



Book of Faith Lenten Journey: Marks of the Christian

These worship helps are for congregations shaping their Lenten Wednesday worship services around the Lenten Resource—*Book of Faith Lenten Journey: Marks of the Christian*. The weekly and daily themes emerge from Paul’s Letter to the Romans, chapter 12. In these Worship Notes you will find bullet points highlighting each week’s key themes from *Marks of the Christian*, a Prayer of the Day, scripture readings, hymn suggestions, and several ideas and images around which to build the worship experience. Worship planners are encouraged to pick and choose from these worship helps—and even to go beyond them—in planning Lenten worship that speaks to the context of your congregation. Each week in Lent, the worship planner should have read each of the six daily readings from *Marks of the Christian* in order to plan worship and prepare a sermon that speaks to the experience of congregational members who are working through this resource as a personal or small group Lenten discipline.

The following items are available in each set of Worship Helps.

Introduction to the Day

Provides a theme for the worship that is connected to scripture readings for the day and to the weekly themes found in the book.

Prayer of the Day

A Prayer of the Day connected to the day’s theme.

Readings and Psalm

Scripture readings that connect to the themes of the worship and help set the direction for the worship service.

Prayer Prompts

Thematic prayer petition suggestions provided to guide the prayers of the community in worship.

Hymns for Worship

Hymn suggestions from multiple hymn sources to use in building the worship.

Ideas and Images

Suggestions for interactive sources of art, media, and content to use in creative ways to enhance or expand the worship experience.



Worship Helps for Ash Wednesday

■ Introduction to the Day

To be used as a sermon starter and springboard into the worship service

Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent and sets the tone and direction for worship on the seven Wednesdays in Lent. It is a solemn service, looking ahead, as it does, to the Passion of Christ and calling followers of Christ into a time of penitence, prayer, and deep reflection on the key themes of Christian faith. In *Marks of the Christian*, the theme for Ash Wednesday is “Remembering the Mercies” of God amidst our sin and struggle to know, love, and live in constant relation to God. The preacher might read and consider the daily reflections from *Marks of the Christian*, which explore various themes of God’s ongoing redemption in our lives. Ash Wednesday should not focus solely on human sin and finitude but also on God’s continuing hunger to know us, love us, and draw us near, redeeming us into God’s own beauty despite ourselves.

The preacher might focus on:

- The way remembering and savoring God’s presence and love shapes our souls, our attitudes, our behavior, our hopefulness. In remembering, we live Eucharistic lives, giving thanks for the great giving of God.
- Our tendency to forget in times of struggle. We forget what God has done and continues to do. Thus, we lose track of God and our true identity as God’s beloved. We imagine we are on our own, without the presence of the One who has promised to journey with us always. We turn in on ourselves, not out to God and God’s world. We wither in sinful forgetting of God.
- The hunger of God for us to enter deeply into God’s graces, savoring and remembering, watching and waiting for the appearance of God’s smallest graces in our lives. God wants us always. God hungers for relationship with us, despite sin and forgetfulness, despite our tendency to turn away.
- The power of God to redeem us, breaking through our shell so that we remember the mercies of God. This is a process that sets us free from guilt and shame and self-preoccupation, awakening the desire to serve and surrender ourselves, to worship and watch for the in-breaking of God’s kingdom, and to live in mutual joy and giving with others in the body of Christ. The daily reflections from *Marks of the Christian* pick up various themes of God’s ongoing redemption in our lives.

■ Prayer of the Day

Use one of the following prayers as Prayer of the Day.

Loving God, you never forget us but like a loving mother tend carefully to our needs lest we be lost. Awaken us to remember and celebrate the mercies which you delight to shower upon us, that our hearts may flow with gratitude and praise for the wonder of your love through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

or

Maker of the morning, your mercies are fresh each day, a flowing river from the infinite goodness of your divine heart. Awaken us to the wonder of your love and free us from bondage to self, that we may live to your glory and love from the fullness of grateful hearts, revealing the mind of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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■ Readings and Psalm

Use these readings and reading introductions as texts for the day.

DEUTERONOMY 6:20-25

Willing service of God flows from hearts and minds that remember God's mighty acts of liberation. The people of Israel are instructed to remember God's deliverance of the people from Egyptian bondage. Obedience to God's will and way is not arbitrary, but the result of joy and gratitude.

PSALM 77:11-20

The psalmist recounts the mighty deeds of our Lord, who works wonders. Awareness of God's holiness and power arises from calling to mind the deeds of the Lord, remembering and meditating upon them.

ROMANS 12:1-2

We are called to present our bodies as living sacrifices and be transformed through faith in Christ, who offered his body and blood for the sake of the world.

LUKE 17:11-19

One leper returns to give thanks after being healed. His faith is revealed in an act of remembrance and praise, an act that shapes his life and reveals the shape of Christian existence.

■ Prayer Prompts

Use these prompts to supplement prayers of the community.

- For this community of faith, may we remember the mercies of God: Where there is coldness, kindle the flame of your love; where there is hardness, soften hearts in the memory of your mercy; where there is joy and hope, free us to share it together.
- Merciful God, we remember and give thanks for the body and blood you so freely give to us. As we are fed, may we feed the hungry in return.
- Instill in the leaders of all nations a passion for peace and justice, and be with those who live or work in harm's way.
- We remember those who are lost, broken, scared, or lonely. Heal the sick and injured [*especially*], and give solace to those in need.

■ Hymns for Worship

Hymn suggestions to go with the readings.

GATHERING

Great is Thy Faithfulness ELW 733
Bless the Feast, *Gather* (GIA) 545

HYMN OF THE DAY

We Remember, *Gather* 417
Restore in Us, O God ELW 328
O God of Mercy, God of Light ELW 714, LBW 425

OFFERING

Take My Life, that I May Be LBW 406
I Received the Living God ELW 477, WOV 700

SENDING

There's a Wideness in God's Mercy ELW 587, 588, LBW 290
Praise to You, O God of Mercy ELW 208, WOV 790
On My Heart Imprint Your Image ELW 811

■ Ideas and Images

Each week in these Lenten Worship Helps, you will find websites to help you with clip art, photos and videos for use in worship. If you have a projection screen, you could project the images for the congregation to read; if not, they could be printed in the bulletin or incorporated in the sermon. Make sure you have the proper permission to reproduce or project items you find. For example, search keyword "Ash Wednesday" at www.best-of-web.com.

See also solumevangelium.wordpress.com and search "the mercy of God."

TWO-PERSON DRAMA

Could be done in place of the sermon or to complement the sermon:
<http://www.feautor.org/id/12085666541>

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

For those incorporating this practice in Ash Wednesday worship, have designated leader(s) make the sign of the cross on the foreheads of worshipers, saying, "From dust you came, to dust you shall return," or something similar. This year you might say, "From dust you came, to dust you shall return, and from dust you will rise to new life in Christ." In this way, you bring the promise of the gospel into this reminder of our mortality. Easter is thus prefigured on Ash Wednesday.

ARTWORK FOR PROJECTION

Images for this week's readings may be found at:

- http://www.pitts.emory.edu/dia/elca_lectionary_yearc.html
- www.textweek.com/festivals/ash.htm