

Host an eco Ash Wednesday Service

Ash Wednesday is a time of contemplating the transience of life on earth, and God's eternal commitment to us. It is also a time to think about how we came from the earth, and how we will return to the earth once again at the end of our lives. This can have particular ecological themes. Why not use your Ash service this year to contemplate how our lives are linked to the environment?

Prepare in advance...

Traditionally ash for Ash Wednesday is made from the left-over palm crosses of the previous year that are burnt. As part of a Living Lent pancake party, or in a Sunday service prior to Ash Wednesday, you could get people to write the action they are giving up on to their palm cross, then burn the palm crosses in a small bonfire. Encourage people to return for the Ash Wednesday service, where the ash will be used.

Before the service: When your palm cross ash is cool, break up the ash and make a paste with it using some olive oil.

In the service: You can talk about how we were formed out of dust and to dust we will return. The word we use for dust now is usually atoms, and we share some of the same atoms as the stars in the sky. But there is another side to the ash: reflect on the way we have destroyed the planet, burning fossil fuels, destroying planets and causing death. Allow people to make a cross with the ash on the back of their hands, or you could offer the opportunity for people to come forward to have this cross made on their foreheads with the traditional words 'remember you are dust and to dust you shall return'.

You could use the intercessory prayers, or the opening prayers, as an opportunity to pray about the environment.

Here are a few resources you might like to look at for inspiration:

Joy in Enough confession: Green Christian have produced a confession, which helps us to think about our relationship with the world. You can find the confession, and ways to use it, at <https://joyinenough.org/resources/the-joy-in-enough-confession/>

A Rocha Prayer calendar: <https://www.arocha.org/en/pray/>

Real hope for the climate: Read our response to the IPCC report here <http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/real-hope-for-the-climate/>

Christian Aid prayers for the climate:

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/worship/prayer-climate-change>



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Living Lent is hosted by The Joint Public Issues Team.