

On Ash Wednesday *Imposition of Ashes in a Time of Pandemic*

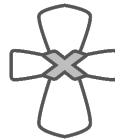
The imposition of ashes is an optional dimension of the Ash Wednesday rite in the Episcopal Church. However, the profoundly tactile nature of the rite has become a significant ritual moment for many people. The imposition of ashes is generally understood to be rooted in the enrollment of penitents on the first day of Lent. That practice was later expanded to all of the laity as a sign of their own repentance and of their commitment to walking the way of Lent together with those who were to be baptized at Easter or, in the case of the penitents, restored to the faith.

For reasons of safety and anti-viral hygiene during this season of COVID, we invite you to administer these blessed ashes on yourself or other people in your household by either **sprinkling ashes upon the head** or, **marking the forehead with ashes** while saying:

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

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Source: Excerpt of a reflection by The Rt. Rev. J. Neil Alexander, Imposition of Ashes in a Time of Pandemic. buildfaith.org/covid-imposition-of-ashes/



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Lenten Devotional Kit *Observing a Holy Lent* 2021



Lent is a season when many people make a special effort to focus on enhancing their ever-growing and loving relationship with God. Christ's life, ministry, and death are remembered during this season. It's also a time to think about how God is with us all the time. You may do this through prayer, reading the Bible, using a Lent meditation resource, helping others, or something else. Anything that connects you to God is a great practice. Even walking the dog, seeing the green grass, or hearing chirping birds can be a way to commune with God.

Here are a few suggestions for using the contents of this bag

- Create a focal point for Lenten devotional prayer and reflection. Place the contents of this bag on a plate near your home altar or at your dining room table.
- Choose one night of the week and invite participants to pick one of the symbols as a starting point for conversation.
- For your own devotion, daily or weekly, choose one of the symbols for reflection as you make your way through the season of Lent. You may want to journal your thoughts during this sacred time for transformational healing and reconciliation.

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Sand Between his baptism and the beginning of his adult ministry, Jesus went into the wilderness for 40 days ‘to be tested’. The desert is a dangerous place and Jesus was hungry, cold, and tired. He was also tempted and tormented, but he didn’t give up.

- Read the story of Jesus being tempted in the desert. (Luke 4:1-13) Touch the sand and reflect on your wilderness moments.
- When things get tough, how do we remember God is there for us?
- What constitutes wilderness in your life? What have you learned there? What might you learn there?

Rock While in the wilderness, Jesus was tempted by the devil to transform stone into bread. He knew he was not called to do this by God. He didn’t change the rock into food. Later, Jesus became known for doing amazing things. He fed the hungry, offered encouragement, and healed people.

- When you are angry or sad, it may feel like your heart has become a rock. How does that feel?
- How can you help someone who has a “rock” in their heart? How does it feel to help others?
- Read the story of Zacchaeus. (Luke 19:1-10) Jesus transforms Zacchaeus. Jesus transforms us and helps us make better choices.
- Is there a place in your life where you could make better choices, with Jesus’ help?

Human Figure Because Jesus was fully human, he gets us, understands us from inside our skin, and knows from experience that we’re each capable of great things, Godly things. No matter what we do, he keeps on inviting us to join us in his work which has become our own. Jesus knows that we can do good things on earth, just like he did.

- In Lent, we are counting down 40 days until Easter. What can you do to be more like Jesus at home? At school? At work? Everywhere?
- Read the story of Jesus washing the disciples’ feet. (John 13:1-7)
- How can we live like Jesus?

Shell Historically, the season of Lent was when new Christians were prepared for baptism. Jesus began his ministry after his baptism.

- As someone who has been (or will be baptized) what is your ministry?
- How are you living out the promises made in the Baptismal Covenant? Read through the Baptismal Covenant on page 304-305 of the Book of Common Prayer.
- Read the story of Jesus’ baptism (Mark 1:9-11) and look at photos of baptisms of family members

Candle Jesus is called the Light of the World. Jesus told his disciples to be a light in the world too and make a difference.

- Where do you shine? What do you think you are good at? What is your talent?
- How can you encourage someone to see the good in themselves?
- Read Matthew 5:14-16 and sing the song *This Little Light of Mine*.
- How do you let your light shine?

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Source: Modified online resources from St. Cuthbert Episcopal Church, Houston, TX and buildfaith.org/lent-in-a-bag/