

# The Order of Worship

Ash Wednesday

February 17, 2021

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## PRELUDE

*O Lord Throughout These Forty Years*

Cathy Hoefler, Music Director, Salem Lutheran Church

## GATHERING & OPENING WORDS

*by Dan Schifeling, Worship Calls*

Pastor Melissa McDade

St. Paul and Norrisville UMC churches

On Ash Wednesday we begin the journey that is Lent, a forty-day season before Easter (excluding Sundays). During this time, we follow the example of Jesus who was led by the Spirit to a forty-day retreat into the wilderness just before he began his public ministry. There Jesus fasted and prayed in order to learn what God was calling him to do and to build the spiritual strength and integrity to accomplish it. In the same way, we now begin a period of reflection and prayer so that we can learn what it means for us to be Christ's followers, discover what God is calling us to do, and be graced by God to grow in spiritual strength and integrity.

On Ash Wednesday we have the opportunity to be marked by ashes. Ashes are a symbol of our humble humanity and of our tie to an earth which is finite and fractured. Yet ashes are also a symbol of cleansing and rebirth and a sign that, in Christ, we are made new. As we receive ashes, God invites us to turn toward God (which is the meaning of repentance) in order to receive from God a clean heart and a new Spirit.

## CALL TO WORSHIP *(based on Psalm 51)*

Leader: This is the season of Lent, a time when we recognize the ways we have moved away from God, a time when we look deeply into our lives and see the ways we have not lived faithfully. Lent is also a time of reorientation and renewal; a time of turning our hearts and minds back to God.

**People: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love.**

L: God is a God of abundant mercy, who seeks reconciliation with wayward Creation.

**P: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.**

L: God is a God who constantly reaches out to us, inviting us into love, inviting us into life.

**P: Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.**

L: The sacrifice which is pleasing to God is a contrite heart and a spirit of brokenness; let us turn to God humility and faith.

**P: God, you are merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Wash away our guilt, heal our brokenness, and draw us ever closer to you.**

## CALL TO RECONCILIATION

*from Thom Shuman*

The Rev. Todd Smith

Bethel Presbyterian Church

L: On this night, we begin our journey to Easter. Before we can take the first step, we must admit how we have not been faithful to our God. Let us pray together, saying,

## **UNISON PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS**

**We have trouble telling the truth, God of broken hearts, yet we must admit on this night how we have trouble being your people.**

**We may not trample the poor, but we sometimes walk right past them.**

**We don't receive bribes, but we are more privileged than many around us. We trust more in ourselves than in you, and spend far too much time patting ourselves on the back, rather than holding out a hand to others.**

**Where can we go for forgiveness but to you, God of the ashes?**

**When we are greedy, you promise to be gracious.**

**When we have trouble confronting injustice, you stand at our side.**

**When we struggle to seek good, you point us to Jesus, our Brother, our Savior, who shows us how to turn our back on evil to follow him. Amen.**

Silence is kept...

## **ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

L: God refuses to stand far off, but comes close to us – to hear our prayers, to touch our hearts with forgiveness, and to walk with us during this holy season and beyond.

We have no need to go anyplace else, but into the comforting and restoring heart of the One who loves us. Thanks be to God. We are forgiven. Amen.

**OLD TESTAMENT LESSON:** Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Mark Hoefler, Salem Lutheran Church

**ANTHEM**

*"Beautiful Things"*

Salem Lutheran Church Choir

**EPISTLE LESSON:** 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Jackie Amhrein, William Watters UMC

**GOSPEL LESSON:** Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Pastor Betty Lou Deuchler  
Salem Lutheran Church

**A TIME FOR THE CHILD IN EACH OF US**

Pastor Melissa McDade  
St. Paul and Norrisville UMC Churches

**THE MESSAGE**

*Pastor Mark Gorman*

Centre, Ebenezer, and William Watters UMC Churches

**THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES**

*from Thom Shuman*

L: Just yesterday it seems, the palms were fresh and green, held tight in hands as we re-enacted Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. But then they dried, shriveled, became almost too fragile to touch, until we burned them into the ashes for tonight.

Yet, by the grace of our God, with the Spirit resting upon them, they are mixed with oil and placed on our heads, the dust of life resting upon us as a sign that by sharing the gifts of peace, reconciliation, justice, and generosity, we will live into the people we long to become.

Let us pray: As we are touched with this mark, God of all moments, remind us that just as you shaped humanity from earth's dust, so, from the ashes of repentance and denial, that grace which is gifted to us through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, will shape us into faithful followers. Amen.

*Please impose ashes on your forehead, and on your family's foreheads, saying any or all of these statements:*

*Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return.*

*Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ.*

*Repent and believe the Good News: God longs for you to be whole.*

L: Through the cross of Christ, God have mercy on you, pardon you and set you free. Know that you are forgiven and be at peace. God strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in life eternal. Amen.

**PRAYER AFTER THE ASHES** (in unison)

**Gracious God, you created us out of the dust of the earth and breathed into us the breath of life. By your hand we live and to your hands we return when all our days are done.**

**Grant that the awareness of our mortality, symbolized by these ashes, may lead us not to fear, but to faith. In our weakness, teach us to look to you for strength, in our failures, to turn to you and find forgiveness, and in our dying to await the gift of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Let us join in prayer as our Lord taught us:

**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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

**BENEDICTION**

L: Created from dust, held together by God's extravagant love, we turn away from sin, and leave today embracing God's love. Be safe, and go in peace. Amen.

**POSTLUDE**

*"Now is the Time of Grace"*

Cathy Hoefler, Music Director Salem Lutheran Church

For an Ash Wednesday/Lenten offering, we encourage you to go to:

<https://habitatsusq.org/support-us/lent-giving/>

and contribute for the 40 days of Lent,  
then send your offering to Habitat for Humanity Susquehanna  
to help others in our community.