



GATHERING OF THE COMMUNITY

PRAYER

Dear God,
Today we celebrate Ash Wednesday
and the beginning of this Lenten season.
We sign with a cross - ashes on our foreheads
to remind us that our bodies are of this earth
and that one day will return to dust.
But more important, the cross and the ashes are placed
on a vessel that houses the Holy Spirit —
that in this earthen vessel is the very presence of God
made visible in our acts of love
and in the tremendous creativity within our human spirits.
Bless us as we begin our Lenten journey
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

*HYMN

#386 Lord Jesus Think on Me SOUTHWELL

PRAYER FOR A TIME OF TURNING ROUND

Truly dust we are, and to dust we shall return;
and truly yours we are, and to you we shall return.
Help this to be a time of turning round
and beginning again.
Through the forty days of Lent, help us to follow you
and to find you: in the discipline of praying
and in the weariness of caring
in whatever we deny ourselves,
and whatever we set ourselves to learn or do.
Help us to discover you
in our loneliness and in community,
in our emptiness and our fulfilment,
in our sadness and our laughter.
Help us to find you when we ourselves are lost.
Help us to follow you on the journey to Jerusalem
to the waving palms of the peoples hope,
to their rejection, to the cross and empty tomb.
Help us to perceive new growth
amid the ashes of the old.
Help us, carrying your cross,
to be signs of your Kingdom.
Amen.

~ written by Jan Sutch Pickard.
(Silence for personal confession and reflection)

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 51:1-17

Response to the reading: "Thanks be to God"

WORDS OF REFLECTION

Becky Bonham

IMPOSITION OF THE ASHES

Our ancestors in the faith
used ashes as a sign of our repentance,
a symbol of the uncertainty and fragility
of human life.
Like them,
we have tasted the ashes of hopelessness;
we have walked through the ashes
of our loss and pain;
we have stood knee-deep
in the ashes of our brokenness.
God of our lives,
out of the dust of creation
you have formed us and given us life.
May these ashes not only be a sign
of our repentance and death,
but reminders that by your gift of grace
in Jesus Christ, our Redeemer,
we are granted life forever with you.
Amen.

~ written by Thom Shuman

A period of silence will follow. Those who wish to do so, may anoint themselves with the sign of the cross placed on their foreheads or hands. The ministers will provide blessings from a distance. The ashes are from palm branches used at Palm Sunday services in the past, mixed with oil.

THE WISDOM OF ASH

**All: There is a wisdom in ash,
that we need so much,
but seldom hear.**

One: It's the wisdom of grief,
that reminds us of our mortality,
and that life is more than this dust can contain.

**All: It's the wisdom of confession,
that brings our darkness out of hiding,
and opens the windows to Light.**

One: It's the wisdom of repentance,
that stops us in our tracks,
and charts the way to Love.

**All: There's a wisdom in ash,
and we welcome it, Jesus,
thankful for the renewing gifts it brings.
Amen.**

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*HYMN

#257 What Wondrous Love Is This WONDROUS LOVE

BLESSING FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

So let the ashes come as beginning and not as end;
the first sign but not the final.

Let them rest upon you as invocation and invitation,
and let them take you the way that ashes know to go.

May they mark you with the memory of fire
and of the life that came before the burning:
the life that rises and returns and finds its way again.
See what shimmers amid their darkness,
what endures within their dust.

See how they draw us toward the mystery
that will consume but not destroy,
that will blossom from the blazing,
that will scorch us with its joy.

~ written by Jan L. Richardson

We are grateful for those who serve with us today:
Video & Sound Technician - Evan Adnams