

## **Dwelling in the Word:** John 8:1-11

### *Liturgy response*

Help me to see like you

**You are the God who sees**

To notice those at the edge

**Where your Spirit is at work**

To look with love and compassion

**Beyond society's judgements**

When powerful men make accusations

**Remind me to buy time and write in the dust**

Help me to draw them out

**And unmask their ruses**

When presented with a false binary

**Give me guile to slip the trap and see a third way**

When I don't have the answers

**May your Spirit give me the words**

When I am tempted to look down on anyone

**Remind me we are all sinners**

May I never use the gospel as a threat

**But offer it as gift**

Blessed are the peacemakers

**Who diffuse confrontation**

Let no stones be thrown

**Go carefully, look after yourself**

**Amen**

## **Imposition of Ashes**

### *Prayer*

God of the ashes

Today let us hold the tension of the story of our making - born of the dirt, beautifully connected to the earth we walk on. And yet, possessing the knowledge of our own mortality - that our common decay cannot be escaped. As we begin lent help us to become honest about the ways our societies and selfhoods are marred by injustice, cruelty, neglect, and greed. Help us to see our own role in the degeneration of the world; that as we push back evil around us, we might also admit those secret evils that dwell in us. As we name how we've been complicit in the ashes of this world, help us to bear them in solidarity and hope. **Amen**

### *Ritual*

1. You are dust, beautiful dust. Stand tall

2. You are dust and to dust you shall return  
Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ

### *Track*

Hymn by Daudi Matsiko

Lay your weary head on me

I'll break you off a bit of peace

I'll be air that you can breathe

## Prayer

*Write prayers in the sand*

God of solidarity

Thank you for being a God who enters the suffering of the world - who doesn't run from those in pain but rushes to the site of blood and tears. Release us from those empty cravings for unity that comes at no cost to the oppressor. Lead us towards spaces of costly advocacy. We confess that in speaking up on behalf of the oppressed we too soon become enamoured with the sound of our own voices. Our egos spoil even our best intentions. Show us when the voices of the vulnerable are being drowned out by the cacophony of the privileged. Make our presence and dignity known in a world that perpetually eclipses the voices of the marginalised. Guide us into a solidarity that demands something of us. Let us learn to risk ourselves on behalf of the vulnerable, believing that when one of us is harmed we all are. And God, keep us from those who will demonise the fight in us, who would prefer us complacent and far from one another. Secure in us the courage to resist, knowing that together we will restore what the world has tried to suffocate in us. **Amen**

*Benediction*

Go with heads bowed in humility toward all you have done and not done to protect every living thing. May you be sewn into the complicated tapestry of oppressed and oppressor knowing that you are more than one thing. May you march and write and sing and educate and use what power you have to call forth justice. And may you contend daily with all the ways the curse still dwells in the hidden parts of you, that you would be a person of constant searching, self-honesty, confession and forgiveness.

**Amen**

*All prayers from Black Liturgies by Cole Arthur Riley*

# Dust

## Prayers for Ash Wednesday 2025

### Gathering

*Prayer*

Inhale - We honour our mortality

Exhale - Hope is written in the ashes

*Prayer For being human*

God of shalom

Here we are dangling from the precipice without care or concern for our collective fate. We have lost sight of our own faces, risking our humanity in favour of supremacy. Guide us away from the edge of our undoing. Show us what it means to be people of deep and abiding reverence for the beauty and connectedness of everything everywhere. Train us out of the habits of degradation and artifice - incessantly competing to be worth more, to be loved more, Remind us that we don't need to exalt humanity over any other piece of creation in order to be worth something. Keep us from the delusion of our dominion over earth, sky or star. We are no greater. Remind us that the dust beneath us transcends our own humble existence and let our hardened exteriors soften in the presence of safety. May any honour we've withheld from one another be doubled in the presence of reparation and forgiveness. We won't get free alone. Keep us human. **Amen**