

U.S. churches bring Ash Wednesday to the streets

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Toronto, Canada, March 11 (ENInews)--Busy commuters in some cities in the United States had the church come to them on Ash Wednesday. In the second year of "Ashes to Go", priests and ministers of various Christian denominations distributed ashes to surprised passersby on urban streets and at train stations and bus stops on 9 March.

On Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, Christians are marked on their foreheads with the sign of the cross in ashes as a mark of penitence.

In Palm Desert, California, the Rev. Derek Fossey of Hope Lutheran Church told The Desert Sun newspaper that the aim of Ashes to Go was to reach out to people who were not members of a church, or those who had not been to church in a long time. "This is a visual reminder that church is not just a bunch of pews in a sanctuary," said Fossey.

In New Jersey, the Rev. Sandye Wilson, rector of the Episcopal Church of St. Andrew and Holy Communion in South Orange, stood on a train platform placing ashes on the foreheads of commuters bound for work in New York City. "Sometimes it's difficult for the world to come to church, so we bring the church to the world," Wilson told the South Orange Patch news website.

Churches in Texas and Illinois also participated in the Ashes to Go initiative. In addition to train stations, clergy from 26 congregations in the Episcopal diocese of Chicago also brought ashes to coffee houses, college campuses and nursing homes. Traditionally marked by 40 days of fasting and sacrifice, Lent ends with the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday.