Station 1 – introduction, myrrh; Jesus' birth, anointment in death

Invite people to rub myrrh oil on their wrist or back of hand; close eyes or focus on an item with soft eyes and breathe deeply three times to center.

Station 2 – slips of paper, pens

Invite people to write something for which they need forgiveness or that is a barrier to a closer relationship with God – something specific or a general habit/way of thinking that does not align with Jesus' teachings. It can be a drawing. No one else will see it.

Station 3 – ashes, mirror; repentance

Invite people to pray:

O God the Father, creator of heaven and earth, Have mercy on me.

O God the Son, redeemer of the world, Have mercy on me.

O God the Holy Spirit, advocate and guide, Have mercy on me.

Holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, three persons and one God, Have mercy on me.

Receive ashes from the Elder, or if you do not want ashes, look in the mirror and tell yourself, "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return." (Genesis 3:19)

Station 4 – candle, bowl, tweezers; letting go of sins

Put candle in a fireproof bowl surrounded by water. Invite people to burn, or have an elder burn, the slip of paper from Station 1. Or have people tear their slips of paper into tiny pieces and drop the shreds in the water.

As for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more. But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.

"Dear God, forgive me my sins and help me be closer to you."

Station 5 – bowl, water, rocks, paper towels or a towel, prayer slips

Hear the good news! God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Invite people to take a rock from the bowl. For the next 40 days, carry the rock in your pocket, or put it somewhere you will see it daily. Remember that we are formed of the earth, but the living water wears down our rough places until we are smoothed by His grace.

Below: handout, signs for prayer stations.

Ash Wednesday – Prayer Stations

As part of early Christian observance of the Lord's passion and resurrection, a 40-day season of spiritual preparation became the church's custom. During this season leading up to Easter, converts to the faith were prepared for baptism, and people who had committed serious sins were reconciled to the community with penitence and forgiveness. In this way the whole congregation was reminded of the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ and the need we all have to renew our faith.

You are invited, therefore,
to observe a holy Lent:
by self–examination and repentance;
by prayer, fasting, and self–denial;
and by reading and meditating on God's Holy Word. *(from The Book of Common Prayer)*

Station 1:

Rub some of the myrrh-scented oil on your wrist or the back of your hand. Inhale deeply and exhale slowly for three breaths, taking time to make yourself fully present. When you have fully centered yourself, go to Station 2.

Station 2:

Think for a minute about your relationship with God. What is coming between you and a closer relationship with God?

> Is it something heavy from your past that you carry around with you that you need to let go?
>
> Is it a behavior or habit that takes up time and space you could be using for time with God?
>
> Is it a grudge, an argument, anger or a wound that you've nursed for a while now?
>
> Is it something that prevents you from doing the things you know you should?

Take a slip of paper and write a word or draw a symbol that represents what is coming between you and God. (Don't worry, no one will see it except you.) Fold it in half and carry it with you to the next station.

Station 3:

Prepare yourself for atonement by saying this prayer in your head, whispered, or aloud.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving kindness.
In your tender mercy blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.
Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation and uphold me with your Spirit;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

When you are ready, receive ashes from the Elder; or if you do not want ashes, look in the mirror and remind yourself, "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return."

Station 4:

"As for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more. But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting."

Take the slip of paper you wrote on at Station 1. Tear it into tiny pieces and throw the scraps into the bowl. Look into the candle flame and pray, **"Dear God, forgive me my sins and help me be closer to you."**

Station 5:

"The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust."

Hear good news! God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

Look at the water in the bowl and remember your baptism. Reach into the bowl and take a rock. For the next 40 days, carry the rock in your pocket, or put it somewhere you will see it daily.

Remember that we are formed of the earth, and the living water wears down our rough places until we are smoothed by His grace. Go forth renewed in the knowledge that God forgives a repentant heart, and show your penitence and gratefulness by seeking a closer communion with Him.

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"As for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more. But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting."

Take the slip of paper you wrote on at Station 1. Tear it into tiny pieces and toss the scraps in the bowl around the candle.

Look into the candle flame and pray,

"Dear God, forgive me my sins and help me be closer to you."

Station 5:

Hear good news! God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

Look at the water in the bowl and remember your baptism.

Reach into the bowl and take a rock.

For the next 40 days, carry the rock in your pocket, or put it somewhere you will see it daily.

Remember that we are formed of the earth, and the living water wears down our rough places until we are smoothed by His grace. Go forth renewed in the knowledge that God forgives a repentant heart, and show your penitence and gratefulness this Lent by seeking closer communion with Him.