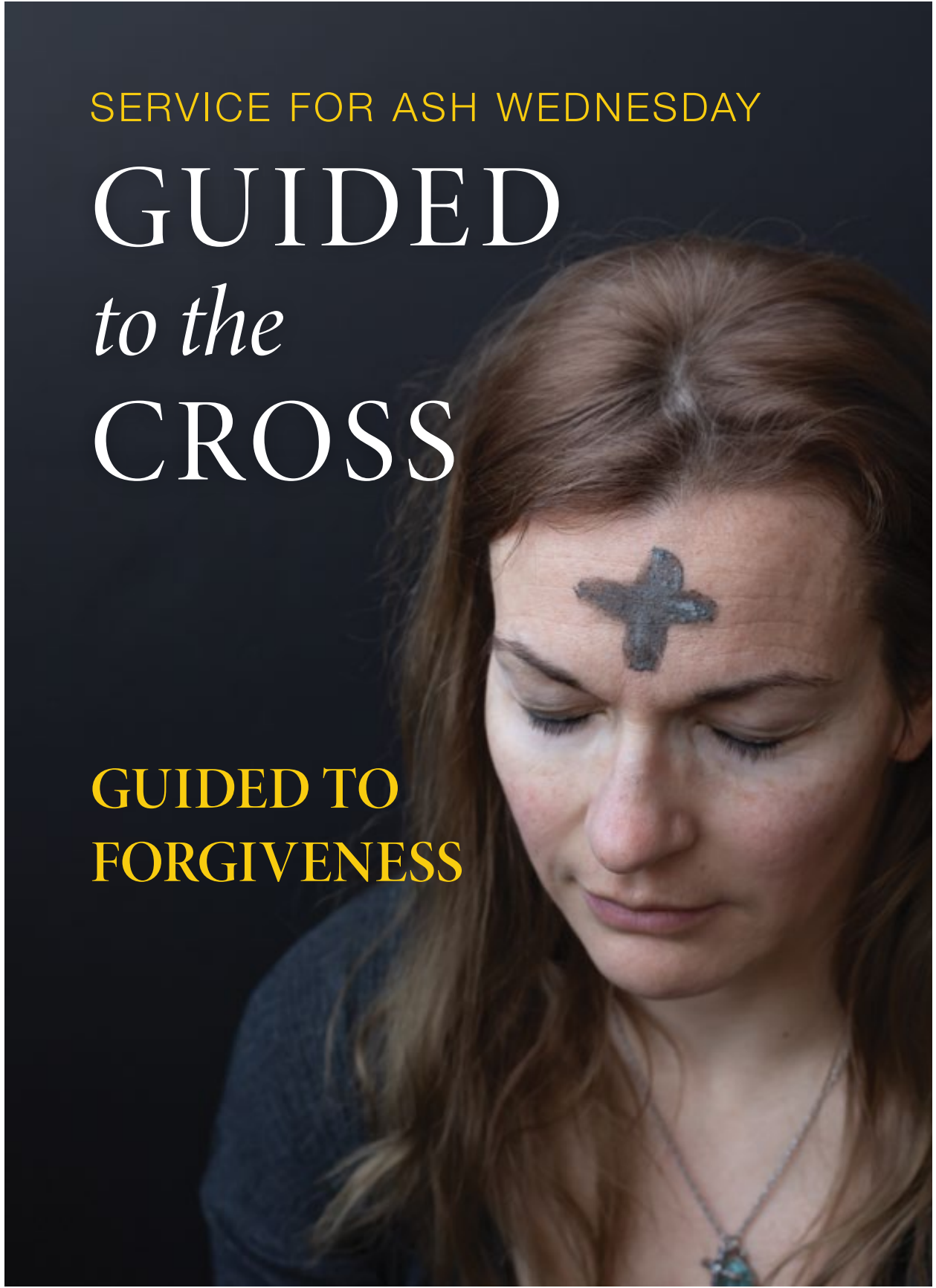


SERVICE FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

GUIDED  
*to the*  
CROSS

GUIDED TO  
FORGIVENESS



SERVICE FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

# GUIDED *to the* CROSS

## GUIDED TO FORGIVENESS

### COMPLETE SCRIPT FOR WORSHIP LEADERS

- If desired, an **Environmental Projection** is shown on a screen or on the walls of your worship space to set the tone for the service before the service begins or throughout the service at various points:

[shutterstock.com/image-photo/ash-cross-on-womans-forehead-1908899350](https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/ash-cross-on-womans-forehead-1908899350)

- This **Theme Verse** is read aloud by the pastor at the start of the service or is read silently by the congregation before the service begins:

*He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:13-14*

- The **Opening Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Aberstwyth 77 77 D, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

Savior, when in dust to thee low we bow th'adoring knee;  
When, repentant, to the skies scarce we lift our weeping eyes;  
O, by all thy pains and woe suffered once for us below,  
Bending from thy throne on high, hear our penitential cry!

By thy helpless infant years, by thy life of want and tears,  
By thy days of deep distress in the savage wilderness,  
By the dread, mysterious hour of th'insulting tempter's pow'r,  
Turn, O turn a fav'ring eye; hear our penitential cry!

By thine hour of dire despair, by thine agony of prayer,  
By the cross, the nail, the thorn, piercing spear, and torturing scorn,  
By the gloom that veiled the skies o'er the dreadful sacrifice,  
Listen to our humble sigh; hear our penitential cry!

By thy deep expiring groan, by the sad sepulchral stone,  
By the vault whose dark abode held in vain the rising God,  
O, from earth to heav'n restored, mighty, reascended Lord,  
Bending from thy throne on high, hear our penitential cry!

- The **Invocation and Call to Repentance** are spoken responsively by the pastor and the congregation:

**P** In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen.

**P** In ancient times, people might display their sorrow over sin by scattering dust and ashes on their heads, a reminder that in Eden God decreed death as the penalty for sin: “You are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19). Yet God also promised that a Savior would come to destroy the power of the tempting serpent who had brought sin and death into God’s creation. In his suffering, the inspired prophet Job spoke of his trust in the Lord’s promise: “I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth” (Job 19:25). Confident in his Redeemer’s love, Job confessed his sins, “I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6). Remembering that the promised Savior, Jesus our Redeemer, shed his blood on the cross for us, we take onto ourselves a mark of repentance. You are invited to come forward at the direction of the ushers to receive the mark of ashes, a reminder that we, like Job, repent in dust and ashes.

- The **Invocation of Ashes** takes place at this time. Participants are invited to come forward at the direction of the ushers to receive a mark of ashes.

- The **Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Munich 76 76 D, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

I lay my sins on Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God;  
 He bears them all and frees us from the accursed load.  
 I bring my guilt to Jesus to wash my crimson stains  
 Clean in his blood most precious till not a spot remains.

I lay my wants on Jesus; all fullness dwells in him;  
 He heals all my diseases; my soul he does redeem.  
 I lay my griefs on Jesus, my burdens and my cares;  
 He from them all releases; he all my sorrows shares.

I rest my soul on Jesus, this weary soul of mine;  
 His right hand me embraces; I on his breast recline.  
 I love the name of Jesus, Immanuel, Christ the Lord;  
 Like fragrance on the breezes his name abroad is poured.

- The **Confession and Forgiveness** (Psalm 51:1-2, 9-10, 12) are spoken responsively by the pastor and the congregation:

Ⓟ Having received the symbol of repentance, let us confess our sins to God our Savior, using the words of the psalmist David.

Ⓒ **“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!...Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”**

Ⓟ God has had mercy on us, and for the sake of Christ Jesus our Redeemer, he has forgiven our sins. I announce to you that your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

- **“Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit!”**

- The **Prayer of the Day** is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:
  - Ⓟ Heavenly Father, although we are all too aware of our sins and failures, we repent with humble confidence, knowing that Jesus shed his blood on the cross for us. By your grace, your undeserved favor for sinners, you have brought us out of the domain of sin and transferred us into the kingdom of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we have forgiveness for our sins. Lead us by your Spirit to walk in love as Jesus walked, and to bear witness to the fact that our Redeemer lives! Hear our prayer, and accept our praise in Jesus' holy name. Amen.
  
- The **Old Testament Reading**, Psalm 103:11-14, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:
  - Ⓟ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.
  
- The **Epistle Reading**, Colossians 1:9-14, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:
  - Ⓟ And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
  
- The **Gospel Reading**, Luke 23:33-34, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:
  - Ⓟ And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.

- The **Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Southwell SM, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

Lord Jesus, think on me  
 And purge away my sin;  
 From worldly passions set me free  
 And make me pure within.

Lord Jesus, think on me  
 Nor let me go astray;  
 Through darkness and perplexity  
 Point out your chosen way.

- The **Children’s Sermon** is delivered by the pastor or other worship leader:

*Needed: an assembled paper crown, enough paper crowns  
 for all of the children (these can be decorated and cut out at home)*

- ▣ This is the beginning of Lent, a season of 40 days when we remember how Jesus suffered and died for us. After those 40 days, it will be Easter morning, and we will celebrate Jesus’ resurrection! Today is called Ash Wednesday because in Bible times, people would show they were sad or that they were sorry for their sins by putting dust and ashes on their heads. Today, in our worship service, everyone who wanted to do so received a mark of ashes on their hand or forehead. Some of you received that mark too.

The mark of ashes shows that we are sorry for our sins. We know that Jesus had to suffer and die to take our sins away, so the ashes also remind us that our sins are forgiven! The prophet Isaiah said that God would comfort people who are sad and sorry about their sins. God would “give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes” (Isaiah 61:3). I’m going to put this paper crown on the head of someone who received the mark of ashes. *(Place crown on a child.)* Everyone will have a crown that they can take home to decorate and wear. The ashes remind us that we are sorry for our sins. The crown reminds us that, because Jesus died for us, our sins are forgiven and we have the crown of life. That means we will live forever with Jesus!

Let's pray: Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross to take away our sins. Help us to live as your children and to share the good news of your love with others. Amen.

- The **Sermon Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune *Der Am Kreuz 87 87 77 88*, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

Jesus, grant that balm and healing in your holy wounds I find,  
Ev'ry hour that I am feeling pains of body and of mind.  
Should some evil thought within tempt my treach'rous heart to sin,  
Show the peril, and from sinning keep me from its first beginning.

Should some lust or sharp temptation fascinate my sinful mind,  
Draw me to your cross and passion, and new courage I shall find.  
Or should Satan press me hard, let me then be on my guard,  
Saying, "Christ for me was wounded," that the tempter flee confounded.

Ev'ry wound that pains or grieves me by your wounds, Lord, is made whole;  
When I'm faint, your cross revives me, granting new life to my soul.  
Yes, your comfort renders sweet ev'ry bitter cup I meet;  
For your all-atoning passion has procured my soul's salvation.

- The **Sermon** is delivered by the pastor:

**P** Grace, mercy and peace to you, my dear Christian friends. Welcome to Ash Wednesday. Welcome to the season of Lent, and welcome to this journey being guided to the cross of Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

It is typical to call the 40-day season of Lent a journey. Because that is what it is. We are journeying with our Lord as he heads to the cross. But what are we going to find there? That is what we are exploring tonight and in the weeks to come on the road to Calvary.

Consider me your tour guide on this trek to the tree where Jesus died. What do we see on this night, and what will we see along the way?

On this Ash Wednesday, the first thing we can't help but see is ashes—ashes placed on our foreheads in the shape of a cross to remind us that we are dust and to dust we shall return. Why ash? Because since ancient times, people wore sackcloth and ashes when they were sorrowful, repentant and grieving, all of which we do this night as we ponder the depth of our sins and the turning away we have done—turning away from God to do our own thing, to follow evil or destructive or prideful paths. We mourn with St. Paul that the bad things we don't want to do