



## UCA Liturgy for Ash Wednesday *(from *Uniting in Worship 2*)*

A container of ashes is placed on the communion table prior to the service.

### CALL TO WORSHIP

Let us worship God.

Enfold me in your love, dear God,  
**yet pierce my heart with your mercy.**

In the cascading of your compassion,  
**scour away all that offends.**

The truths to which I am blind  
are hidden so deep, so secretly:  
**bring the light of your wisdom  
to the depths of my heart.**

*Psalm 51:1, 6, 10*

Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
**and put a new and steadfast spirit within me.**

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit  
be with you all.

**And also with you.**

*2 Corinthians 13:13*

Sisters and brothers in Christ,  
from the earliest days of the Church,  
Christians have observed with great devotion  
the time of our Lord's passion and resurrection.

It became the custom of the Church to prepare  
by a season of penitence and fasting.  
At first, this season was observed  
by those who were preparing for baptism at Easter  
and by those who, having been excommunicated,  
were to be restored to the communion of the Church.

By keeping these days with care and attention,  
Christians take to heart the call to repentance  
and the assurance of forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel,  
and grow in faith and devotion to our Lord.  
So, by self-examination and repentance,  
by prayer and fasting,  
by self-denial and acts of generosity  
and by reading and meditating on the word of God,  
let us keep a holy Lent.

#### OPENING PRAYER

O God,  
you alone are holy and merciful;  
help us to rest in your grace  
and find the treasure of life  
in the service of Jesus Christ,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
God now and for ever. **Amen.**

#### OLD TESTAMENT READING: Joel 2:1-2,12-17 (NLT)

**2** Sound the trumpet in Jerusalem!

Raise the alarm on my holy mountain!

Let everyone tremble in fear

because the day of the LORD is upon us.

<sup>2</sup>It is a day of darkness and gloom,

a day of thick clouds and deep blackness.

Suddenly, like dawn spreading across the mountains,

a great and mighty army appears.

Nothing like it has been seen before  
or will ever be seen again.

*A Call to Repentance*

<sup>12</sup> That is why the LORD says,  
“Turn to me now, while there is time.

Give me your hearts.

Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning.

<sup>13</sup> Don’t tear your clothing in your grief,  
but tear your hearts instead.”

Return to the LORD your God,

for he is merciful and compassionate,  
slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.

He is eager to relent and not punish.

<sup>14</sup> Who knows? Perhaps he will give you a reprieve,  
sending you a blessing instead of this curse.

Perhaps you will be able to offer grain and wine  
to the LORD your God as before.

<sup>15</sup> Blow the ram’s horn in Jerusalem!

Announce a time of fasting;

call the people together

for a solemn meeting.

<sup>16</sup> Gather all the people—

the elders, the children, and even the babies.

Call the bridegroom from his quarters

and the bride from her private room.

<sup>17</sup> Let the priests, who minister in the LORD’s presence,

stand and weep between the entry room to the Temple and the altar.

Let them pray, “Spare your people, LORD!

Don’t let your special possession become an object of mockery.

Don’t let them become a joke for unbelieving foreigners who say,

‘Has the God of Israel left them?’”

PSALM READING: Psalm 51:1-17 (NLT)

<sup>1</sup> Have mercy on me, O God,  
because of your unfailing love.

Because of your great compassion,  
blot out the stain of my sins.

<sup>2</sup> Wash me clean from my guilt.  
Purify me from my sin.

<sup>3</sup> For I recognize my rebellion;  
it haunts me day and night.

- <sup>4</sup> Against you, and you alone, have I sinned;  
I have done what is evil in your sight.  
You will be proved right in what you say,  
and your judgment against me is just.
- <sup>5</sup> For I was born a sinner—  
yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.
- <sup>6</sup> But you desire honesty from the womb,  
teaching me wisdom even there.
- <sup>7</sup> Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean;  
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
- <sup>8</sup> Oh, give me back my joy again;  
you have broken me—  
now let me rejoice.
- <sup>9</sup> Don't keep looking at my sins.  
Remove the stain of my guilt.
- <sup>10</sup> Create in me a clean heart, O God.  
Renew a loyal spirit within me.
- <sup>11</sup> Do not banish me from your presence,  
and don't take your Holy Spirit from me.
- <sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and make me willing to obey you.
- <sup>13</sup> Then I will teach your ways to rebels,  
and they will return to you.
- <sup>14</sup> Forgive me for shedding blood, O God who saves;  
then I will joyfully sing of your forgiveness.
- <sup>15</sup> Unseal my lips, O Lord,  
that my mouth may praise you.
- <sup>16</sup> You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one.  
You do not want a burnt offering.
- <sup>17</sup> The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit.  
You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.

NEW TESTAMENT READING: 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10 (NLT)

<sup>20</sup> So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" <sup>21</sup> For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

**6** As God's partners, we beg you not to accept this marvelous gift of God's kindness and then ignore it. <sup>2</sup> For God says, "At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you." Indeed, the "right time" is now. Today is the day of salvation.

### *Paul's Hardships*

<sup>3</sup>We live in such a way that no one will stumble because of us, and no one will find fault with our ministry. <sup>4</sup>In everything we do, we show that we are true ministers of God. We patiently endure troubles and hardships and calamities of every kind. <sup>5</sup>We have been beaten, been put in prison, faced angry mobs, worked to exhaustion, endured sleepless nights, and gone without food. <sup>6</sup>We prove ourselves by our purity, our understanding, our patience, our kindness, by the Holy Spirit within us, and by our sincere love. <sup>7</sup>We faithfully preach the truth. God's power is working in us. We use the weapons of righteousness in the right hand for attack and the left hand for defense. <sup>8</sup>We serve God whether people honor us or despise us, whether they slander us or praise us. We are honest, but they call us impostors. <sup>9</sup>We are ignored, even though we are well known. We live close to death, but we are still alive. We have been beaten, but we have not been killed. <sup>10</sup>Our hearts ache, but we always have joy. We are poor, but we give spiritual riches to others. We own nothing, and yet we have everything.

GOSPEL READING: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21 (NLT)

#### *Teaching about Giving to the Needy*

**6** “Watch out! Don't do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. <sup>2</sup>When you give to someone in need, don't do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. <sup>3</sup>But when you give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. <sup>4</sup>Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

#### *Teaching about Prayer and Fasting*

<sup>5</sup>“When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. <sup>6</sup>But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

<sup>16</sup>“And when you fast, don't make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. <sup>17</sup>But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. <sup>18</sup>Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

#### *Teaching about Money and Possessions*

<sup>19</sup>“Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup>Store your treasures in heaven, where

moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

## SILENT PERSONAL REFLECTION

### **Service of Ashing**

#### THE RECEIVING OF ASHES

The leader takes the ashes from the communion table, and says:

Blessed are you, God of all creation.

You are eternal, we are mortal,  
formed from the dust of the earth.

As we receive these ashes, make them a sign for us  
of repentance and returning to you.

Breathe into us again the breath of life.

**Blessed be God for ever.**

Come, receive the sign of ashes.

The ashes are placed on each person's forehead, or hand, in the shape of a cross with the words:

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

**Amen.**

#### A LITANY OF PENITENCE

Let us pray:

**Most holy and merciful God,  
we confess to you, and to one another,  
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.**

We have not loved you  
with our whole heart, and mind, and strength.  
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.  
We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven.

**Have mercy on us, Lord.**

We have been deaf to your call to serve  
as Christ served us.

We have not been true to the mind of Christ.

We have grieved the Holy Spirit.

**Have mercy on us, Lord.**

We confess to you, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness:  
our pride, our hypocrisy,  
and our failure to be completely honest with ourselves  
or with other people.

**We confess to you, Lord.**

Our preoccupation with our own comforts or possessions,  
and our dishonesty in daily life and work:

**We confess to you, Lord.**

Our exploitation of other people,  
and our envy of those with more talents than ourselves:

**We confess to you, Lord.**

Our negligence in prayer and worship,  
and our failure to share the faith we have:

**We confess to you, Lord.**

Accept our repentance, Lord, for the wrongs we have done:  
for our blindness to human need and suffering,  
and our indifference to injustice and cruelty.

**Accept our repentance, Lord.**

For all false judgments,  
for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbours,  
and for prejudice and contempt  
toward those who differ from us:

**Accept our repentance, Lord.**

For our waste and pollution of your creation,  
and our lack of concern for those who come after us:

**Accept our repentance, Lord.**

Restore us, good Lord.

**Grant us forgiveness and time for amendment of life.**

Strengthen us to overcome temptation.

**And empower us with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.**

By the cross and passion of your Son our Lord,

**Bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.**

THE PEACE

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**And also with you.**

## BLESSING

In the deserts of this world,  
may you find signs of God.

In the wilderness of your lives,  
may you be encouraged by God.

In your joy and in your sorrow,  
may you rejoice in God.

**Amen.**

## DISMISSAL

Go forth in peace to live your Lenten discipline.

**We go in faith and hope. Amen.**

