



# Extending Hope

## Lenten Liturgies of Turning and Returning

By Rev Dr Margaret Wesley

Following the form of Second Order Holy Communion from  
*A Prayer Book for Australia (APBA).*

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## Introduction: Brief notes on readings and themes

Year B (Mark) – Bible readings from *An Australian Lectionary*.

These notes will help you understand the thematic choices I have made in the liturgy. They might also help you in your sermon preparation. If you prefer, you can [go straight to the start of the liturgy](#).

### Ash Wednesday:

#### Joel 2:1-2,12-17

This passage is full of warning and full of hope. It warns first, against presumption; against assuming God will always be on our side just because we call ourselves God's people. If we are living in arrogance and injustice we should not expect God's presence to be sunshine and light. We should expect darkness and discipline to lead us to repentance and draw us to the true light. And if we repent now, before the darkness comes, then perhaps the darkness and discipline will not be necessary.

#### Psalm 51:1-17

I struggle every year with verse 4:

*Against you, you alone, have I sinned,  
and done what is evil in your sight.*

Since we are directed to read this Psalm in relation to King David's abuse of power to commit sexual abuse and murder, how could the sin be against God only? Surely the sin was primarily against Bathsheba and Uriah!

In my struggling, I have found two insights that help, but don't completely put an end to my wrestling:

1. As a mother, I can be something of a mother bear. If you hurt my children, you answer to me! Perhaps this verse is saying that God is the ultimate mother bear: that God so completely identifies with humanity that any harm to a person is taken personally by God. (cf Matthew 25:31-46)
2. On a different tack: perhaps this is a prayer from someone who has not yet fully understood the depth of their wrongdoing – someone who sees that they have transgressed God's law but is not yet ready to feel all the horror they should feel over the harm they have done to people. Since this verse is early in the Psalm, it may be just a starting point in a prayer that will lead the one who prays it deeper into true repentance.

Verse 5 also raises concerns for anyone who is not entirely convinced by St Augustine's ideas about original sin. My understanding of this verse is that we are all born into sinful systems, rather than that babies are born guilty. Either way, this Psalm calls us to be honest with God about the forces that draw us toward wrongdoing and seek cleansing and renewal from God in order to live in a way that brings life to our communities rather than death.

## **2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10**

This passage picks up where Psalm 51 leaves off. As people who have been forgiven, cleansed and renewed – people who have been reconciled to God and to our community – we live as ambassadors of reconciliation, attracting everyone around us into the same forgiveness, cleansing and renewal we have experienced.

As you look through the list of challenges Paul faces, you might find something there that resonates with your experience. For me, it is v8-9:

*we have commended ourselves in every way... in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; <sup>9</sup> as unknown, and yet are well known*

I find it hard to remain gracious when I have been misunderstood or overlooked. I need to hear this exhortation again and again, and remember, standing with Paul and Jesus, that I am completely known and understood by God, and that is all I really need.

## **Matthew 6:1-21**

Again, we are reminded that there is no value in looking like a good Christian if looking like a good Christian is all we care about. It might gain us a good reputation, and that may place us in positions of influence in the church, but those things are worthless.

It is good discipline to do good without letting anyone see, and without talking or posting about it afterwards. When we do that, we are tested: Do we really believe God sees and acknowledges our good works? Do we really believe that good works are worth doing for their own sake, just for the good they do – not because they make us look good.

**When we put all these ideas together, for Ash Wednesday:**

**Theme: Repentance and Renewal**

## **Lent 1**

### **Genesis 9:8-17**

Genesis is a skilfully crafted work of literature in which no word is wasted – so when something is repeated four times within ten verses, you know it is very important. The first covenant God makes in scripture was not just with a specific group of people – it is not even just with people – it was with all living creatures. The author of Genesis says this four times to make sure we don't miss the point!

Our Year B Lent readings focus on the development of the theme of covenant through scripture, and this is where it starts, with God making a covenant with all living creatures, with a promise that there would never again be a flood of the magnitude they had just endured.

People often ask why God doesn't just destroy evil. Well, the flood story is part of the answer. Much life and property is lost in the flood, yet the problem of human violence and corruption (Gen 6:11) remains. The flood did not entirely sweep it from the world since it lived on in Noah's family.

God is not willing to wipe out humanity in order to rid the world of human violence and corruption. The flood story demonstrates why God will never do that, and the covenant declares unequivocally *that* God will never do that.

### **Psalm 25:1-10**

Continuing the theme of covenant, this Psalm reminds us of God's covenant faithfulness. We can trust God to remain faithful and merciful. We are also reminded to remain faithful to our covenant promises to God.

### **1 Peter 3:18-22**

This is a tricky passage, so I am a little tentative in my brief comments.

The flood story is described as prefiguring baptism – as bringing people to salvation through water by (then) getting into a big boat and (now) appealing to God to include us in the resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus is said to have “made a proclamation to the spirits in prison”, which seems to include those who perished in the flood. When we put that alongside the comment that Jesus “suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous” it may be reasonable to infer that Peter is saying that Noah's neighbours were saved from violence and corruption by the actions of Noah and his family (the few for the many), and to the extent that his ark prefigured the resurrection, those many may be said to have been eternally saved through Jesus' death and resurrection.

In Jesus, salvation of the *many* (unrighteous) through the *few* (righteous) is infinitely intensified to salvation for *all* (the unrighteous) through the *one* who alone is entirely righteous.

Where the flood failed to deal with the violence and corruption of humanity, Jesus' death and resurrection has succeeded.

### **Mark 1:9-15**

Unlike Matthew and Luke, Mark gives us few details about Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. In the terseness of Mark's account, though, we do see some interesting things:

<sup>12</sup> *And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.*

As soon as the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus in baptism she forces him into the wilderness. In Scripture we often read of God's Spirit filling people and immediately empowering them for some great work they are called to do. The

great work Jesus is to do at this point is hidden, remote and unexplained – but clearly important.

<sup>13</sup> *He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan:*

Jesus recapitulates the wilderness wanderings – 40 days for 40 years – immediately after recapitulating, in baptism, the crossing of the Red Sea.

*And he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him:*

We usually think of the wild beasts as signalling danger, but since we have just read about God's covenant with ALL living creatures, we may wonder if Jesus was letting the beasts know that the time of their salvation is also near (cf Rom 8:20-23) – an announcement he will make to people after returning from the wilderness.

**When we put these ideas together, for Lent 1:**

**Theme: Covenant with Creation – salvation of the many through the few**

## Lent 2

### Gen 17:1-7,15-16

God's covenant with Abraham is so central to the story of God and humanity that it is affirmed by God four times, in different ways, before Isaac is born. Each affirmation presupposes and builds on the one before, and the tension rises as Abraham and Sarah get older, to the point where, in the verse following our reading, Abraham falls on the ground laughing (ROFL, literally) because of the absurdity of the suggestion that he and Sarah might produce a child. Sarah will also laugh at this idea, and the son who will be born is named Isaac, which means *laughter*.

Here, we are looking at the third affirmation of the covenant, so we need to keep in mind the content of the previous two:

1. Abraham will become a great nation and in him (and his descendants) all the families of the world will be blessed (12:1-3).
2. It will be Abraham's own descendants, not distant relatives, who will inherit the promises, but first they will experience slavery and oppression for centuries. When Abraham believes God, it is "reckoned to him as righteousness" (15:1-16)

In chapter 17, the focus is on God's covenant not only being with Abraham but also with his descendants – specifically his descendants through Sarah – they will make a home in the land where Abraham and Sarah are currently nomadic travellers.

The current violence in Gaza makes it particularly necessary to treat this subject with great sensitivity. Christians interpret these promises in light of

Rom 4:13-25, below, but Jewish people who are not followers of Jesus will interpret it in other ways.

The important point is that God seeks partners in Abraham and Sarah – people with whom to accomplish God’s plan to bless all the world.

### **Ps 22:24-32**

This is one of the darkest lament psalms, and is the one most quoted by the Gospel writers in their accounts of Jesus’ passion. This Psalm also has one of the clearest turning points (v22, APBA) of all the psalms, where the cry for rescue is answered and the psalmist pours out praise in gratitude. That is where our reading comes in. The appropriate response for someone who has experienced God’s goodness is to praise God loudly and publicly.

### **Rom 4:13-25**

The question of who now inherits the promises of the Abrahamic covenant naturally arises from reading genesis. Paul asserts here that since it was through faith that Abraham received the promise, all people of faith in the God of Abraham are included. We, therefore, demonstrate that we are part of Abraham’s family, not through keeping the law (Paul’s interest) or through some sort of genetic testing (more likely to be our interest) but by relating to God with a faith like Abraham’s.

Of course, if we read the full story, we will know that Abraham’s faith was far from perfect. The glowing review Paul gives him is a little rose-tinted! That should give us encouragement that we are still showing ourselves to be Abraham’s descendants when our faith falters.

When we see ourselves as descendants of Abraham, the worst thing we could do would be to sit back and bask in our status. We are called to show our family likeness through active faith – through believing God and partnering with God to keep bringing blessing to all the families of the world.

### **Mark 8:31-38**

In response to Peter’s challenge of Jesus’ “downer” assertion that he will suffer and die at the hands of their religious leaders, Jesus publicly declares that not only will he suffer but anyone who follows him will be his partner in suffering. Somehow, though, Jesus makes even this daunting call sound inviting. This is a path worth following because:

1. Fellowship with Christ, who is our life and our hope, is better than anything we might be called to sacrifice.
2. The path Jesus is walking leads to justice, truth, love and peace. It is an incredibly hard path, but why would we walk in any other direction?

**When we put these ideas together, for Lent 2:**

## Theme: Covenant Partners - Co-Workers with God for the life of the world

### Lent 3

#### Ex 20:1-17

*The 10 Words.* When we call them “commandments” we suddenly resist obeying them. So let’s call them something else. Exodus calls them the Ten Words. That may feel a bit vague to us, but when we read in John 1 that Jesus is *The Word* we begin to understand.

Jesus embodies these words, and in him we see how beautiful they are. A person who lives like this brings life to the world, and so Jesus invites us to want to live like this as well.

There is so much wisdom we can find in these words. Personally, I find myself increasingly drawn to lament the damage done by envy in personal relationships, in the church, in civic life and between nations. Though I see what envy does, I often catch myself getting grumpy when I notice people who seem to be doing so much better than me. Envy is a hard enemy to defeat.

What might a world without envy look like? Will you join me in praying for and longing for such a world? What would a human life without envy look like? We know the answer to that. It would look like Jesus.

[The confession for this week is based on the 10 Words.](#)

#### Ps 19

This is one of my favourite Psalms. It draws in ideas from sun-worshipping religions and, rather than condemning them, applies them to the Law of God. Yes, it says, the sun is amazing! It is like the Law in its power to illuminate and give life. Both are fabulous, but we don’t worship the sun or the Law. We worship the one who created both.

Jesus is the light of the world and the complete fulfilment of the Law. He is all the good things this Psalm celebrates, and we do worship him because he is the creator in creation, fulfilling creation, revealing the creator.

#### 1 Cor 1:18-25

Just as Jesus is the Law of God and the light of the world, he is also the Wisdom of God and the kingship (power) of God – though his life story appears to be foolish and weak.

All that is God and all that is human meet in Jesus.

#### John 2:13-22

Jesus is the fulfilment and summation of the entire story of God’s dealings with people: the Law, the light, the Wisdom, the King, and here: the Temple.



The entire story is retold in Jesus and brought to the climax and conclusion that was always intended.

### **When we put these ideas together, for Lent 3:**

#### **Theme: Covenant Recapitulated in Christ**

We draw on Patristic theology when we use of the word “Recapitulation” to denote the above idea of the story of humanity being retold in Jesus. Irenaeus of Lyon was probably the first to use the word, though the Gospel writers and Paul seem very familiar with the idea.

Jesus recapitulates our human story, and we are, in turn, invited into his story.

Through Lent we reflect on our failings and sins and seek the courage to repent. This is about being honest – not about wallowing in self-loathing. We have each failed in lots of ways; humanity, though beautiful and creative, appears to be doomed to repeat the same mistakes over and over. The story of the human race looks like a Shakespearian tragedy, but then, late in the plot, there is a twist: the true hero takes the stage and lives the story all over again, turning it into a triumph, and giving new depth of meaning to every other character.

### **Lent 4**

#### **Num 21:4-9**

This story needs to be read alongside the John reading, below, that refers to it. The people are suffering from snake bites, which they attribute to God’s judgement on them for complaining so much. The solution God gives Moses is to make a bronze snake and raise it on a pole. Those who were bitten could look at the bronze snake and live.

This is a curious story – there are lots of curious stories in the Pentateuch! It may be a mistake to read too much into it – but it is almost impossible to avoid that mistake in stories so rich with imagery!

One thing that we should notice is that the object that brings healing is the very thing that represents judgement. No wonder this is picked up in John’s Gospel as an image for the cross of Jesus. Christ on the cross is the starkest condemnation of the human race: God came so near as to become one of us and our response was violent rejection and murder. But by looking AT the cross – not averting our gaze in shame or denial – we find life.

#### **Ps 107:1-3,17-22**

I often speak with people who think the misfortune in their life is some sort of punishment for their sins. I usually try to assure them that God does not work that way. This Psalm, though, reminds us that even if our suffering is our own fault or the result of our own sin, the solution is never to attempt to hide from

God but, always to return to God and ask for healing from the One who is so much more ready to help us than to condemn.

So, again, here we find that even our wrongdoing can be something that reminds us to return to God; even our sin can be the place where we find life.

### **Eph 2:1-10**

This is another reminder that, though habitual sin may take us to a place of death-like hopelessness – a place where we feel utterly unable to turn from wrongdoing and return to God – even there, in the face of such hopelessness, we can celebrate the power of God who raises the dead! Nothing can keep us from God's love. Even our sin reminds us of God's grace.

I particularly love verse 10:

*For we are what God has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.*

The deadness of violence, greed and envy are not the natural state of humanity. We were created to do good. Our destiny is to be enlivened life-givers, and our Creator ensures we fulfilment of that destiny.

### **John 3:14-21**

John 3:16 is rightly the favourite Bible verse of many Christians. It is a beautiful summary of the gospel. I encourage you to look at the whole passage, though, not just one verse.

God is not on about condemnation but restoration. God invites us to come out of hiding, to turn our back on shame, and look squarely at the cross, where we see the best and the worst of humanity: where we see Jesus' loving willingness to endure the cross for us, and where we also see the fear and envy of the people who put him there.

Look at it. Don't hide in the dark. Stand in the light and look directly at the cross. And there find healing and life.

**When we put these ideas together, for Lent 4:**

**Theme: Sign of the Covenant – Looking at the Cross for Healing**

## **Lent 5**

### **Jeremiah 31:31-34**

This beautiful passage deals with the "problem" that had always been inherent in the covenant God made with people – our tendency to break our side of it. However much we fail to keep our side of the contract, God always finds a way to honour God's side.

On the other side of brokenness, God is forming a people who covenant with God from the heart.

The idea of brokenness here takes my mind back to when Moses broke the first stone tablets he received from God, when Moses returned to find the people worshipping an image of a calf (Exodus 32:19). There was so much brokenness right from the beginning of the story of God's dealing with humanity. Laws are broken. Relationships are broken. Hearts are broken. But that is not the end. It is just the beginning!

There is always a new beginning after the brokenness of the past.

### **Psalm 119:9-16**

This little section of Psalm 119 is a fitting prayerful response to the Jeremiah reading. God has promised to write God's Law on our hearts, so we respond by treasuring the Word of God *in* our hearts and *with* all our hearts.

### **Hebrews 5:5-14**

Hebrews is always a challenge for preachers, and one of the challenges of this passage might be to resist the temptation to insult our congregations by telling them they are "dull in understanding" like the recipients of this letter. What I take from this rather harsh assessment of the recipients is that, right from the start, Christians have tended to miss the point of the grand, mind-blowing, world-changing message of the gospel by focusing on trivialities. Each generation finds their own trivialities to focus on, but trivialities of some sort are always a distraction to growth in genuine faith.

So, let's not get distracted by annoyance over the trivialities that are distracting others! Let's focus on what the writer wants us to focus on in 5:5-10. Jesus was exalted, not because of his strength and power but because of his humility and prayerfulness. His path to exultation lay through suffering and death.

### **John 12:20-33**

I cannot overestimate the centrality of this passage to the Gospel of John. As you read through this Gospel you come across a repeated refrain of "My hour has not yet come" (2:4, 7:6,8,30, 8:20). A sense of expectation is built around this "hour". Here, at last, Jesus announces that his hour has come! And what is it that signalled to Jesus that the hour had finally arrived? Some Greeks asked to see him! This may seem strange until we remember all the prophecies in Jewish Scripture about gentiles coming to Jerusalem to seek the Lord. From Zechariah, for example, we read:

"Many nations shall join themselves to the Lord on that day, and shall be my people" (2:11) and "Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favor of the Lord." (8:22)

This passage is as important a turning point in John as [Mark 8](#) is in that Gospel. In bot, we find that a key announcement about Jesus' identity is immediately followed by an assertion from Jesus that he will suffer and die, and that anyone who wishes to follow him should expect to join him in suffering.

Here again, as in [John 3](#), we find a play on the word exalt – lift up. Jesus will be glorified (lifted up in glory) at the hour when he is lifted up physically on the cross. The path to life eternal winds unavoidably through death – for Jesus, and for anyone who wishes to follow him.

**When we put these ideas together, for Lent 4:  
Theme: Covenant Renewal – Life through Death**

## Liturgy

### Greeting

The Kingdom of God has come near!

**We repent and believe the Gospel.**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

(APBA, p119)

### Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the custodians of the land where we gather today - the Jagera and Turrbal people<sup>1</sup>. We celebrate their culture, thank them for their care of the land and pay respect to their elders, whose voices we seek to hear and heed.

### Sentence

#### **Ash Wednesday:**

The Lord says:

“Return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting, weeping, and mourning....

Return to The LORD your God,  
who is gracious and deeply loving as a mother,  
quick to forgive, abundantly tender-hearted” (Joel 2:12-13)

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<sup>1</sup> The Jagera and Turrbal people are the traditional owners where I live – in northwest Brisbane.

**Lent 1:**

Christ died for sins once for everyone—the just for the sake of the unjust—to lead you to God. (1 Peter 3:18)

**Lent 2:**

Jesus said, “If you wish to come after me, you must deny your very self, take up your cross and follow in my footsteps. If you would save your life, you’ll lose it, but if you lose your life for my sake, you’ll save it.” (Mark 8:34-35)

**Lent 3:**

The message of the cross is complete absurdity to those who are headed for ruin, but to us who are experiencing salvation, it is the power of God. (1 Corinthians 1:18)

**Lent 4:**

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert,  
so the Chosen One must be lifted up,  
so that everyone who believes in the Chosen One  
might have eternal life. (John 3:14-15)

**Lent 5:**

Jesus said, “unless a grain of wheat  
falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain;  
but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest.” (John 12:24)

Prayer of Preparation, APBA, p119

**Collect****Ash Wednesday:**

God of life and hope,  
You grieve with us over all the broken places  
In our world and in our hearts,  
May our tears mingle with yours,  
To water a thirsty land with love that banishes despair.  
May a gentle rain of tears reveal the path to life and hope,  
To cleansing and forgiveness,  
And the restoration of all that had been broken

In remade hearts and renewed creation. Amen.

### **Lent 1**

God of love for all,  
Though we are few in number,  
And fragile in faith,  
Fill us with such love for your creation  
That we joyfully devote  
Our bodies, hearts and minds  
To the divine paradox  
Of living contrary to our world's demands  
For the sake of our world's salvation,  
In the strength of our  
Sustainer, Saviour and Sanctifier:  
One God for us, for our world and forever. Amen.

### **Lent 2**

God of teamwork and co-creation,  
You need no help but choose to work through us.  
Give us grace each day to grasp  
The hand of fellowship you offer,  
And in the power of your Spirit,  
To work with you to restore, renew  
And bless the world you love. Amen.

### **Lent 3**

Living Word,  
Our Wisdom, Law and Temple,  
In whom God's plans and promises are all fulfilled,  
Help us follow you so closely  
That all who seek the Way, Truth and Life  
Might through us be drawn to You,  
Who alone is our eternal hope. Amen.

### **Lent 4**

Dishonoured, exalted Saviour,  
Lifted up in death and life

In shame and glory,  
Let us not despise the dangers,  
Wounds and failings of our lives,  
But find you present in our humiliation,  
And find ourselves restored in your resurrection,  
Where alone is true rebirth  
Of our selves, your church, and all creation. Amen.

## Lent 5

God of paradox,  
You bring life through death,  
Growth through falling,  
And abundance through emptiness,  
Take our broken promises, we pray,  
And renew in us the everlasting  
Covenant of truth, peace and love,  
So that, together, we may call  
All creation to dance  
To the rhythm of your grace. Amen.

## Ministry of the Word

Psalms to be taken from the Canadian Psalter: [www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/GS2016-Liturgical-Psalter-2016-05-04.pdf](http://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/GS2016-Liturgical-Psalter-2016-05-04.pdf)

Bible passages taken from *The Inclusive Bible*, Priests for Equality,  
Bowman & Littlefield, 2007

## Sermon

[The notes on the lectionary readings may be helpful.](#)

Nicene Creed, APBA, p123

## Intercessions

*Intercessions are an opportunity for the congregation to agree together in calling on God to bring healing and restoration. They will include current concerns in the world, the church and the parish.*

*At St Pauls, we have been including the following two prayers in our intercessions for over a year now, and are committed to continuing to pray for peace and housing for all:*

**God of the nations,  
whose sovereign rule brings justice and peace,  
have mercy on our broken and divided world.  
Shed abroad your peace in the hearts of all  
and banish from them the spirit that makes for war,  
that all races and peoples may learn to live  
as members of one family and in obedience to your law,  
through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** (APBA, p202)

**God who made our home,  
And made your home with us,  
Yet often had no place to lay your head,  
Have mercy today on all who have no home.  
Provide shelter and protection,  
A future and a hope,  
To all whose beds tonight will be unsafe, unstable or exposed.  
Grant wisdom and compassion,  
To everyone with power or resources  
To provide housing solutions,  
So that all may live in peace  
And share with equity and thanksgiving  
The good things you provide  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** (By Rev Dr Margaret Wesley)

These intercessions will also be included on the appropriate days:

### **Ash Wednesday**

We praise you for the beauty of your creation:  
From the majesty of mountains  
To the splendour of the Sea,  
And the kindness of the human heart.  
As our Lenten offering, we bring our hearts to you  
To break, to clean and to remake  
Into hearts that take delight in all that is good.  
Where evil seems to triumph,  
Help us to hold out the hope of turning,  
Of rebirth and transformation  
To every wandering soul,  
Every corrupt institution,  
And every broken place,  
So that all creation may be whole,



And every creature may be free. Amen.

### **Lent 1**

God of cleansing and deliverance,  
As our world faces greater dangers than those of Noah's time,  
And contends with greater sins than those of Noah's neighbours,  
Give wisdom to all, especially those with power and influence,  
To curb the threat of habitat destruction, extreme weather,  
Rising oceans, viral and bacterial hazards,  
And weaponry with massive destructive potential.  
Through this flood of dangers, may your Church be an ark of grace,  
Where, though we may be few, we baptise and disciple all the world,  
Because you go with us to carry us through death to life for all. Amen.

### **Lent 2**

God of Hope,  
In Abraham you called an ordinary man to leave his home  
To take blessing and transformation to the entire world.  
Help us follow you as boldly so that through us  
Your Spirit might pour out the blessing of  
Peace wherever there is conflict,  
Fullness wherever there is hunger,  
Shelter wherever there is homelessness,  
Refuge wherever there is danger,  
Forgiveness wherever there is guilt,  
Acceptance wherever there is shame,  
Love wherever there is rejection,  
Wisdom wherever there is confusion,  
And the light of Christ wherever hope grows dim. Amen.

### **Lent 3**

Christ, the wisdom and power of God,  
Our temple, our law and our Shepherd;  
When we see precious things crumble around us,  
Remind us of your eternal and constant presence.  
Be near, we pray, to all who live in fear and danger,  
From violence, poverty or natural disaster,  
Be for them a sure foundation,  
And a hope that lights the way beyond despair

To their eternal home in you. Amen.

#### Lent 4

Crucified Lord,  
Exalted in humiliation,  
We look to you for life:  
In our illnesses and wounds, we look to you for healing;  
In our despair, we look to you for hope;  
In our shame, we look to you for acceptance;  
In our rejection, we look to you for love,  
In our sin, we look to you for forgiveness,  
In our hurting world, we look to you for a new way forward  
Into peace and kindness, sufficiency and solidarity,  
Until we see your kingdom come,  
And your will done on Earth as in heaven. Amen.

#### Lent 5

Into your hands, loving God,  
We pour out all the fleeting, flimsy hopes  
To which our hearts have clung:  
Success and security,  
Wealth and influence,  
Vigour and control,  
Clarity and certainty.  
They are the fickle husks that sometimes  
Wrap around the life you give,  
And so, we let them die,  
So we can find new birth in you. Amen.

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray:

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.**

(APBA, p124)

## Confession

*At St Paul's we usually sing the Kyrie Eleison before the Confession, rather than after the Absolution as in ABPA, p120.*

Lord, have mercy

**Christ, have mercy**

Lord, have mercy

### Introduction to Confession

God seeks truth and love in our inner being,  
in our relationships,  
And in all the institutions of our world.

*Silence*

Let us then return to the one who made and loves us,  
Asking for a clean heart and a new spirit,  
For ourselves, for the church and for the world.

### Confession

*These prayers of confession model corporate penitence. Since nobody sins in isolation – we all influence and are influenced by the systems of which we are part – we bring our communities with us (in our hearts and minds) as we turn and return to God. In this I am taught by Isaiah who, in 6:5, confessed: “I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips”. The deceitfulness of the individual and that of the community are intertwined.*

*These prayers are in litany form because they are different each week. We are asking the congregation to practice the form, rather than expecting them to remember the particular words. The form is a threefold repetition of the*

*Kyrie Eleison – one for the world, one for the church and one for the individual. Lord, have mercy on us all!*

## **Ash Wednesday**

[At this point, ONLY IF conditions allow this to be done safely:

Give out long pieces of paper (~21cm).

Invite congregation members to write or draw on these some words or images to represent something they want to leave behind in Lent, and something they want the church and world to leave behind.

Invite them to burn these with a candle in a metal bucket.

Mingle the ashes with the ashes from palm crosses and use for imposition of ashes.]

Wherever there is war and hatred, violence and revenge,

**Lord, have mercy.**

Wherever human greed neglects and exploits those who are vulnerable,

**Christ, have mercy.**

Wherever your creation is harmed by thoughtlessness and wilful ignorance,

**Lord, have mercy.**

Where your people dishonour you through rivalry and schism,

**Lord, have mercy.**

Where the gospel of grace is used to bolster human pride,

**Christ, have mercy.**

Where precious, hurting people are condemned instead of loved,

**Lord, have mercy.**

When we take the path that's easy instead of the one that is just,

**Lord, have mercy.**

When we lie or tell half-truths to justify ourselves,

**Christ, have mercy.**

When the suffering in our world ceases to break our hearts,

**Lord, have mercy.**

**In your mercy, turn us from the path of destruction,**

**And return us to the path of life. Amen.**

## **Imposition of Ashes**

### **Blessing of the Ashes**

Ashes are placed on the communion table and blessed:

God our Creator, you know how we are formed,  
And have compassion for the weaknesses of our nature;  
God our Redeemer, you shared our mortal life,  
And have felt with us the power of temptation;  
God our Sanctifier, you search our hearts,  
And fan the flame of our faltering faith:  
Take these ashes and make them signs for us  
Of our turning from sin and returning to you.  
As we receive them as a sign on our bodies,  
May our hearts be cleansed, and our spirits be renewed.

**Blessed be God for ever.**

*Those who wish to receive ashes come forward. The ashes are imposed in the shape of a cross on each person with any of the following or other suitable words, or silence.*

- Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return.
- Repent and believe the gospel.
- Take up your cross and follow Christ.
- Turn from sin, return to Christ and be renewed by the Holy Spirit.

## **Lent 1**

Wherever human sin brings harm to your creation,

**Lord, have mercy.**

Where growing profits make consciences dull

**Christ, have mercy.**

For every habitat that is lost and all the species that are gone,

**Lord, have mercy.**

When your church has condoned destruction in your name,

**Lord, have mercy.**

Where we have failed to show loving leadership in creation,

**Christ, have mercy.**

Whenever your people have served ourselves instead of others,

**Lord, have mercy.**

When we have given up because the task has been too hard,

**Lord, have mercy.**

When we have seen injustice and failed to protest and resist,

**Christ, have mercy.**

When we have focussed on our own salvation instead of bringing light and life to the world,

**Lord, have mercy.**

**In your mercy, turn us from the path of destruction,**

**And return us to the path of life. Amen.**

## **Lent 2**

For all opposition to truth and compassion,

**Lord, have mercy.**

For violence toward the prophets, Jesus and all martyrs,

**Christ, have mercy.**

For every exercise of human power that has brought death instead of life,

**Lord, have mercy.**

When your church has grasped at power instead of your love,

**Lord, have mercy.**

When your church has turned from the difficult path of discipleship,

**Christ, have mercy.**

Where we have failed to bring blessing to the world,

**Lord, have mercy.**

When we have worshipped power and success instead of you,

**Lord, have mercy.**

When we have followed the values and visions of the world instead of following you,

**Christ, have mercy.**

When we have strived to save ourselves instead of giving our lives for others,

**Lord, have mercy.**

**In your mercy, turn us from the path of destruction,  
And return us to the path of life. Amen.**

### **Lent 3**

For the worship our world gives to wealth and power, success and pleasure, instead of to you,

**Lord, have mercy.**

Whenever people turn from your glory to seek glory for themselves,

**Christ, have mercy.**

For all forms of dishonesty in the justice systems of our world,

**Lord, have mercy.**

When Christian institutions use your name to exert power and dominance,

**Lord, have mercy.**

When your people treat you like a harsh, demanding master instead of a devoted parent,

**Christ, have mercy.**

When jealousy and competition prevent your people from loving you and each other,

**Lord, have mercy.**

When we harm our family members instead of showing respect and fidelity,

**Lord, have mercy.**

When we take for ourselves what belongs to someone else,

**Christ, have mercy.**

For every creature we have ever harmed – through violence or neglect,

**Lord, have mercy.**

**In your mercy, turn us from the path of destruction,  
And return us to the path of life. Amen.**

## Lent 4

Where spiritual pain is numbed instead of being healed,

**Lord, have mercy.**

When desperate people are given false hope,

**Christ, have mercy.**

For all that distracts people from your invitation to life,

**Lord, have mercy.**

When the church attracts people to itself instead of to you,

**Lord, have mercy.**

When your people preach wrath instead of love,

**Christ, have mercy.**

When we limit the extent of your grace,

**Lord, have mercy.**

When we love pleasure and hide from you,

**Lord, have mercy.**

When we bask in our salvation instead of expressing it in good works,

**Christ, have mercy.**

Whenever we judge instead of loving,

**Lord, have mercy.**

**In your mercy, turn us from the path of destruction,**

**And return us to the path of life. Amen.**

## Lent 5

Where laws are broken and rights denied,

**Lord, have mercy.**

Where hope is lost and freedoms extinguished,

**Christ, have mercy.**

Where human greed makes food, shelter and safety scarce,

**Lord, have mercy.**



When the light of the world grows dim,

**Lord, have mercy.**

When words of life are twisted to deal death,

**Christ, have mercy.**

When the church has forgotten it is the body of Christ,

**Lord, have mercy.**

When darkness closes in the we can't see any light,

**Lord, have mercy.**

When our own pain is so intense that we cannot feel compassion,

**Christ, have mercy.**

When we feel so lost, we stop believing there is a path to life,

**Lord, have mercy.**

**In your mercy, turn us from the path of destruction,**

**And return us to the path of life. Amen.**

Absolution, APBA, p126

### **Greeting of Peace**

Jesus is our peace. Through his body he has formed one reconciled humanity.

(Eph 2:14-16)

We are the body of Christ, **His Spirit is with us.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you, **And also with you.** (APBA, p127)

### **Offering Prayer**

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation.

Through your goodness we have these gifts to share.

Accept all we have, all we give, and all we are,

As we dedicate all to your glory

and the service of your kingdom.

**Blessed be God for ever.**

## **Holy Communion**

(APBA, p128)

### **Prayer After Communion**

God of compassion and mercy,  
With this bread and wine  
You sustain us  
For our Lenten pilgrimage.  
In the strength of this meal  
May we walk with courage  
The road of self-giving love,  
In the footsteps of Christ. Amen

## **Blessings**

### **Ash Wednesday**

God of truth and grace grant you:  
Eyes to see the cost of human greed,  
Hearts that break for victims of injustice,  
Ears that hear God's call to repentance and reconciliation,  
Hands that do the work of restoration  
And feet that bring you back, again and again, to  
The blessing of God most gracious  
Creator, redeemer, and sanctifier,  
To sustain you, heal you, and renew you  
Now and always. Amen.

### **Lent 1**

May you be carried through the storms of life  
By the grace of God  
In a vessel big enough to hold the whole creation,  
So that a kaleidoscope of hope  
Might be revealed to all your neighbours,  
Inviting them into the blessing of God:  
Creator, Saviour and Renewer  
Of us all, this day and forever. Amen.

### **Lent 2**

As you go to bless your neighbours, may you:  
Take God's hand,  
Assume God's strength,  
Apply God's wisdom,  
Indwell God's story,  
Receive God's grace,

And accept God's invitation  
To receive and take to all the world  
The Blessing of God most loving,  
Creator, Healer, and Sustainer,  
Today and every day. Amen.

### **Lent 3**

Walk in the footsteps of Christ;  
Worship God;  
Love your neighbours;  
Be so infused with hope  
That envy, greed and vengeance  
Find no foothold in your heart;  
Receive and give and be  
The Blessing of God most faithful,  
The Initiator, The Revealer and The Renewer of all. Amen.

### **Lent 4**

Look to Christ  
Lifted up in shame and glory  
And in Him find  
Your hope,  
Your Life,  
Your vindication,  
And the hope, life and vindication of all creation;  
And the blessing of God All-loving,  
Creator, Redeemer and Advocate,  
Be with you in all things at all times. Amen.

### **Lent 5**

May you Live this week in the paradox of grace:  
Discovering God's unconditional love whenever you fail,  
Finding wholeness whenever you break,  
And healing whenever you are wounded;  
May your darkest hour open your eyes to see the face of God,  
And may your dying bring you to eternal life  
In the Blessing of God most gracious  
Your maker, your healer and your in-dweller. Amen.

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