



**Toll free conference call number (844) 855-4444, access code 654132#**

**Worship will also be connected through Facebook Live**

## **ASH WEDNESDAY**

**February 22, 2023, 5:30 pm**

*+Stand as you are able*



### **Welcome**

### **Lighting of the Christ Candle**

### **Centering Music**

#### **+Call to Worship**

We gather together at the edge of a new season.

**We stand together on the cusp of something new.**

Will we wade into self-reflection?

**Will we invite honesty to dance?**

Will we listen for God's invitation?

**Will we seek deeper faith?**

What kind of fast do we choose? What kind of faith will we build?

**We gather together at the edge of a new season.**

Listen, God is speaking.

Let us pray:

#### **+Hymn**

## Call to Confession

Our scripture passage for today tells the story of people who are trying hard to be faithful. They ask God, “God, do you notice? Do you see all the good we’re doing? Are you proud of us?”

It sounds a bit like children seeking parental attention. Did we do a good job?

In those moments we always want to hear God say, “Excellent job, good and faithful servant.” But in today’s scripture, God says to the people, “I want you to seek justice.”

Friends, faith is a constant dance of us asking God, “Am I doing it right?” and, “How can I do better?”

In the prayer of confession we linger in this tension for a moment. We acknowledge that we are works in progress and we ask for God’s help. God may challenge us, but fortunately, God will never abandon us. So let us turn to God in prayer, using the confession printed in your bulletin  
Let us pray:

## Prayer of Confession

Merciful God,

How many times in a day could we choose love?

**How many times could we choose justice?**

How many times could we speak kindly to ourselves?

**How many times could we offer grace?**

How many times, God? And how often do we miss it?

**Forgive us for choosing the path you did not travel.**

Forgive us for hitching our horse to the world’s measure of goodness, instead of yours.

**Return our hearts to you, and guide us continually, even in the parched places.**

With gratitude we pray,

**amen. (Moment of silent prayer)**

## Assurance of Pardon

Family of faith, when a baby is learning to walk, the parents do not criticize the baby for falling. Instead, they celebrate every wobbly step. They applaud every hesitant stand. They whoop and holler when their child lands in their arms.

Surely the same must be true of God. Although we often lose our way and we often choose the wrong thing, I imagine God whoops and hollers with every step in God’s direction.

So hear and believe the good news of the gospel: no matter how many times we fall, no matter how many times we choose the wrong path, God is waiting for us at the end with open arms. We are forgiven. We are invited. We belong.

Thanks be to God for a love like that. Amen.

## Hymn

*O Lord, Hear My Prayer* #471

## Prayer for Illumination

God,

We want to hear your voice. Shout loudly; don't hold back.

Move in our spirits the way you moved over the waters of creation.

We are beginning a new season today, God, and we don't want to begin anything without you.

So speak to us today—

through silence, through scripture, through song.

Speak to us as you spoke to the Israelites so many moons ago.

Speak to us like a gentle breeze or a loud trumpet.

We don't care how, we just long to hear your voice.

So don't hold back.

We are here. We are listening.

Amen.

**Scripture Reading** **Isaiah 58:1-12** Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. <sup>2</sup>Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God.

<sup>3</sup>“Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?” Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. <sup>4</sup>Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. <sup>5</sup>Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? <sup>6</sup>Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? <sup>7</sup>Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

<sup>8</sup>Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. <sup>9</sup>Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, <sup>10</sup>if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. <sup>11</sup>The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. <sup>12</sup>Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

## Homily

## Anthem

## Invitation to Imposition of Ashes

Beloved people of God: every year at the beginning of Lent 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 Christ by acknowledging our need for repentance, and for the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel.

We begin our journey to Easter with the sign of ashes. This ancient sign speaks of the frailty and uncertainty of human life, and marks the penitence of this community. I invite you, therefore, in the name of Christ, to observe a holy Lent by self-examination and penitence, by prayer and fasting, by works of love, and by meditating on God's word.

*Let us pray: God of all that is, you created us from the dust and to the dust we shall return. Let us accept this anointing with ashes as a sign of our penitence and may we carry their remembrance throughout the season of Lent, as we seek you in our lives and in the world. Amen.*

**+Song**      *The Lord Now Sends Us Forth*      #747

## +Benediction

As you leave this place, may God bless you with seeking.  
Seek out the hungry. Seek the weary. Seek the good in every person you pass.  
Seek out the hopeful. Seek the faithful. Seek God in each of us.  
As you seek and as you wonder, may you find what you are looking for.  
In the name of our loving God, who is always seeking us,  
go now in peace. Amen.