



Members of the [Florida Chapter](#) of The Fellowship of United Methodists in Music and Worship Arts has provided this list of ideas for Ash Wednesday, Holy Week, and Easter. These creative folks met on two days in January 2021, compiled these ideas, and are happy to share them here.

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In our introduction, we quoted from "[The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why It Matters](#)" by Priya Parker, in which she states, "when we don't examine the deeper assumptions behind why we gather, we end up skipping too quickly to replicating old, staid formats of gathering. And we forgo the possibility of creating something memorable, even transformative." This might be a good book to invest in as you examine how you have assembled in the past, how you're assembling now, and how you may assemble in the future.

All links provided are suggestions and for your convenience and are not meant to be an endorsement for particular companies.

### **Ash Wednesday**

While making plans for Ash Wednesday, please read these recommendations from the Ecumenical Consultation on Protocols for Worship, Fellowship, and Sacraments and Discipleship Ministries:

Discipleship Ministries: [Ash Wednesday recommendations](#)

The [Ecumenical Consultation on Protocols for Worship, Fellowship and Sacraments](#) — an interdisciplinary group of theologians, scientists, physicians, pastors, bishops, and practitioners from United Methodist, Evangelical Lutheran, Episcopal, Pan-Methodist, and Roman Catholic traditions — offers guidance for safe ritual practices for the safety of the general public and the vitality of Christian congregations.

## Ash Wednesday (continued)

1. Marcia McFee's free [Ash Wednesday resource](#).
2. Burlap Hearts: Purchase burlap hearts for the pastor to prepare ahead of time with the imposition of ashes. (Purchase "Natural Jute Burlap Heart Party Decoration" from [Amazon.com](#)) Include a safety pin so the congregation can wear the heart.
  - a. Virtual Services: Send hearts with an explanation of Ash Wednesday or Ash Wednesday liturgy for families to follow along during virtual service or during their own personal time.
  - b. In-Person Services: Have plastic bags with hearts ready to give out to those that attend.
3. Devise a way to provide the congregation with individual ashes -- in a baggie or small container. Caution congregation to mix with oil NOT WATER if they are going to put the ashes on themselves. (Read precautions in articles listed above)
4. If your ministerial association in your community is active, consider joining together for an outdoors ecumenical service.
5. Drive-Thru Ash Wednesday
  - a. Schedule so it's convenient for people to drive through on their way home from work.
  - b. Make sure safety precautions are exercised.
  - c. Give ashes for each family member (see above for safe ideas) and a bag with activities for families to do together each week during Lent.
  - d. If impositions of ashes will be done in person (w/precautions), consider including spoken liturgy transmitted through an FM transmitter that people can listen to on their car radios.
6. Create something more memorable and transformative such as a virtual pancake dinner on Shrove Tuesday where attendees are asked to share memories.
7. Outdoor bonfire/service and have folks get their own charcoal and put it on their foreheads.
8. For In-person service: People would receive strips of paper that would quickly dissolve in water. Towards the end of the service, the congregation would be asked a question related to Lent or Ash Wednesday and their personal faith journey. They would write the answer on the paper and, on the way out, drop it in a large bowl of water. A pastor or lay leader could draw attention to baptism and the forgiveness of sins. A modification for online worship is that people could write the answer on a piece of paper and rip it up. [Water-soluble paper](#) is available through Amazon.

9. Clay -- Jeremiah 18:1-6

*The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: "Come, go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words." So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel. The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him.*

*Then the word of the LORD came to me: Can I not do with you, O house of Israel, just as this potter has done? says the LORD. Just like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.*

**Reflection:** One of the ways in which sin is described in the Bible is as a "hardness of heart." *Do you ever feel that your heart is hard, that it is inflexible or judgmental? Do you keep your guard up in your relationships with others and/or with God?* Reflect on the way in which this is true.

**Action:** Take a piece of clay. Warm it in your hands and knead it until it becomes pliable. Give it a new shape – perhaps a small bowl which could symbolize receptivity to God and God's forgiving love.

10. Oil -- Lamentations 3:19-24

*The thought of my affliction and my homelessness  
is wormwood and gall!*

*My soul continually thinks of it  
and is bowed down within me.*

*But this I call to mind,  
and therefore I have hope:*

*The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases,  
and God's mercies never come to an end;*

*they are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness.*

*"The LORD is my portion," says my soul,  
"therefore I will hope in God."*

**Reflection:** The author of Lamentations spends most of his time complaining, both about the world's afflictions and his own. One thought gives him or her peace: the steadfast love of God. The knowledge of God's unshakable love, even in the midst of trouble, is finally the grease that makes the squeaky wheel of lamentation fall silent. *Where can God help you loosen up the "stuck" places of your life?*

**Action:** Dip your finger in the oil in the bowl on the table before you and smooth it onto the back of your hand. As you do, reflect on the parts of your life which are stiff and squeaky – places where you are stuck, places that give you cause for continual complaint. Consider how the love of God might lubricate these parts of your life, renewing them, making them usable in a way they have not been before. Instead of a bowl, oil could be given in a bag or other container.

11. If your church's tradition is to use confirmands during your Ash Wednesday service, consider using them as liturgist. If your services are virtual, assign them readings and have them record them to be incorporated into your live stream or virtual service.

### **Palm Sunday**

1. Palm Processional: Ask church members to take a photo of themselves waving/holding a palm branch (set a deadline). Take all of the photos and put them into a slide show to use during Palm Sunday services -- virtual or in-person. B&W palm branch clip art can be found online, and copies can be made and sent home to families to color.
2. Record & present your traditional Palm Sunday Cantata.

### **Holy Week**

1. Most of us were already dealing with the pandemic during Holy Week and Easter last year. Don't re-invent the wheel. Look at what you did last year and see how you can make it better.

### **Maundy Thursday**

1. Seder meals: Participate online with a Jewish family. The United Methodist Book of Worship offers the guidance below. The PCUSA has similar guidelines.

United Methodists are encouraged to celebrate the Seder as invited guests in a Jewish home or in consultation with representatives of the Jewish community, thus respecting the integrity of what is a Jewish tradition and continuing the worthy practice of Jews and Christians sharing at table together. Celebrating the modern meal without a Jewish family as host is an affront to Jewish tradition and sometimes creates misunderstanding about the meaning of the Lord's Supper.

2. Foot washing: Families can do it within their own family in their bathtub.

## Good Friday

1. If you are doing a Tenebrae service virtually, have each speaker cover their laptop camera with black after reading their section.
2. Consider having a walk through the campus "stations of the cross" and end with communion in the sanctuary. Schedule family unit groups 15 minutes apart and sanitize between each group.
3. Consider a drive-thru "Stations of the Cross." Keep the locations close to each other to complete the stations in 45 minutes or an hour. Think of your church parking lot and parks or other green spaces or large parking lots nearby. Examples: Go to a hospital parking lot to pray for those with COVID during this service last year. E-mail out the readings and let families do this together anytime on Good Friday. Try using QR codes so that people can get information straight to their phones.
4. An upside to having worship online is being able to focus the congregation's attention on one element. Maybe have an evocative image on the screen with music in the background?
5. Consider using an aural equivalent of stripping of the altar. For example, there could be music with organ in the beginning and, by the end, a cappella chant.
6. Consider centering the service around different verses of "O Sacred Head Now Wounded." A Scripture passage would be read, and then a verse would be sung.
7. For the Passion reading, Augsburg Fortress has a wonderful resource for each of the Gospels that splits the Passion into different parts (Narrator, Jesus, Peter, etc.). This is the site to [order the Gospel from Matthew](#), but the other 3 Gospels are on the site as well. No rehearsal required! Parts can be assigned ahead of time, and people can simply show up and read them or be recorded ahead of time.
8. Virtual drama pulling clergy and people from other churches together. Iona Community. Wild Goose publication with readings and movement of the story. A bit of a Celtic flavor.
9. If you traditionally have a Holy Saturday service, consider using Luminaries with names written on them.

## General Ideas

1. Make sure families and individuals are engaged at home.
2. Encourage children to draw palm branches on their driveway on Palm Sunday, a cross on Good Friday, and an empty tomb on Easter Sunday.

## Easter Ideas

1. Set up a cross outside of your sanctuary and invite the congregation to place live flowers on the cross throughout Easter weekend.
2. Use Matthew 28 and plan a simple service for Easter. More quiet and reflective with moments of celebration.
3. Live-stream Sunrise service and pre-record your regular worship service if you are concerned with too many in attendance on Easter.
4. One of the iconic traditions of Easter worship is Brass and/or Handbells. Consider pre-recording them. Depending on your circumstances and precautions, brass players can use [instrumentalist masks](#) and [cover the bells](#) of their instruments.
5. Virtual "Hallelujah Chorus." Search YouTube for videos. Consider using the virtual choir video produced by UM Discipleship last Easter ([Christ the Lord Is Risen Today](#)).
6. If your church always purchases Easter Lilies and you will not be in your sanctuary for Easter, consider continuing the tradition. Instead of sending the lilies home, give them to senior centers, hospitals, first responders, and the local grocery store staff. Include a note with them thanking the recipient for their service to your community. Even if you have in-person worship, consider doing this anyway to show your church's gratitude to those in your community.
7. If you're looking for festive prelude music and can't use brass or handbells, consider Piano/organ duets. Or perhaps consider using a string ensemble instead of brass.

For many of us, our Lenten and Holy Week services are not well attended. Care should be taken to decide how much time and effort should be spent on services that, in normal times, are not well attended.

## Repertoire Suggestions

The links in this section were provided by those who recommended the selections and are not meant to endorse any of the publishing houses or companies.

### Ash Wednesday

Introit: [With Oil and Ashes](#)

[To Dust – Karen Marroli; SATB](#)

### Lent

[We See the Mountains Lifted High Before Us](#)/Hal H. Hopson; 2-part mixed

[Lament](#) by Karen Thompson; 3 – 5 octaves. Level 2+; can be done with no tables; has some echo rings, but could be adapted for just music stands.

[Wade in the Water](#) (for 12 bells or less)

### Holy Week

[Thy Will Be Done](#); C Courtney

[Golgatha in Bethlehem](#), L. Dengler; a piece for Lent anytime, not just Holy Week, and it works for Christmas too

[And He Died](#) (text is Mark 15:16-18) by Jay Althouse, Hope Publishing

[He Never Said a Mumbalin' Word](#), arr. by Hal Hopson, Sacred Music Press (2 part with piano, opt c instr, guitar)

[In All Our Grief and Fear We Turn to You](#), arr. Thomas Keesecker

[What Wondrous Love](#) arr. Susan E. Geschke; 2 – 3 octaves or 3 – 5 octaves. Level 1+

### Easter

[On the Third Day](#) by Allen Pote

[Hallelujah for the Cross](#) – P Drennan

[My Redeemer Lives](#), Victor Johnson

[Sing, Shout, Celebrate](#) – Joel Raney

[Alleluia! Amen!](#) By Karen Lakey Buckwalter; 3 – 5 Octaves. Level 1+

[Acclamation in G Minor](#) – Karen Thompson; 2 – 3 octaves or 4 – 6 octaves. Level 2+

[Hope for Tomorrow](#) (for 12 bells or less)

Additional Favorite Lenten/Holy Week/Easter Anthems

Beneath the Cross; Words & Music by Keith & Kristyn Getty

Create in Me a Clean Heart by John Leavitt; Hal Leonard

Grant Us Your Peace; Felix Mendelssohn

Lamb of God, by John Reim

Lamb of God, arr. F. Melius Christiansen