



*A thriving faith community
engaged in compassionate service.*



7:00 p.m. Worship Service

Live Streaming on Facebook plus On Demand on YouTube

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Order of Service

***Please rise in body or spirit**

The Meaning of Lent and Ash Wednesday

The first Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord's Passion and Resurrection. It became the custom of the church to prepare for these days with a season Of penitence and fasting. The Lenten season provided a time in which converts to the faith Were prepared for Baptism. Over the years Lent has become a time for all Christians to renew their faith, recognizing the need for confession, repentance, prayer, and forgiveness. Particular attention is given to Jesus' own journey of faith, as he prepared for what awaited him in Jerusalem-his suffering, death and resurrection.

Ash Wednesday gets its name from the ancient biblical sign of ashes, which signifies the uncertainty of human life, and marks the penitence of the individual Christian and the community of the faithful.

Prelude

A Lenten Prelude

Chopin

***Call to Worship**

Leader: Beloved of Christ, let us enter this holy space of worship and this holy time of Lent.

All: We come, turning and returning to God.

Leader: We gather knowing that God embraces our whole selves.

All: We come laughing or weeping, rejoicing or mourning, confident or doubting, carefree or burdened.

Leader: We begin in dust and in quiet, seeking courage to begin again.

All: We come, for God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

Leader: We take on the disciplines of Lent as acts of faithful resistance.

All: We come to dream of a world renewed. We imagine a world at peace. We lift our voices in praise.

***Opening Hymn #167**

Forty Days and Forty Nights

***Call and Prayer of Confession**

Leader: Siblings in Christ, let us confess our sins to God, laying down our burden of guilt into the grave of forgiven wrongs, where shame is conquered forever. Holy God, you created life from dirt, breathing air into our lungs, and entrusting us to live rightly. Today, as we remember our mortality with ashes and prayer, we confess our tendency to forget.

All: We have forgotten our Creator. We have forgotten that we came from dust and we shall return to dust.

Adapted from Illustrated Ministry

Leader: Remind us of our fragile humanness, held delicately in the palm of your hand. Remind us to observe and appreciate creation—this incredible universe imagined for your glory and life's flourishing.

All: Forgive us for living as if we are invincible. Forgive us for living as if we are powerless.

Leader: For you are both the great God of all living things and the precious Spirit that inhabits each of us.

All: Have mercy upon us, your children. Amen.

***Assurance of Pardon**

Leader: Beloved, God knows we lose sight of our place in creation, falling into arrogance or misery, forgetting God's mercy. Remember and receive God's pardon and be at peace. Amen.

Scripture Reading

Joel 2:1, 2, 12-17; O. T. pg. 846

Homily

Rev. Allyn Foster

Prayers of the People

One: Creator God, today, when we mark ourselves with ashes, we hear the promise that we will one day return to the same earth from which we were born—the same earth you shaped and called good, the same ground that cries out for the injustice committed upon it, the same rocks that sing your praise even when we are silent. May this bit of earth with which we mark ourselves deepen our elemental communion with all creation. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

One: The ash reminds us of what marks our hearts—the love and hope we're hesitant to share, the fear and anger we pray doesn't show on our faces, the faith and doubt that wrestle within us. As we enter this season, make us unafraid of what dwells within, trusting your Spirit is always, still, shaping us. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

One: The ash reminds us of what remains—after fire, after devastation, after unimaginable sorrow. We remember all who mourn now, and all who have endured so much. May your presence comfort hurting hearts and bring peace to struggling spirits Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

One: The ash reminds us that all the world is made of the same stuff—and so we pray for all people, and for all of creation, for just peace, for nurturing, and flourishing, for liberation of each one and for all. May this season free us from what distracts, binds, and numbs us, and reorient us toward the freedom we find in your love. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

The Lord's Prayer

Leader: Now let us pray the prayer that the Lord Jesus taught us saying:

People: Our Father, 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 debts as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Impostion of Ashes

Leader: Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, a time of discernment, reflection, and growth. We pause now to remember our mortality and the cycle of life: birth, death, new life. In the same manner, may we also remember the cycle of prophetic imagination: critique, lament, imagine. We are called as God's people into both of these cycles, providing renewal and hope. As these ashes are placed on your forehead, remember you were formed from the dust of the earth and given life by the breath of God. Remembering we are dust doesn't diminish our worth or cleanliness; rather, it affirms our integral, connected place in this beautiful work of God's love. We were made with love, and when we die, God will receive us with love. Let us pause today to remember our mortality, thank God for this precious life, and commit ourselves to the work of imagination.

All: Remember you are from dust, and to dust you shall return.

***Hymn 814**

In God Alone (3 times)

***Charge and Benediction**

Leader: Beloved humans, created from dust and inhabited by God's Spirit, go into the world with confidence, trusting that God, who knows our frailties, will never abandon us to death, but will accompany us through all of life and to our end. May we be humble enough to know our human weakness, and inspired enough to know our special place in God's heart. Amen.

All Depart in Silence