

Ashes to Go: Additional resources to print

If you are printing a liturgical handout, or offering any kind of take-away from Ashes to Go, you may wish to print one or more of these additional resources.

Any handout should also include resources for keeping Lent such as your congregation's worship and program times, appropriate web, scriptural or community resources.

An Invitation to a Holy Lent*

Dear People of God: From the early days of our faith, Christians have observed the remembrance of Christ's passion and resurrection with great reverence.

It became the custom to prepare for that observance by a season of prayer and fasting, and the reconciliation of those who had been separated from the community of faith.

By keeping the season of Lent, we take to heart God's call to repentance and the assurance of forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel, and practice in our daily lives the work of reconciliation.

I invite you, therefore, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word.

To make a right beginning to this season it is appropriate to receive the mark of ashes as a the reminder of our mortal nature and of God's invitation to receive Christ's redeeming work.

* this is included in Liturgy C, and may be included in Liturgy B.

Why "Ashes to Go"?

Ashes are an ancient sign of penitence. From the Middle Ages it became the custom to begin Lent by being marked in ash with the sign of the cross. The reminder that we are dust turns our attention to the creative power of God, and God's ability to heal the brokenness in our lives when we offer that brokenness to God. That turning to God is the work of Lent, preparation for the celebration of Easter.

We're offering ashes on the street corner today because that reminder of need, humility, and healing shouldn't be confined to a church building. We probably need it more when we are in the middle of our daily business! The ashes we receive here are to remind us throughout the day of our need for God, and of God's call to us.

There is much more to the beginning of Lent than ashes alone, and we encourage you to make time for worship with a community of faith, for the support of others and of the great traditions of faith in our work of repentance and renewal. But God meets us not just in worship, but in the midst of life, and we offer the opportunity to remember our faith to those whose schedules make it hard to stop and pray with others today.

Prayers for keeping Lent

O God whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring us again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ your Son. Amen.

(BCP Lent 2)

Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves: 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 Savior. Amen.

(BCP Lent 3)

God our Creator, the strength of all who put their trust in you, mercifully accept our prayers; and because, in our weakness, we can do nothing good without you, grant us the help of your grace, that in keeping your commandments we may please you, both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(adapted from the collect for 6 Epiphany in the Book of Common Prayer, but appropriate to keeping Lent)