



## AN ADAPTABLE AT-HOME LITURGY FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

Written by Rev. Sarah Are

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*We invite you to implement this liturgy as-is, or adapt it for your context. Please attribute credit as follows:  
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### INTRODUCTION

The beginning of Lent brings a new invitation—an invitation into a deeper life of faith, an invitation to renewed spirituality, and an invitation into deeper awareness of God and self. This liturgy is designed to carve out space for personal reflection and intention setting at the start, knowing that the more honest we are with our hopes for this season, the more meaningful this season can become. This liturgy was written to be used by individuals or young families at home, but it could be adapted for small group use as well. To adapt it for congregational use, we encourage the addition of Holy Communion, a longer prayer of the people with silent reflection time, and additional hymns.

### SOME HYMNS & MUSIC THAT MIGHT BE FITTING ARE

- ["All Belong Here"](#)  
*Words and music by The Many*
- ["Come As You Are"](#)  
*Words and music by The Many*
- ["Ash Wednesday Comes and, Lord, We Hear"](#)  
*Words: Carolyn Winfrey Gillette; Tune: TALLIS' CANON 8.8.8.8 ("All Praise to Thee, My God, This Night").*
- ["Bless the Lord"](#)  
*From the Taizé community, France. © 1991.*
- ["O God, As We Pause"](#)  
*Words: Carolyn Winfrey Gillette; Tune: ST. DENIO 11.11.11.11 ("Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise").*

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

- A candle and lighter
- A Bible and pen
- Printed copies of our Ash Wednesday doodle page, one for each participant (*included with this download*)
- A device to watch a short video or project it on screens
- A journal (*optional*)

## I. SET THE SPACE

The year 2020 taught us just how much our space matters. Many of us realized just how holy our sanctuaries are for us when we were unable to physically gather within them. However, this season has also reminded us that God does not reside in any one place, for God is everywhere—and God promises to draw near to us wherever we may be. And so, as you begin, we invite you to mark your space so that your soul knows: *this is holy ground*.

To mark your sacred space, we suggest lighting a candle. Maybe find a pillow on the floor to sit on, or settle yourself into your favorite chair. Brew some tea, turn on some music that moves your spirit (*you might begin by singing or listening to one of the songs suggested above*). Gather your supplies (*listed above*). Most importantly, turn your phone notifications off so that you can truly be present.

Take a few deep breaths in and out. Repeat to yourself:

*I am here. God is here.*

*This space is holy ground.*

### TIPS FOR YOUNG FAMILIES

- Invite your kids to have a hands-on role in this liturgy by having them collect the needed supplies from around the house (*pens, Bible, candle, lighter, computer, etc.*), and inviting them to light the candle to set the space.
- Before you begin the liturgy, invite your children to create a special place for you all to sit and reflect. They can make a comfortable fort out of pillows for you to sit on the floor, or they can gather all the supplies needed to gather around the table.

## II. OPENING PRAYER

Now that the space is set, begin with prayer. Read the following words as an opening prayer. To make this a kinesthetic prayer, circle or underline any phrases that particularly move you or stand out to you.

### PRAY

Creator God,

There is a rumbling in us that won't let go.

It stirs in us like the wind stirs leaves—inviting us to move, drawing us forth.

When we're quiet, we know that rumble is the Holy Spirit,

Dancing love awake in us.

So we're here.

And we're still.

And we're quiet.

And on this first day of Lent, we're asking you to draw near.

As we hear your scripture read aloud, open the door for us to move.

Invite us in. Rumble us awake.

Gratefully we pray, Amen.

## III. READ & REFLECT | Beginning With Honesty

### READ GENESIS 3:19B

"From dust you came, and to dust you shall return."

### REFLECT

- This verse—spoken to us when we receive the imposition of ashes on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday—reminds us of our humanity. So in full honesty, make a list of 5-10 challenges you are struggling with, recognizing that life is messy and life is complicated. Name anything that is hard or heavy in this moment. Write them down in your journal or on the doodle page (*included with this liturgy*). Challenge yourself to think of the core emotion underlying each challenge. For example, instead of simply saying, "I'm busy," perhaps you might confess: "I overcommit myself because I worry that others will think I'm selfish if I say no." Name your challenges and your confessions, offering them all to God.

### III. READ & REFLECT | Beginning With Honesty (CONT.)

#### REFLECT (CONT.)

- Take a moment to look over your list. Ask God for forgiveness for the things you can control. Ask God for grace for the things you cannot.

#### TIPS FOR YOUNG FAMILIES

- Print enough doodle pages for each of your kids to have one. Help them write their challenges, if needed. When you're finished, display them in a visible place for the season of Lent. If it is difficult for them to think of challenges in their life, invite them to reflect on problems they see in the world that they hope to help change.

#### READ "INVITED" A POEM BY SARAH ARE

Our God is intimately aware of our humanity and the many ways we fall short or get stuck in the weeds of our own problems. Having confessed and written down some of the challenges that weigh heavily on you, read the following poem as a reminder of God's grace:

*I like to imagine that each year,  
God invites me to a party.  
God drops me a note that says,  
"No gifts, casual dress. Come just as you are."*

*I like to imagine that I am brave enough to go.  
I like to imagine that I decide that I am worth it.  
This was no pity invite,  
There is no obligatory postage.  
God wants me there.*

*So I get myself together,  
Smudged glasses, sensitive ego, wrinkled shirt, and all.  
I ring the doorbell a few minutes late on account of the fact that  
I lost my keys twice trying to get out the door,  
And I almost turn back to hide in my car,  
Afraid that I might embarrass myself over appetizers or small talk.  
But then God answers the door,  
And God says, "You're here!"  
And I smile, because I am.*

*And with every step past that threshold,  
I know that God is cheering me on.  
It's the pride of a parent watching their child take their first step.  
If I freeze, God is not disappointed.  
If I fall, God is not mad.  
But if I trust the invitation,  
If I move closer,  
I know, God celebrates.*

*Friends, you've got mail.  
It's an invitation to dust off your shoes,  
To go deeper,  
To trust that you're worth it,  
To lose your keys and your faith,  
And then to find them both, along with your worth.  
You are invited.  
We are invited.  
Again and again and again.  
This invitation is for you.  
—Rev. Sarah Are*

## IV. RESPOND | Intention Setting

### WATCH

Watch one (or both!) of the following short videos. Both videos are invitations to a richer, more meaningful, more intentional life.

- “A Pep Talk from Kid President to You” [youtube.com/watch?v=l-gQLqv9f4o](https://youtube.com/watch?v=l-gQLqv9f4o)  
*Created by Kid President and Brad Montague. Published by SoulPancake.*
- “The Present” [youtube.com/watch?v=WjqIU5FgsYc](https://youtube.com/watch?v=WjqIU5FgsYc)  
*“The Present” is a thesis short from the Institute of Animation, Visual Effects and Digital Postproduction at the Filmakademie Baden-Wuerttemberg in Ludwigsburg, Germany.*

### WRITE

Having read scripture and poetry, named the challenges you are facing, and watched these invitational videos, now write down 5-10 hopes you have for this Lenten season. Allow these videos to be encouragement for living life with intention. You can write your hopes in your journal or on your doodle page.

As you write, consider these written hopes to be intentions that you are setting for the six weeks ahead. These are not intended to be aimless wishes on stars, but instead, thoughtful intentions for your one wild and precious life.<sup>1</sup>

## V. CLOSING PRAYER & BENEDICTION

Pray the following words. To make this a kinesthetic prayer, circle or underline any phrases that particularly move you or stand out to you.

God of open doors,  
Open arms,  
And open conversations,  
We know  
Deep in our souls  
That you are forever inviting us in.  
Again and again,  
You invite us to take another step closer,  
Another step deeper,  
Another step further,  
In this journey of faith.  
So with your invitation in our hands,  
We pray for strength and wisdom.  
Show us the next right step in this journey.  
We are here.  
You are here.  
This is holy ground.  
May this holy Lenten journey begin  
Once again.  
Gratefully we pray,  
Amen.

<sup>1</sup> This is an allusion to the poem, “The Summer Day,” by Mary Oliver.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Rev. Sarah Are**, *Founding Creative Partner of A Sanctified Art*

Sarah (*she/her*) is the Associate Pastor for Youth and Young Adults at Preston Hollow Presbyterian Church, Dallas, Texas. She graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University with a degree in Social Work, and holds a Master of Divinity degree from Columbia Theological Seminary. Sarah loves to combine her love of all things creative with her passion for God. She believes that the Church has a responsibility to open every door to God, so that those of us who are visual, kinesthetic,

or relational learners all have equal opportunity to engage God to the fullest of our abilities. Sarah feels called to live her life welcoming people into the church by using her energy and passion for beautifully scripted words, raw and relevant liturgy, and hands-on worship experiences to engage our longing for God and the need for justice in this messy world.