

◆ A HOME RITUAL FOR ◆

ASH WEDNESDAY

For Individuals & Families | Westminster United Church

Gather somewhere comfortable. You will need: a small bowl of ashes (from burnt paper) a candle, and a Bible. If you have no ashes, olive oil or water may be used instead.

GATHERING & LIGHTING THE CANDLE

Light the candle. Sit together in silence for a moment. Speak aloud the words below:

We enter this holy season of Lent: a time of turning, of letting go, and of drawing closer to God.

Lent is an important time when we look deeply inside ourselves. We are honest about the fact that we do not always live the way that God intends. We commit ourselves to changes, and to new beginnings, opening ourselves up to being renewed through Jesus Christ.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come, you who long for mercy. Come, you who seek new life.

Come, you who are weary and burdened.

Come, you who are beloved by God.

Come with open hearts, seeking forgiveness, healing, and hope.

OPENING PRAYER

Merciful God,

You know our hearts, our fears, our failures.

As we mark this season of Lent may we be honest with ourselves, aware of our fragility and open to your transforming love.

Hold us, guide us, and lead us closer to you, through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Spirit. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Read: Joel 2:12-17, Psalm 103:8-14, Mark 1:14-15

REFLECTION

Sit in Silence or share briefly with a word or sentence.

"What is one thing I am being invited to release or return to God this Lenten season?"

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Each person may mark a cross of ashes/water/oil on their own forehead, or mark one another's forehead, saying:

**"Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.
Return to God, who loves you."**

Sit quietly for a moment after all have received the mark of the cross. Then pray THE LORD'S PRAYER.

PRAYER OF LENTEN COMMITMENT

God of grace, as we enter these forty days, we commit to:

Slowing down, and listening for you. Paying attention to those who are hurting. Practising generosity and letting go. Trusting in your mercies which are new every morning.

BLESSING

Go now into this season of Lent, aware of your humanity, yet confident in God's steadfast love and unending mercy.

May the Spirit guide you, may Christ's love sustain you and may you live each day in the hope of new life that God offers freely. Thanks be to God. Amen.