



Ash Wednesday

Note: Ash Wednesday is an important day in the Church year, so this isn't your average service! Whether with adults or with children, it requires more preparation than usual! Diddy Disciples is usually prop-free and prep-lite but we've pulled all the stops out for Ash Wednesday. These materials encourage you to invite even the youngest children to join in one of the most visual and sensory moments of the Church year.

You will need

- A small piece of paper for each child, either blank or with sorry messages drawn or written on them by the children.

For the wilderness (Optional)

- a 'wilderness tray' to support the children in imagining the wilderness. This is a tray filled with sand (or brown sugar) with a few rocks and stones placed around so that it looks desolate. Or if there are smart board facilities, you may like to show the wilderness as a backdrop. You can find a wilderness scene at www.diddydisciples.org/samples
- a Jesus figure: we use the Joseph figure from my daughters' nativity set. If you have no appropriate figures, you could print a picture of Jesus to lay on the sand.

If your group is using premade ash:

- Ash (burnt palm crosses mixed with oil to which you could add your burnt papers). You may like to use the ash that your church is using during a main Ash Wednesday service.
- a video of paper being burned into ash. Either record your own video or use the Diddy Disciples video at www.diddydisciples.org/samples

If your group is going to burn the paper during the worship:

- a brazier or mini BBQ: something to burn paper in safely
- matches or a taper
- a metal spoon to scoop up the ash
- a bowl with oil to make the ash for ashing

Make sure that any room that you light a fire in is appropriate (e.g. a large church building), due to the risks posed by inhaling smoke. When lighting the fire, make sure children and vulnerable adults are kept at a very safe distance. Bear in mind that some of them may feel drawn towards it. Using a physical barrier may be appropriate.

For the ashing of the plants (Optional)

- Either: a daffodil plant for each classroom
- Or a daffodil bulb or a seed for each child. If you are planting the bulbs at the end of the session, you will also need a pot to place the bulb in and soil.

Introducing the 'wilderness'

Invite the children to sit in a circle so they can all see.

Lent starts today!

It's Ash Wednesday.

It's time to go the 'wilderness'!

Place your 'Wilderness Tray' in the centre of the circle, or show an image of the wilderness.

This is the 'wilderness':

sand, rocks, and sky and nothing else.

Jesus went to the wilderness! Place Jesus figure in the wilderness.

In Lent we go to the wilderness with Jesus.

Let's get up and march on the spot:

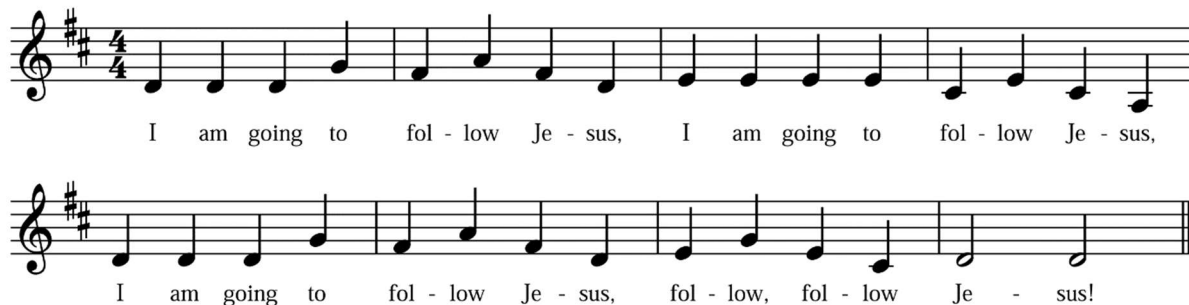
1, 2, 3, 4 . . . 1, 2, 3, 4 . . .

Let's sing 'I am going to follow Jesus'.

I am going to follow Jesus

Song: 'I am going to follow Jesus'. Words © Sharon Moughtin-Mumby

Tune: 'Bobby Shaftoe' (traditional).



I am going to fol - low Je - sus, I am going to fol - low Je - sus,

I am going to fol - low Je - sus, fol - low, fol - low Je - sus!

The words of this song are so repetitive that it won't need teaching. Start singing and the children will gradually join in. For groups that use the Diddy Disciples materials, this song will become the 'Gathering Song' for Lent.

I am going to follow Jesus,

I am going to follow Jesus,

I am going to follow Jesus,

follow, follow Jesus!

Looking inside

We're in the 'wilderness' with Jesus.

Jesus looked one way . . .

Let's look this way . . .

Lead the children in looking to one side.

And there was sand and rocks and sky.

And Jesus looked the other way . . .

Lead the children in looking to the other side.

And there was sand and rocks and sky.

Jesus looked behind him . . .

Lead the children in looking behind.

And there was . . . *encourage the children to join in*

sand and rocks and sky.

In the wilderness there isn't much to look at **OUT**side.

Just sand and rocks and sky. *Shake head*

So it's a good place to spend time looking **IN**side:

Look down at your own heart and trace a circle there.

at ourselves and our hearts.

On Ash Wednesday,

we ask God to help us to look **IN**side.

God gives us a new start!

Sometimes, when we look inside *Trace circle on heart*

we remember things we really wish we hadn't done.

Shake head and look perplexed.

The Good News is: God **LOVES** giving new starts!

Ash Wednesday is a wonderful time to ask God for a new start!

Let's have a time of saying sorry together.

If your group knows one of the Diddy Disciples Sorry Songs, use this here in place of the following material

To help us say we're sorry, we're going to learn some new words to our tune.

So 'my turn', 'your turn':

Spoken: There are things I wish I'd not thought.

There are things I wish I'd not thought.

Spoken: Can I start again, please!

Can I start again, please!

The first line we sing THREE times.

Let's try and fit the words to our tune:

Lead the group in singing:

There are things I wish I'd not thought.

There are things I wish I'd not thought.

There are things I wish I'd not thought.

can I start again, please!

We're ready for our time of Saying Sorry.

Lead the children in placing hands on head

Let's put our hands on our head

I wonder if there's anything we've thought
that we wish we hadn't thought...

There are things I wish I'd not thought.

There are things I wish I'd not thought.

**There are things I wish I'd not thought,
can I start again, please!**

Lead the children in placing hands by mouth

Let's put our hands on our mouth

I wonder if there's anything we've said
That we wish we hadn't said...

Let's sing 'There are things I wish I'd not SAID.'

There are things I wish I'd not said.

There are things I wish I'd not said.

**There are things I wish I'd not said,
can I start again, please!**

Lead the children in crossing your arms on your chest

Let's cross our arms on our chest.

I wonder if there's anything we've done

That we wish we hadn't done...

Let's sing 'There are things I wish I'd not **DONE**.'

There are things I wish I'd not done.
There are things I wish I'd not done.
There are things I wish I'd not done,
can I start again, please!

The Burning

This first option involves burning the sorries during the session with a small group. For other options, including burning the sorries before or after the session, see the other options at the end of the document.

Option 1:

Invite two children to take around pieces of paper.

Name and Name are going to bring round some paper.

If you like, you can take a piece of paper and hold it in the air to show that there are things that you wish you hadn't done.

As we wait for our paper, let's sing,
'I am going to say I'm sorry.'

Lead the group in singing either the refrain from your usual Sorry Song or

**I am going to say I'm sorry,
I am going to say I'm sorry,
I am going to say I'm sorry,
can I start again, please!**

Once all the children and adults who wish to take a piece of paper have done so:

When we do things that make God or other people sad,
it can make us feel sad and cross inside.

Let's crumple our paper up to show how we can feel
when we know we've made someone feel sad.

Let's put our feelings into the paper.

Lead the children in crumpling your paper to show your feelings: crossly, with frustration, sadly, etc. For example:

I'm feeling cross with myself for making my friend feel sad.
I'm going to put my crossness into this paper.

Crumple the paper crossly.

Whatever we're feeling, we can give our feelings to God.

Name is going to bring this basket around.

If you like, you can put your paper in the basket
and give it to God.

If you're going to leave the room to burn the papers outside, invite the children to march after you in a line once you've collected their papers.

Lead the group in continuing to sing either the refrain from your usual Sorry Song or:

**I am going to say I'm sorry,
I am going to say I'm sorry,
I am going to say I'm sorry,
can I start again, please!**

We're going to burn our 'sorries' now with fire.

The fire will change this paper into something different.

We're going to watch it change.

We're going to ask God to change our sorries into something amazing.

Place the crumpled paper in the brazier and light it.

Let the children watch for a moment. When the moment has passed...

Look at the fire, stretching up and swaying.

Sway with your own body and stretch up.

Look at the smoke going up to God with our sorries.

Let's imagine we're flames of fire too.

Lead the group in swaying their bodies like flames, singing either the refrain from your usual Sorry Song or 'I am going to say I'm sorry'.

**I am going to say I'm sorry,
I am going to say I'm sorry,
I am going to say I'm sorry,
can I start again, please!**

When the paper has turned to ash, take a spoon and scoop some ash from the fire and place it in a bowl. You may like to have some of your church's usual ash in the bowl already so the children receive both forms of ash.

The Ashing

Invite the children to sit. Show the children the bowl of ash.

This is 'ash'. *Show ash.*

When we burn paper with fire, it turns into ash!

With this ash we're going to do something

the Church does every Ash Wednesday.

We're going to draw a cross on your forehead!

First, I need someone to draw a cross on my forehead!

Invite a child to draw a cross on your forehead.

Name can you put your thumb in the ash.

When the child is ready:

Now can you draw a cross shape on my forehead.

When the child has drawn the cross:

God gives me a new start!

Look! The ash cross shows that God has given me a new start!

In large groups:

If you like, you can come forward, and

Name or I will draw a cross on your forehead with ash

to show you want to follow Jesus.

In small groups:

I'm going to come round the circle.

If you like, I'm going to draw a cross on your forehead with ash

to show you want to follow Jesus.

If you'd like me to draw a cross, stand up when I stand in front of you.

All groups:

While we do this, can everyone else sing:

'I am going to follow Jesus'?

As the children sing, draw a cross on the forehead of each child who comes forward or stands up in their place with the words:

'God gives you a new start!'

I am going to follow Jesus!

Look at all those new starts! Beautiful!
God's made our 'sorries' into a new start!
After 3, let's shout 'God gives us a new start!'
1, 2, 3: God gives us a new start!

Let's use our new starts to follow Jesus!
Let's stand up and march on the spot and sing 'I am going to follow Jesus!'

I am going to follow Jesus,
I am going to follow Jesus,
I am going to follow Jesus,
follow, follow Jesus!

You may like to end here, or continue with the following..

Transformation

We're going to do one more thing with our ash.
Show the bowl of ash.
Ash helps plants grow.
Paper is made from trees.
Show paper like the paper the children used to say sorry
When paper is burned, it makes good food
for new trees and plants.
God's turned our 'sorries' into food for plants!

Option 1:

For large groups (e.g. schools)

Here I have some *bulbs/ pots of daffodils/plants*: one for each class.
To the class representatives: Come and take one plant each.
Encourage the children to take a plant then to stand facing the group.
I'm going to place ash on your plants for food.

Let's sing, 'I am going to follow Jesus' one more time as I ash your plants.
Place ash on each plant as you sing:

I am going to follow Jesus,
I am going to follow Jesus,

I am going to follow Jesus,
follow, follow Jesus.

Option 2:

For groups who would like to plant bulbs after the worship session

I have some bulbs here.
In a moment, we're going to plant them,
then place ash on our plants for food!

Name and *Name* are going to bring our bulbs around now.
If you would like one, hold your hands out like this. *Show the group cupped hands.*
Let's sing, 'I am going to follow Jesus' one more time
as we wait for our bulbs.

I am going to follow Jesus,
I am going to follow Jesus,
I am going to follow Jesus,
follow, follow Jesus.

All groups:

This Lent, you can watch your seeds/plants/garden growing.
Remember the food helping your plants to grow
is the ash from our sorries!
God's turning our 'sorries' into beautiful flowers!
God can make amazing things happen when we say sorry!

Close with the bulb planting activity or with a blessing and suitable song.

Appendix

The Burning: further options

How to burn the sorries safely will change according to your setting. Choose from the following four options or adapt the material in whatever way you deem necessary.

Option 1: Burning the sorries **during** the session with a small group (see p.5 above)

Option 2: Burning the sorries **during** the session with a large group or school

Option 3: Burning the sorries **before** the session

Option 4: Burning the sorries **after** the session

Option 2:

*Burning the sorries during the session **with a large group or school***

In our classes, we've written or drawn our sorries on a piece of paper.

The Good News is, we can give all our cross and sad feelings to God.

Could a member from each class bring forward

the class's basket of sorries?

As they come forward, let's sing.

Lead the group in singing either the refrain from your usual Sorry Song or

I am going to say I'm sorry,

I am going to say I'm sorry,

I am going to say I'm sorry,

can I start again, please!

We're going to burn our 'sorries' now with fire.

The fire will change this paper into something different.

We're going to watch it change.

We're going to ask God to change our sorries into something amazing.

Place the crumpled paper in the brazier and light it.

Let the children watch for a moment. When the moment has passed...

Look at the fire, stretching up and swaying.

Sway with your own body and stretch up.

Look at the smoke going up to God with our sorries.

Let's imagine we're flames of fire too.

Lead the group in swaying their bodies like flames, singing either the refrain from your usual Sorry Song or 'I am going to say I'm sorry'.

I am going to say I'm sorry,
I am going to say I'm sorry,
I am going to say I'm sorry,
can I start again, please!

When the paper has turned to ash, take a spoon and scoop some ash from the fire and place it in a bowl. You may like to have some of your church's usual ash in the bowl already so the children receive both forms of ash.

Option 3:

Burning the sorries before the session. Optional: show a video of the burning.

*Before our service/last week we wrote or drew our 'sorries' on a piece of paper.
We gave all our cross and sad feelings to God.
This morning, I burned your pieces of paper!*

Optional: I took a video of your sorries burning!

Play the video. Continue with the following either during or after the video, depending on its length.

Let's show the fire, stretching up and swaying.
Sway with your own body and stretch up.
Let's show the smoke going up to God with our sorries.
Let's imagine we're flames of fire too.

Lead the group in swaying their bodies like flames, singing either the refrain from your usual Sorry Song or 'I am going to say I'm sorry'.

I am going to say I'm sorry,
I am going to say I'm sorry,
I am going to say I'm sorry,
can I start again, please!

Option 4:

Burning the sorries after the session

Begin with Option 1 or 2 above, depending on your size of group. Replace the material following 'We're going to burn our 'sorries' now with fire, with the following material.

I'm going to burn your sorries later!
The fire will change this paper into something different.
We're going to ask God to change our sorries into something amazing.

*Optional: Here's a video of some other children burning their sorries!
Play the video. Continue with the following either during or after the video.*

Let's imagine we're burning our sorries now!
Let's show the fire, stretching up and swaying.
Sway with your own body and stretch up.
Let's show the smoke going up to God with our sorries.
Let's imagine we're flames of fire too.

Lead the group in swaying their bodies like flames, singing either the refrain from your usual Sorry Song or 'I am going to say I'm sorry'.

**I am going to say I'm sorry,
I am going to say I'm sorry,
I am going to say I'm sorry,
can I start again, please!**