



ASH WEDNESDAY

February 14, 2024

6:30 p.m.

The Prelude

Maureen Howell

*Ash Wednesday begins the Christian season of Lent. We will spend the coming days journeying with Jesus toward the cross; toward the death that ultimately brings resurrection life. Many of us will spend these coming days practicing a new spiritual discipline or giving up something that seems to be getting in the way of the life we long to live. And tonight, we come together to mark the beginning of this Lenten journey.*

*We come together to acknowledge our sin, to acknowledge our mortality. We come to glimpse the Christ who offers forgiveness, who offers everlasting life.*

*As part of tonight's worship, the imposition of ashes will be offered. This practice may not be familiar to everyone. Ashes have been used in Christian churches to mark the beginning of Lent since at least the 10th Century, and ashes are mentioned in scripture as a symbol of purification and repentance. We offer the imposition of ashes tonight as a physical reminder of our mortality and sin; an assurance of God's forgiveness and salvation.*

The Call to Worship (responsive)

Leah Reed

LEADER: The Lord says, return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;

PEOPLE: **God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger,  
and abounding in steadfast love.**

LEADER: The call of the Lord is heard. The day of the Lord is near.

PEOPLE: **Let us worship God.**

The Invocation

\*The Hymn, 451

“Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy”

ARISE

The Call to Confession

Michael Hood

The Prayer of Confession (unison)

**Have mercy, O God, have mercy on us.  
We have many treasures on earth that we hold too dearly;  
that we withhold from others in need.  
When we sin against neighbor, condone injustice,  
and quarrel with one another, we sin against you.  
Forgive us, we pray, for we are broken in spirit.  
Do not see us for our faults, and do not go away from us.  
Keep us always in your presence  
so that we may be restored to the joy of your salvation.  
Sustain in us a willing spirit to treasure what you desire;  
then our hearts will be opened in joy and gladness.  
In Jesus Christ, our Treasure, we pray. Amen.**

The Silent Confession

The Assurance of Pardon (responsive)

LEADER: The truth is this: God's love and mercy are never-ending. God knows us in our inward being; God cleanses us from our sins and shortcomings, and restores to us the joy of salvation.

PEOPLE: **Thanks be to God!**

We are for - giv - en. We are for - giv - en. Thanks be to  
God. Thanks be to God. We are for - giv - en. We are for -  
giv - en. Thanks be to God. Thanks be to God.

Music: Hal Hopson, 1995

The Hebrew Bible

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Lynn Lingafelt

The Christian Testament

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

The Gospel

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

\*The Hymn

“O God of Love, the Fast You Choose”

KINGSFOLD

**O God of love, the fast you choose is not some great display.  
It's everything we gladly do to serve you day by day.  
It's not a moment set apart when we will mourn our sin;  
For you require a change of heart — a change from what has been.**

**Lord, we confess we often sing that you are our delight,  
Then we go shouting words that sting; we bicker and we fight.  
Oppressing others for our gain, we put our interests first.  
We overlook our neighbors' pain while praying here in church.**

**You teach us what it means to be a church that worships you:  
In setting captive people free, we praise you as you choose.  
In sharing bread with hungry folk, bringing the homeless in,  
And breaking every bitter yoke we worship you again.**

**God, bless us as we journey on to live in loving ways.  
Then darkness will turn into dawn and gloom will turn to praise.  
When justice is our offering, we also will be blest,  
And we will know the fast we bring will be our very best.**

Tune: English traditional  
Text: Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, 2012

The Homily

“Jarring but Hopeful”

Christopher Chapman

## The Invitation to Lenten Discipline (responsive)

LEADER: Friends in Christ, every year at the time of the Christian Passover we celebrate our redemption through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Lent is a time to prepare for this celebration and to renew our life in the paschal mystery. We begin this holy season by remembering our need for repentance, and for the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

PEOPLE: **We begin our journey to Easter with the sign of ashes, an ancient sign, that speaks of the frailty and uncertainty of human life, and marks the penitence of this community.**

LEADER: I invite you therefore, in the name of the Lord, to observe a holy Lent by self-examination, penitence, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, and by reading and meditating on the word of God. Let us bow before our creator and redeemer.

PEOPLE: **Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. May these ashes be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence, so we may remember that only by your gracious gift do we experience everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior.**

ALL: **Amen.**

## The Imposition of Ashes

Tonight we impose ashes in the shape of a cross as we speak the words, "From dust you have come, to dust you will return." The ashes offer a sign of our sinfulness and mortality. That they are imposed in the shape of a cross offers hope for God's gifts of forgiveness and eternal life.

\*The Hymn, 200                      "Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days"                      LAND OF REST

\*The Benediction

\*Those who are able are invited to stand.

\*\*\*\*\*

The opening words about Ash Wednesday are used with permission from [www.spaciousfaith.com](http://www.spaciousfaith.com) by Mennonite pastor Joanna Harader in Lawrence, Kansas. The Prayer of Confession reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from *Feasting on the Word Worship Companion*, © 2013. The Assurance of Pardon is adapted and used with permission from the Process & Faith website, [www.processandfaith.org](http://www.processandfaith.org). The Invitation to Lenten Discipline is reprinted by permission from *Liturgical Year*, © 1992 Westminster/John Knox Press.

The following are reprinted with permission, all rights reserved, under ONE LICENSE #A-708116: *We Are Forgiven*, © 1995, Hal Hopson; *O God of Love, the Fast You Choose* © 2012 Carolyn Winfrey Gillette.