





In the middle of a normal week, we pause to observe Ash Wednesday together—individually and as a faith community. We remember that God made us from fragile, blessed dust and breathes through us the breath of life and love. From dust we are created and to God's good dust we shall return. With dust and oil and glitter (a new recipe!) tonight - or your dirt from a houseplant, chocolate powder, cinnamon or some ashes you created - we claim the mark of God's cherished, flawed, blessed and beloved creature.

Today we begin our 40-day Lenten journey to discover who we are created to be as God's beloved—and how we are to approach and treat one another as also beloved.

In daily practices of prayer, study, self-reflection and service we will be very intentional on this Lenten journey. We follow Jesus -- God's Beloved Child, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh in whom we see God's image most clearly. So come, let us pray for strength and imagination to follow Jesus wherever he will lead us this Lent. We model ourselves after him and long to be a more faithful, creative and effective expression of him. This is our identity.

With all the twists and turns our lives sometimes take away from God and God's ways, we want to return. As we journey this season, we pay attention to where we have been and to where we are going. We want to know ourselves better and see where we need to be focused on building up our Christian identity. We welcome the Spirit to lead us, guide us and light the way so that we can be more intentionally the hands, heart and hope of Jesus.

Ash Wednesday

February 17, 2021 | 7:00pm | YouTube

Meditation

God our Creator, You have formed us out of the dust of the earth. May these ashes be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence, and a reminder of your grace. ~Voices United

Welcome

Prelude

Lighting of the Candles & Ringing of the Bell

Hebrew Scripture Lesson

Joel 2, selected verses

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near— a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness spread upon the mountains a great and powerful army comes; their like has never been from of old, nor will be again after them in ages to come.

Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord, your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her canopy. Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep. Let them say, “Spare your people, O Lord, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, “Where is their God?””

Centering

Please take a breath between each line.

Be still and know that I am God

Be still and know that I am

Be still and know that I

Be still and know that

Be still and know

Be still and

Be still

Be

Amen.

Opening Prayer Based on words of Marilyn Pagán-Banks

Holy One, as we enter the season of Lent, remind us that bearing the sign of the cross on our forehead is not enough. Help us to move beyond ritual *void of responsibility*. Guide us from personal misgivings, shame or guilt toward true acknowledgment and sincere amends. May the symbol of the cross we carry be for us a symbol of our commitment to work towards collective healing, reconciliation and liberation. May the open cross set us free to be the unique individuals you call us to be—living into our identity as ‘Christian’ in our own ways. May we be the hands and heart and hope of Christ. Amen.

Lenten Candles

We light seven candles tonight as we embark on this Lenten journey. We want the light to illumine our path as we seek to be the words and ways of Jesus. We commit to being more infused by the Spirit as we travel. Even as we know this is good and important work, we recognize that it isn't easy—and we may come upon the shadow side of humanity and some of our own unique darkness.

We will extinguish one candle each time we gather for worship this season, acknowledging that this can be tough and exhausting work. As we approach the desertion and depletion of Good Friday, we also prepare ourselves for the dawn and love of Easter morning...the light that never goes out.

Prayer at the Candles

Holy One, we set off on this Lenten journey with Jesus because we want to watch him and listen to him—so that we might become more like him. Jesus didn't just talk about love and faithfulness but he made it real with his hands. Help us, Holy One, to be *all in* this season of Lent. Reach out and touch us that we might use our bodies, minds and spirits to bring more love and grace into the world. Amen.

Response *Put Peace into Each Other's Hands*—Fred Kaan (*Hands Shaped like a Cradle*)

Tune: St Columbia, Irish Traditional Melody—With Joy Draw Water; Immortal Love; Mother of All

**Put peace into each other's hands and like a treasure hold it;
protect it like a candle flame, with tenderness enfold it.**

**Put peace into each other's hands with loving expectation;
be gentle in your words and ways, in touch with God's creation.**

**Put peace into each other's hands, like bread we break for sharing;
look people warmly in the eye: our life is meant for caring.**

**Put Christ into each other's hands, he is love's deepest measure;
in love make peace, give peace a chance and share it like a treasure.**

Invitation to Confession Psalm 51, selected verses

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.

The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Prayer of Confession LaGretta Bjorn

Loving God, Creator of all that has been, all that is, and all that is to come; You made us human and gave us hearts to love you and follow you. We thank you for the many blessings you have given us over this past year.

We acknowledge that there are times in our lives when we, ourselves, feel unloved and unlovable. Give us the grace to love others, even when they are difficult.

We trust in your faithfulness to carry us over the rough places of life. We trust in your love to walk with us through the difficulties of our days. We trust in your promise of life everlasting and put all of our hope in you. We thank you for Jesus. We thank you that he lived so that we might have eternal life.

Forgive us for our sins: The things you asked us to do and we failed to do as well as the things you told us not to do but we did anyway. We are sorry and we ask that you strengthen us so that we will more closely follow you.

We pray that your Holy Spirit will be felt by people who are in pain in mind, body, spirit or relationship. Help them to know that you are with them and you are able to carry them through their trials.

We ask all these things in the name of Jesus, our Friend and Savior. Amen.

Silent Prayers We suggest more centering and cleansing breaths.

Assurance of Forgiveness based on Romans 8

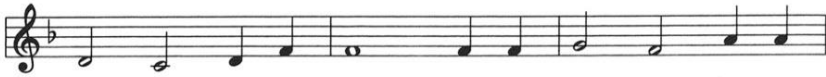
We have this assurance that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Hymn *Sunday's Palms are Wednesday's Ashes*

Our ashes each year are made from the palms we waved the previous year during Holy Week.



1. *Sun-day's palms are Wednes-day's ash - es as an -
2. We have failed to love our neigh - bors, their of -
3. We are hast - y to judge oth - ers, blind to



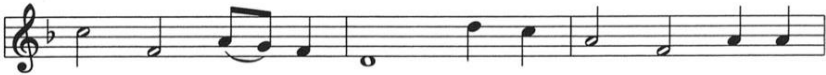
oth - er Lent be - gins; thus we kneel be - fore our
fenc - es to for - give, have not lis - tened to their
proof of hu - man need; and our lack of un - der -



Mak - er in con - tri - tion for our
trou - bles, nor have cared just how they
stand - ing dem - on - strates our in - ner



sins. We have marred bap - tis - mal pledg - es, in re -
live, we are jeal - ous, proud, im - pa - tient, lov - ing
greed; we have wast - ed earth's re - sour - ces; want and



bel - lion gone a - stray; now, re - turn - ing, seek for -
o - ver - much our things; may the yield - ing of our
suf - fering we've ig - nored; come and cleanse us, then re -



give - ness; grant us par - don, God, this day!
fail - ings be our Len - ten of - fer - ings.
store us; make new hearts with - in us, Lord!

Children's Message

Blessing & Imposition of Ashes

Claim and Response: You are—and I am—loved with a forever love.

Response *Spirit of the Living God*

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Psalter Lesson Psalm 46: 10-11 reimagined by Maren Tirabassi

O God, we have been forced to be still and we have found you in so many ways. Please continue to send forth your Holy Spirit and encircle us with your love.

We thank you for showing up in the strangest places.

In the bubbles that form when we wash our hands,

In distant waves from neighbors we haven't seen in ages,

In the earthworms making rich soil where we plant,

In a stunning clear blue sky,

In laughter from a game night shared on Zoom,

In the smell of cooking bacon or fresh strawberries,

And so much more...

We are truly grateful for your constant presence and this blessing within the need to shelter in place—an opportunity to notice! Amen.

Gospel Lesson Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

“Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from our God in heaven. So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and our God who sees in secret will reward you.

“And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to our God who is in secret; and our God who sees in secret will reward you.

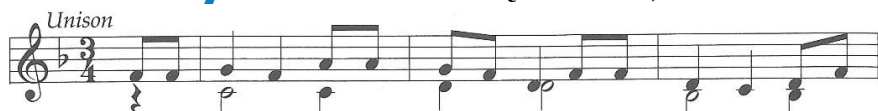
“And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by our God who is in secret; and our God who sees in secret will reward you.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Reflection

Call to Prayer *Come and Find the Quiet Center, v 1*

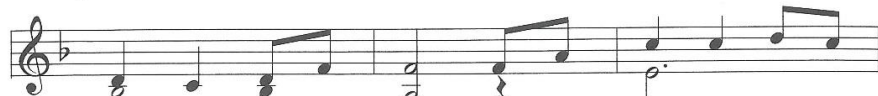
Unison



1. Come and find the quiet cen - ter in the crowd-ed life we
2. Si - lence is a friend who claims us, cools the heat and slows the
3. In the Spir - it let us trav - el, o - pen to each oth-er's



lead, find the room for hope to en - ter, find the
pace, God it is who speaks and names us, knows our
pain, let our loves and fears un - rav - el, cel - e -



frame where we are freed: clear the cha - os and the
be - ing, touch - es base, mak - ing space with - in our
brute the space we gain: there's a place for deep - est



clut - ter, clear our eyes, that we can see all the
think - ing, lift - ing shades to show the sun, rais - ing
dream - ing, there's a time for heart to care, in the



things that real - ly mat - ter, be at peace, and sim - ply be.
cour - age when we're shrink - ing, find - ing scope for faith be - gun.
Spir - it's live - ly schem - ing there is al - ways room to spare!

Pastoral Prayer & Prayers of the People

Lord's Prayer

Our [Creator/Mother/Father/Holy One] 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 and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

[A variety of names for God are welcome here – including in the Lord's Prayer.]

Benediction