

This information brought to you by your Association of Unity Churches..

Ash Wednesday Service

Purpose: To provide an experiential, meditative service of personal preparation for Easter.

Materials:

1. One or more candles, lighted from the Christ Candle.
2. burning bowl.
3. Incense to cover odor of documents burned.
4. Cedar chips to facilitate burning.
5. Flower bulbs appropriate for planting indoors or outdoors. One bulb per plastic sandwich bag. Include planting and care instructions. Preferably bulbs which will bloom by Easter in your part of the country. Consult local greenhouses or garden supply stores.
6. Paper and pencils.

Process:

People are told to bring in any burnable items which represented a useless, limiting memory or habit which they were willing to release. Items can include old photos, unnecessary marriage or divorce papers, paid-off mortgages, loan notes or bills, letters representing unpleasant or no longer desired relationships or business dealings, and documents which had belonged to people (and pets) who had made their transition.

The idea is not only to release the limiting behavior of the past, but also the visible reminders of those limits.

For those who do not bring in items, paper and pencils are provided to write these things on. Invitation is then made to release these items at home.

The lesson (about 10 minutes) focuses on why it is helpful to release the limits of the past and the things that remind us of those limits; the need to forgive ourselves, the events, and others involved.

The meditation (also about 10 minutes) focuses on bringing those limits to mind, forgiving all involved, being willing to allow those limits to become ashes, and giving garlands of beauty to ones self instead. (Is. 61:3).

People then come forward to burn things, and are immediately given a bag with a flower bulb and instructions on planting and care.

After all are seated, a prayer of thanksgiving is offered. The meaning of the bulb is then explained - It is a symbol of the potential we have to create garlands instead of ashes.

At various places in the service, include special music to enhance the experience, particularly music to which the congregation responds.

In addition, the Lenten Covenant may be included.

Lenten Covenant

This is my covenant with God. I seek His guidance and direction during ten minutes of prayer each day of Lent (five minutes in the morning and five minutes in the evening.)

In return, I accept His promise of peace of mind, harmonious relationships, health of mind and body, and abundant supply to meet my every need.

For surely as I "seek first the kingdom (counsel) of God and His righteousness, all these things shall be added."
