

ASH WEDNESDAY GODLY PLAY LESSON

by Lisa Butler, Christ Episcopal Church, Cedar Rapids IA

(adapted by Julie Hester, for Rocky River Presbyterian, Concord, NC)

MATERIALS:

Purple underlay, Bowl of water, doll, candle materials from baptism story, ashes, paper towels or napkins, for wiping fingertips

ACTIONS

Spread the purple cloth out.

Place the bowl of water in front of you, and pick up the doll.

Demonstrate with baptism doll and water. Finish by drying the doll's head.

*Put the doll on the underlay.
Place the ashes on the underlay next to the doll.*

WORDS

It's purple time now, the time for getting ready. We begin now to get ready for the mystery of Easter. This is a great mystery, and it takes time to get ready for it. It will take us six weeks during Lent, from now until Easter. Tonight we get ready in a very special way. Tonight is called Ash Wednesday, and it, too, is a great mystery.

When we are baptized, the pastor takes water and places it on our head. The pastor says something like, "Julie, child of God, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." The water marks us as God's child, and a part of the church, forever. When the baptism is over, and your head is dry, you can't see the mark of the water, but you always know it is there.

*Put some ashes on your fingers
and rub them together.*

Tonight something will happen to us to help us remember that we belong to God, and to get ready for the mystery of Easter. The pastors will take ashes and mark our forehead with it. This time, we can see the mark. Tonight, we will be able to see everyone's mark. We can remember that we are all marked as God's children, forever.

*Use the doll to show how the
ashes will go on our foreheads,
with a cross.*

When we receive this special mark tonight, we will hear different words. "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." We hear and see these words, in the shape of a cross, to remind us that in death there is hope because of God's love.

*Rub some ashes between your
fingers again.*

The ashes also help us remember that we all sin, we all make mistakes, and need God's love and forgiveness.

*Take water from the bowl and
wash the ashes away, then dry
the doll's head.*

And God always forgives.

*Make the sign of the cross again
with ashes on the doll's head.*

Tonight when we hear: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return," and see the mark of the cross on our heads, we can remember that, all our lives long, and even after, we belong to God.

Now, I wonder ...

I wonder if you have ever received the Ash Wednesday mark before?

I wonder if we will be able to feel the ashes on our foreheads?

I wonder if people will wipe the ashes off when they leave church?

I wonder if we will still remember the ashes when we do wipe them off?

I wonder what it means when we hear, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return?"

I wonder why the cross reminds us that in death there is hope?

I wonder if God can see the marks on our heads?

I wonder how this helps us get ready for Easter?

Note: Be prepared to be able to answer if asked where the ashes come from. In our church, they are ashes from burning the last year's Palm Sunday palms.