

Ash Wednesday 7PM (2026)

Ash Wednesday (edited February 16, 2026)

7:00pm Service

All servers enter the chancel from the side door behind the pulpit upon the ringing of the bell. Entrance will be similar to the one before the carols on Christmas Eve: Crucifer, Torch, EM2, to places on the left hand side of the Chancel; Thurifer, Torch, and MC to the right; EM1, Assisting Priest, and Celebrant to steps in front of Altar. The thurible with lit charcoal is carried in to the Chancel by the Thurifer and hung on the hook (no incense laid on yet – not until the gospel procession). All servers reverence the Altar with a profound bow, turn and reverence the Assembly with a profound bow. The salutation (no opening acclamation!) and collect for Ash Wednesday (*BCP*, 264) are chanted by the Celebrant from in front of the Altar steps. Candles with wooden candlesticks have been placed on the Altar and lit before the beginning of the service (not carried in). After the collect, all servers go to their usual seats at the side benches.

The Liturgy of the Word proceeds according to the usual 10:30m Sunday customs, with gospel procession and incense (first use of incense in this liturgy).

After the silence and stillness following the sermon, all stand. The Thurifer lays on incense at the credence table and hangs the thurible back on its hook. Led by the EM1, the Assisting Priest and Celebrant move from their benches to the steps in front of the Altar and stand facing the Assembly. All other servers take their “prayers of the people” positions at the bottom of the steps to the Altar on the left and right hand sides. The Celebrant invites the Assembly to the observance of a holy Lent (spoken). A period of silent prayer, kneeling, follows. Two bowls of ashes have been set on the Altar before the beginning of the service. The ashes are blessed with the words on *BCP*, 265, holy water, and incense. The Celebrant, Assisting Priest, and EM1 ascend the steps up to the Altar from the front; the MC brings a bowl of holy water with aspergillum from the credence table (where they were set before the beginning of the service), places the bowl on the Altar, and returns to their usual “prayers of the people” position. The Thurifer brings the charged Thurible and stands to the right of the Assisting Priest facing the Altar. Order of actions: words, holy water, then incense. When the ashes are blessed, the Thurifer returns the thurible to its hook.

Next, ashes are imposed, beginning with EM1, Assisting Priest, and Celebrant up and in front of the Altar. The Celebrant and Assisting Priest bring both bowls of ashes down with them (one each) and impose ashes on the remaining servers in the Chancel, standing in the same positions where they typically receive communion. Then the Assisting Priest and Celebrant impose ashes on the Assembly at the communion rail (taking the sides they normally would serving the bread at communion). After receiving ashes, the other servers take their seats on the benches while the Celebrant and Deacon/Assisting Priest impose ashes on the Assembly; the MC clears the Altar of the bowl of water and aspergillum and the Gospel Book. After ashes have been imposed on all, the Celebrant and Assisting Priest place bowls of ashes on the credence table and wash their hands, assisted by MC and other servers if need be (an additional bowl of water/lemon juice, along with cloth hand towels need to be on the credence table before the beginning of the service). We have learned that the best way to help the ashes adhere to foreheads, is for the person imposing ashes to have a little puddle of oil in the bowl containing ashes; dip thumb in oil then into ashes.

When hands are washed, EM1, Assisting Priest, and Celebrant take their places at the bottom step of the Altar in front; other servers assume their “prayers of the people” positions at the steps to the sides of the Altar. All kneel. Psalm 51 is chanted by servers and Assembly (using simplified Anglican chant and led by organ and choir) and the Litany of Penitence is said, all still kneeling (the Celebrant and Assisting Priest may read alternate petitions). Note: the Celebrant does NOT make the sign of the cross during this unique version of the absolution.

The Peace is exchanged and the service continues to Holy Communion as at 10:30am on Sundays. Glass communion vessels are used at this liturgy and throughout the rest of Lent.

After the postcommunion prayer (and from benches for all servers as is our new custom??), the Assisting Priest (or Celebrant) bids the Prayer over the People. Servers bow profoundly for this prayer rather than kneeling: “Bow down before the Lord,” is what the Assisting Priest or Celebrant bids (many in the Assembly will kneel). The Celebrant says the prayer over the people. (MC needs to make sure a copy of that prayer – from the *Book of Occasional Services* is in the Altar Book before the beginning of the service.) This proper liturgy ends with concluding hymn and full retiring procession with incense, torches, processional cross (the Coptic one with wooden staff), etc.; servers form up as usual.