

Ash Wednesday Resources 2021

Given the continuing pandemic restrictions, churches and worship leaders are exploring different methods for observing Ash Wednesday, which in 2021 will arrive on February 17. We note that the Ecumenical Consultation on Protocols for Worship, Fellowship, and Sacraments is recommending that “no gatherings in any indoor venue take place for either Shrove Tuesday or Ash Wednesday in the United States.”

Some alternatives may include:

- at-home services using a liturgy such as this one developed by Greg Moore using *United Methodist Book of Worship* materials for use during a 2015 ice storm: Ashes at Home (pdf) and the Worship Design Studio's Ash Wednesday liturgy (available to subscribers and purchasers).
- more reflections on observing Ash Wednesday in the midst of the pandemic can be found on the UM Discipleship Ministries website.

Some considerations:

- Persons should be cautious in creating their own ashes. Ashes should not be mixed with water to create a paste. Use olive oil instead.
- Ashes for liturgical use are available online at sites such as Church Supply Warehouse.
- Dr. Marcia McFee of Worship Design Studio recommends that we “perhaps err this year on the side of the ‘dust’ part of ‘dust and ashes’ - inviting a ritual that involves earth/dirt. Indeed, the imagery of earth has multivalent possibilities: ‘dust you were and to dust you shall return’ as well as the way in which mud was used in healing by ancient peoples. And we could all use some healing in these times.”
- for churches that do choose to have an in-person gathering, all provisions of the Technical Assistance Manual must be observed. One option for Ash Wednesday is to have individual containers of ashes placed by gloved volunteers 24 hours prior to an in-person service for persons to receive during the service or as they leave, allowing them to impose the ashes individually or with their household members.
- administering ashes, even gloved, via cotton swabs, or in a drive-thru setting, does not meet TAM provisions for safety during this season.

— *Back to In-Person Worship Work Group*