A Liturgy for Ash Wednesday

Words to be said are in this style: All: say these words.

Instructions are in italics.

This service may be led by those in minor orders.

Ash is prepared by using cold burnt wood ash put into a small suitable bowl. Burnt palm may be used if preferred, and some congregations keep their palms from the previous Palm Sunday for this purpose.

Hymns may be sung, and a short sermon preached if desired.

Opening Prayer

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord, for he is good

All: His love endures forever

Leader: Into your presence we come, Lord,

a few moments of quietness,

in a busy world that demands our attention,

Breathe on us now that we might know your presence,

and your power to see this lent through...

The Collect

Leader: Be with us O Lord, in all our doings and further us with your continual help, that in all our works, begun, continued and ended in you, we may glorify your holy name Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen

The Psalm

If not the leader someone may be appointed to read the psalm. As an alternative, the leader can read a verse followed by the congregation reading a verse.

Leader: A reading from Psalm 51

Have mercy on me O God in your enduring goodness: according to the fullness of your compassion blot out my offences.

Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness: and cleanse me from my sin;

For I acknowledge my rebellion: and my sin is ever before me.

Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your eyes: so you will be just in your sentence and blameless in your judging.

Create in me a clean heart O God: and renew a right spirit from me.

Do not cast me out from your presence: do not take your holy spirit from me.

O give me the gladness of your help again: and support me with a willing spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways: and sinners shall turn to you again.

O Lord of my salvation deliver me from bloodshed: and my tongue shall proclaim your praise.

You take no pleasure in sacrifice or I would give it: burnt-offerings you do not want.

The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart O God you will not despise.

The Gospel

Any reader can be appointed to read the Gospel, but must do so from a lectern outside the sanctuary.

(St John Ch. 3, 3 - 15)

Leader: The Holy Gospel is taken from the third chapter of the Gospel of St John Beginning at the third verse.

A prayer for Confession and Forgiveness

Leader: In the blazing light of your love our failings are illuminated: our failure to give, our failure to love, our failure to follow, our failure to serve, our failure to be the people, you would have us be. Forgive us and renew us; You know our failings. Enfold us in your arms, that we might daily know, your forgiveness and healing love.

All: Amen.

Leader: The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, slow to anger and of great kindness. (Psalm 103.8)

The Lord's Prayer

Leader: We say together the words of the Lord's Prayer.

All: Our Father...

The Imposition of Ashes

The leader stands before the altar (if in Holy Orders) or in front of the sanctuary area (if in minor orders). Taking a dish of ash and using the finger, the leader imposes a sign of the cross in ash on the forehead of the faithful who come forward in silence and return to their seats afterwards, again in silence. Whilst imposing the ashes the leader says to each one:

Leader: From ash we came and to ash we will return.

Affirmation

Leader: O Lord, you have marked us as yours since our baptisms, and at the start of this Lent, we carry your cross in ash on our heads, and carry your love in our hearts, this day and for evermore.

All: Amen.

Leader: We all say together...

All: May we know the love of the heavenly Father deep in our hearts. May we understand our significance in the centre of His family, and the bonds that hold us so close as brother and sister. May we understand the lengths that He was prepared to go for all mankind, and freely respond in the Today which he has given for us to cherish.

Leader: Let us bless the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

The Blessing

The leader gives this or another suitable blessing:

Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy

Spirit be with us all evermore.

All: Amen.