



*But now, empowered by Your grace,
given to us through Jesus's life, death and resurrection.
We seek to renew our commitment,
and consciously deepen our relationship with You.*

**We recognize, O Lord, that we are simply dust.
Remind us through these ashes of our dependence on You,
and Your devotion to us.
May we know the strength of Your Spirit as we seek to follow You;
May we know the discipline of Your love as we seek to draw nearer to You;
May we know the insight of Your wisdom as we seek to learn of You.
As we receive the ashes upon our foreheads,
may we know the joy of sharing with You in ministry,
in suffering, in death and in life.
For Your glory and your kingdom's sake.**

(Silence)

Words of Assurance

Hear the Good News. The LORD, our God, is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love (Joel 2:13).

God hears the earnest cries of the repentant and forgives our sins.

We come before you in the name of the One who comes to save us, praying in the way He taught us, with these words:

**Our Father (Creator) who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,
for Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

***The Closing Hymn**

Lord, I Want to Be a Christian

UMH 402

***The Benediction**

Please Depart in Silence

**Please stand in body or spirit.*

Marked by Ashes

Ruler of the Night,
Guarantor of the day . . .
This day — a gift from you.
This day — like none other you have ever
given, or we have ever received.
This Wednesday dazzles us with gift and
newness and possibility.
This Wednesday burdens us with the tasks
of the day, for we are already halfway
home
halfway back to committees and
memos,
halfway back to calls and
appointments,
halfway on to next Sunday,
halfway back, half frazzled, half
expectant,
half turned toward you, half rather not.

This Wednesday is a long way from Ash
Wednesday,
but all our Wednesdays are marked by
ashes —
we begin this day with that taste of ash in
our mouth:
of failed hope and broken promises,
of forgotten children and frightened
women,
we ourselves are ashes to ashes, dust to
dust;
we can taste our mortality as we roll the
ash around on our tongues.

We are able to ponder our ashness with
some confidence, only because our every
Wednesday of ashes
anticipates your Easter victory over that
dry, flaky taste of death.

On this Wednesday, we submit our ashen
way to you —
you Easter parade of newness.
Before the sun sets, take our Wednesday
and Easter us,
Easter us to joy and energy and courage
and freedom;
Easter us that we may be fearless for
your truth.
Come here and Easter our Wednesday
with mercy and justice and peace and
generosity.

We pray as we wait for the Risen One who
comes soon.

-Walter Brueggemann

For over thirty years now, Walter Brueggemann (b. 1933) has combined the best of critical scholarship with love for the local church in service to the kingdom of God. Now a professor emeritus of Old Testament studies at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, Brueggemann has authored over seventy books. Taken from his *Prayers for a Privileged People* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008), pp. 27-28.