forgiveness. Too often we hurry away from your table, seeking to serve our own needs  
rather than yours. We look out for our own interests and pervert your teachings to meet  
our comfort level. Gracious God, show us mercy. Forgive us, for we know not what we  
do. In your grace, wash us clean, and use our sinful ways to ultimately accomplish your  
holy plans; for we pray in the name of the One who washes feet and serves, Christ Jesus  
our Lord. Amen.

## **GOOD FRIDAY**

### **Suggested Orders of Worship**

*Note: Sources for each are listed at the bottom of this page.*

**Gathering** (in silence) <sup>(1)</sup>

**Call to Worship**

**Opening Prayer**

**Opening Hymn**

**Prayer for Illumination**

**The Readings**

**Sermon**

**Hymn**

**Solemn Intercession/Lord's Prayer**

**Procession of the Cross**

*It is suggested that a roughly hewn wooden cross be carried into the church at this time and placed before  
the people, saying the following:*

Behold the cross, on which was hung the salvation of the whole world.

Come, let us worship.

*(Repeat 3X)*

**Solemn Reproaches of the Cross** (*See "Sources, 2", below*)

**Closing Hymn**

**Depart in Silence**

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**Organ Prelude** <sup>(3)</sup>

**Invitation to Worship**

**Prayer of Invocation**

**Responsive Reading**

**Gloria Patri**

**Hymn**

**Good Friday Litany**

**Hymn**

**The Readings**

**Silent Prayer**

**Litany of Confession**

**Litany of Petition**

**Litany of Intercession**

**Hymn**

**Sermon**

**Hymn**

**Prayers for Guidance and Preservation**

**Closing Hymn**

**Benediction**

**Postlude**

**Calls to Worship**

Blessed be the name of the Lord our God.

**Who redeems us from sin and death.**

For us and for the salvation of all, Christ became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

**Blessed be the name of the Lord.** <sup>(4)</sup>

O God, today the earth has lost its Light.

**Darkness wove a shroud for the sun.**

In grief God rends the temple's cloak.

## **God's holy heart is breaking.**

My God, my God, what have we done?

**We've caused the death of God's own Son.** <sup>(5)</sup>

## **Prayers**

Most merciful God, in silent awe we bow our heads before you. What you endured on our behalf leaves no room for excuses and self-justification, no possibility of repaying the favor. As we keep watch beneath your cross, let us experience the awe that comes from knowing you have loved us with so great a love. Grant us the humility to comprehend how it was that each and every one of us made your suffering necessary. Grant us such peace for Jesus' sake. Amen. <sup>(6)</sup>

Holy and ever-living God, by the suffering and death of Jesus you save us from Adam's fall. Grant in your mercy that we may be drawn to Christ lifted high on the cross, and by his redeemed love be raised to everlasting life with him, who lives and reigns with you in the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen. <sup>(7)</sup>

Almighty God, look with mercy on your family for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed and to be given over to the hands of sinners and to suffer death on the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen. <sup>(8)</sup>

## **Sources**

1. Adapted from *Book of Common Worship*, 281-291.
2. For suggested wording of such a liturgy, see *Book of Common Worship*, 288-291.
3. Adapted from *A Worship Book for Free Churches* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), 62-69.
4. Hickman, Hoyt L. et. al., *Handbook of the Christian Year* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1986), 179; *The Book Of Common Worship* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 281.
5. *Sourcebook of Worship Resources, Volume 2* (Canton, OH: Communication Resources, Inc., 1996), 13.
6. *Sourcebook of Worship Resources, Volume 2*, 49.
7. *Handbook of the Christian Year*, 179.
8. *Book of Common Worship*, 282.

## EASTER

### Calls to Worship

You are holy, O God, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ, the one sent to redeem us from sin and death.

**He put on our flesh. He dwelt among us full of grace and truth.**

To those who follow him, even through death, he gives new and abundant life.

**You raised him from the grave! Alleluia!**

With joy and thanksgiving we cry out, "Christ is risen!"

**Christ the Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.**

This is the day!

**Glorious day, Resurrection day!**

So, rejoice, beloved, and sing with joy, for Christ is risen from the dead.

**He is risen as he said. Alleluia!**

### Prayers

God of the impossible, the rock is rolled away! The tomb is empty! Christ is risen! We've come to celebrate the empty tomb and to ask you to remove the barriers of our lives and allow the resurrection of ourselves as new creations in Jesus Christ to come forth. Raise us to new life this day and every day, for we pray in the power of our Risen Lord Jesus. Amen.

Mighty God: By your incredible power you raised your Son from the grip of death, and forever opened the portal to everlasting life. By his glorious resurrection, you proved him victorious over death; and you assured all of us that we need not fear death any longer. With grateful hearts we welcome this Easter morning. Accept our worship in the spirit in which it is given, for we humble ourselves in the face of the forgiveness and the promise of newness, in this life and beyond, which you extend to us. We pray with voices united in the strength and confidence of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

### Sources

All of the above were adapted from *Sourcebook of Worship Resources, Vol. II* (Canton, OH: Communication Resources Inc., 1998).



## **PENTECOST**

Pentecost celebrates both an ending and a beginning. It signals the close the Easter Season and it commemorates the birthday of the Christian Church. It is the day when we remind ourselves that the Lord's resurrection has begun the “new day” promised by the prophets and longed for by countless generations. Thus, it is appropriate that the day be marked with joy and with expectation and hope. The color of the day is RED, symbolizing the fire of the Spirit that came upon the church gathered in the upper room. The movement of Pentecost worship should draw the worshipper into the experience of the Spirit's coming, evoking the rushing wind, the initiation of promised renewal, and the abiding presence of God in God's people. If at all possible, Pentecost is an appropriate day to share the Lord's Supper and is the most appropriate day for young people to “own the covenant” and to be confirmed in their Christian faith.

A full liturgy for the day can be found in the *Book of Common Worship* - PCUSA, and there are appropriate traditional collects found in the *Book of Common Prayer*. What follows are a call to worship, an invocation, a collect, and the canticle for Pentecost (the traditional Latin hymn: *Veni Creator Spiritus*, set for responsive reading).

### **Call to Worship**

*One:* You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses,

*Many:* In Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

*One:* And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit

*Many:* And Spoke the word of God with boldness.

*One:* Come, Holy Spirit,

*Many:* Come among us and kindle in us the fire of God's love. Alleluia!

### **Invocation**

Grant, we ask you, merciful God, that your Church, being gathered together in unity by your Holy Spirit, may manifest your power among all nations, to the glory of your name and through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever more. Amen.

### **Collect**

O God, who at this time sent down your Holy Spirit from above upon your apostles, and lovingly sends the Spirit to renew your image in our souls: Mercifully grant that by the working of the Spirit's grace we may be saved from sin and may glorify you; through the merits and the mediation of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, who with you and the Spirit lives and ever makes intercession on our behalf, one God, world without end. Amen.

### **Canticle**

Come, Holy Spirit, our souls inspire,  
And lighten with celestial fire.  
You the anointing Spirit art,  
Who does your sevenfold gifts impart.  
Your blessed anointing from above  
Is comfort, life, and fire of love.  
Enable with perpetual light  
The dullness of our blinded sight.  
Anoint and cheer our soiled face  
With the abundance of your grace.  
Keep far from foes, give peace at home;  
Where you are guide, no ill can come.  
Teach us to know the Father, Son,  
And you, of both to be but One;  
That through the ages all along,  
This may be our endless song:  
Praise to your eternal merit,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.