Finding the Words:
Words for Worship

CBF LITURGY AND WORSHIP AIDS

ASH WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2026

Liturgical Color: purple, black, or linen

Lectionary readings:
Isaiah 58:1-12
Psalm 51:1-17
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21
(Genesis 2:7, 1:31a)

Opening quote: (for bulletin or screen)
From the beginning
It becomes very clear
this is not a journey
we take
alone
but a journey
we take
all one.
-Susan Palo Cherwien, *Crossings*

Call to Worship:
One [consider inviting a child or youth to lead the litany]: God formed people from the dust of the ground and breathed into them the breath of life.
All: This sacred dust, our common origin, makes us family.
One: God formed people from the dust of the ground and breathed into them the breath of life.
All: This sacred dust, our common ground, is our shared home.
One: God formed people from the dust of the ground and breathed into them the breath of life.
All: This sacred dust, this day, marks our foreheads, sign of our common turning toward Christ.

Invocation:
Christ of our turning, this day common dust, common ash, marks us, unites us, reminds us—where we are from, where we return, whose we are. Mark us as yours, our hearts your home. Amen.

Invitation: [offered in explanation by a youth or a children's/youth minister]
During this season of Lent, the children and families of the church invite us all to journey together through a cumulative project here in [or near, to suit your situation] our sacred space. We will be "making room" for the Christ in our lives. During this service, we will ask everyone to join the young people in finding a colored paper and pen [give guidance on where on each row these supplies are located] and spending a moment listing some of those you consider "family", by whatever means they became family. Near the end of our service we will collect these papers and the children will add them to our faith family's Lenten "house" project. We are looking forward to seeing it take shape over these weeks of waiting for Easter, and are grateful that our church will be joining with us to create something special!

Scripture Reading:
Psalm 51:1-12

Call to Confession:
If Lent can be seen as a journey toward our heart's true home in Christ, confession and repentance can be seen as steps of reorienting on that journey, examining our steps, turning, continuing.
Family, God calls us to confession this day. How will we respond?
:

Prayer of Confession:
Loving God, we confess that we have sinned
In our thinking, our speaking, and our doing—
Both in acts we've committed and
acts we've withheld.
We have not loved anyone with our whole heart—
Not you, not our neighbor, not ourselves.
In your mercy, God,
Forgive us, set us back on the path, and draw us more fully into the life of love you dream for us.
:

Assurance of Pardon:
Family of faith, hear the good news and believe—in the love of God, demonstrated for us in the person of Jesus the Christ, you live forgiven and free!

Scripture Reading: [this would be a good opportunity to include a child or youth reader]
Genesis 2:7, 1:31a

Homily (if offering one):

Congregational Response:
The dust we come from is our common origin, making us human family. The dust we return to is common ground, making this home. In becoming and returning, our journey is held in the hands of our Creator.
You have taken a moment during the service to contemplate who makes this journey with you—those you consider family, those with whom you share the bond of common ground, and common dust, with. You have had a chance to write some of those names down on the slips of paper provided near you. If you'll pass those toward [the end of your row/center aisle/side aisle/etc], [children and youth/volunteers] will be by to collect them, and they will be used as part of our Lent-long congregational "Making Room" sanctuary devotion.
[Volunteers move into place to collect slips of paper and take to "home" area]

Imposition of Ashes:
Remember that you are drawn from the dust of God's good creation, and to the dust of God's good creation you will return.

Benediction:
Beloved, our common origin, this sacred dust, makes us family. This common ground is our home. Let us journey together. Amen.

Hymn suggestions:
Sign Us with Ashes—text M. L. Bringle, PHOENIX, ONE LICENSE: 53557
What Wondrous Love Is This—text Anon., WONDROUS LOVE
Beautiful Things—text M. Gungor, L. Gungor, BEAUTIFUL THINGS, CCLI Number: 5665521

Art suggestions:
Ash, Mike Moyers, https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=57140

"Making Room" sanctuary devotional project:
Each worship service will provide an opportunity for the children to lead the way in the creation of a Lent-long all-church project of contemplation and devotion in the form of an art project located somewhere in or near the sanctuary. Children may participate during their children's period, and help with collecting the adults' contributions later in the service.

The project will begin with the outline of a house (or for those ambitious and crafty, a framehouse!), and each service an addition will be made to the house. The objective is not a work of polished art, but an act of communal contemplation.

This art project will coordinate with the CBF children's and family Lenten devotional series, "Making Room at Home for Jesus", which can be accessed at *cbf.net/lent* in both English and Spanish. Our hope is that children's ties to worship will be strengthened as they participate and lead meaningfully in the Lenten journey at home and at church.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leigh Anne Armstrong is a chaplain, liturgist and songwriter and a longtime member of Auburn (AL) First Baptist Church.