



Church on the Hill
FEBRUARY 14, 2024, 7 PM on ZOOM

ASH WEDNESDAY

The beginning of Lent brings a new invitation- an invitation into a deeper life of faith, an invitation to renewed spirituality, and an invitation into deeper awareness of God and self. This service is designed to carve out space for personal reflection and intention setting at the start, knowing that the more honest we are with our hopes for this season, the more meaningful this season can become. **To mark your sacred space, we suggest lighting a candle.** Settle into your favorite chair, brew some tea, and gather your supplies. Most importantly, turn off your phone notifications so that you can be truly present. **Please have ready:** a candle and lighter, elements for Communion, and ash (temporary tattoo or soil from your garden).

Gathering

Gathering Music

Sean Cotty

Welcome and Announcements

Pastor Sally Ann

As we begin the season of Lent, let us turn inward and tune our hearts. Before an orchestra plays together, they must all tune their instruments—the cacophony of this process may be very loud and create lots of dissonance, but it's a necessary step in the process of creating harmonies and melodies. And so, this Lent, how can you tune the instrument of your heart so that it aligns with God?

Call to Worship

Victor Han

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

Opening Prayer

Pastor Sally Ann

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His love endures forever. **Into your presence we come, Lord a few moments of quietness in a busy world that demands our attention. Breathe on us now that we might know your presence and your power to see this day though.**

Breath Prayer – take a few deep breaths in and out.

I am here. God is here. This space is holy ground

Hymn 295 (vs.1-2)

Breathe on Me, Breath of God

Breathe on me, breath of God, fill me with life anew,
That I may love what Thou dost love, and do what Thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, breath of God, until my heart is pure,
Until with Thee I will one will, to do and to endure.

A Psalm

Bible Study Group

Irma - Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love;

Nancy - According to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

Pearl - Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

Rhoda - For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

Pearl - Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight,

Steve - So that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.

Jeanne - Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Marie - O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

Lynne - You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;

Meryl - The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;

Kim - A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Confession and Forgiveness

Steve and Jeanne Sarran

In the blazing light of your love our failings are illuminated **our failure to give, our failure to love, our failure to follow, our failure to serve, our failure to be the people you would have us be. Forgive us and renew us. You know our nature, you know our failings. Enfold us in your arms that we might daily know your forgiveness and healing love. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, slow to anger and of great kindness.** Psalm 103.8

Hymn 462 (vs. 1)

Lord Jesus Think on Me

*Lord Jesus, think on me, and purge away my sin;
from earth-born passions set me free, and make me pure within.*

Affirmation of Faith

May we know the love of God deep in our hearts. May we understand our significance in the center of God's family, and the bonds that hold us so close as brother and sister. May we understand the lengths that God was prepared to go for all mankind and freely respond in the today which God has given for us to cherish. **Amen.**

Word

Dramatic Scripture Reading

Joel 2: 12-18

Annabelle, Bob, and Sarah White

Focus verse: Joel 2:12-13: *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.*

Hymn 651 (vs. 1-3)

O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee

O Master, let me walk with thee in lowly paths of service free;
Tell me thy secret, help me bear the strain of toil, the fret of care.

Help me the slow of heart to move by some clear, winning word of love;
Teach me the wayward feet to stay, and guide them in the homeward way.

Teach me thy patience; still with thee in closer, dearer company,
In work that keeps faith sweet and strong, in trust that triumphs over wrong.

The Gospel

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Gerry Mendler

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Be careful not to parade your good deeds before men to attract their notice; by doing this you will lose all reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give alms, do not have it trumpeted before you; this is what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win men's admiration. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing; your almsgiving must be secret, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites: they love to say their prayers standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners for people to see them; I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you pray, go to your private room and, when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you. When you fast do not put on a gloomy look as the hypocrites do: they pull long faces to let men know they are fasting. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that no one will know you are fasting except your Father who sees all that is done in secret; and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.' The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Let us pray: **Lord, grant us simplicity of faith and a generosity of service that gives without counting cost. A life overflowing with Grace poured out from the One who gave everything that we might show the power of love to a broken world. And share the truth from a living Word. Lord, grant us simplicity of faith and a yearning to share it. Amen.**

Invitation to Keep Lent Faithfully

Transition Team

Pastor: Dear friends in Christ, every year we celebrate Christ's death and resurrection. Lent is a time to prepare for this celebration. In order that our Lent may be a time of renewal and growth we begin this season by remembering our need for repentance and for the forgiveness of God proclaimed by Jesus Christ. I invite you, therefore, in the name of Christ, to observe a holy Lent by self-examination and repentance, by prayer, fasting, self-denial, and giving to those in need, and by reading and meditating on the word of God. Now, merciful God, we come to you in silence: you already know the wrong that weights us down, the guilt we cannot shake. We ask you to take them from us now and set us free to begin a new life. *Silence is kept*

Dorien: We have not loved you with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven. **Lord have mercy.**

Jerry: We've been deaf to your call to serve. We have been unfaithful, proud, and hypocritical. **Christ have mercy.**

Doris: We have been self-centered, and have taken advantage of others. Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

Larry: We have been envious of those more fortunate than ourselves. Christ have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

Sarah: We have loved worldly goods and comforts too much. We have been dishonest in daily life and work. **Lord have mercy.**

Dorien: We have neglected prayer and worship, and have failed to commend the faith that is in us. **Christ have mercy.**

Jerry: We have been blind to human need and suffering, and indifferent to injustice and cruelty. **Lord have mercy.**

Doris: We have thought uncharitably about others, and we have been prejudiced towards those who differ from us. **Christ have mercy.**

Sarah: We have wasted and polluted your creation, and lacked concern for those who come after us. **Lord have mercy.**

Faith Shape Confession

<https://youtu.be/WLv4iv-CbWY>

Assurance of Pardon

Pastor Sally Ann

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.**

Soloists - Elizabeth and Joe Mahowald

Create in me a clean heart, O God, a clean heart, O God, create in me.

O God, in your goodness have mercy on me, in your compassion wipe out my offense.
Thoroughly wash me from my guilt, and cleanse me from my sins.

For I acknowledge my offense and my sin is always before me;
against only you have I sinned, and done what is evil in your eyes.

A clean heart create for me, O God, a steadfast spirit renew in me.
Cast me not out from your presence, O God. Take not your Holy Spirit from me.

Give us back the joy of our salvation, and renew in us a willing spirit.
O Lord, open my lips, and we will sing your praise.

Ashes and Table

Thanksgiving over the Ashes

Pastor Sally Ann

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence, so we may remember that only by your gracious gift are we given everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Invitation to the Lord's Table

The Deacons

Deacon: Come, as we embark on the dawn of this new season.
Come, as we reflect upon the dusk of our lives.

Deacon: Come, as we set aside our distractions and the concerns of our minds.
Come, as we focus on the heart of the matter.

Deacon: God of light and dust be with you, **and also with you.**
Open wide our hearts: **we open them up to our God.**

Deacon: Let us give thanks to God our creator.

Even in the midst of the wilderness, we give God our praise.

Prayer of Communion

The Elders

Elder: Tonight we come together to recall the magnificent common memories we have of our Christ. **We remember his servant leadership and the unconditional love he had for humankind.**

Elder: Here and now, we give thanks for the steadfast love of God that we see reflected in Jesus the Christ. We are grateful for one another and for all the saints who have come to the table throughout history and to those who will gather here after we have returned to dust. With appreciation, we give thanks to the hands who have harvested the grapes and grains before us. **In a spirit of active thanksgiving, we commit ourselves as servants to God's children, finding new ways of bringing justice, righteousness and love to the shadows on this earth.**

Elder: May the Spirit come upon these elements. May the Spirit fill our hearts with love, kindness and acceptance. May the Spirit continue to aid us in our work in the world and as we cross boundaries of denominations and faith differences. **May the Spirit empower us as we walk through these 40 days in the wilderness, as we face the sadness of the crucifixion and as we wait for the Christ's resurrection.**

Elder: As Jesus continued on his journey, he could see that his time was drawing nearer. Our Christ knew that his love and leadership would take him to the cross. And as the final night was upon him, he drew close to his friends. To embrace the love he had with them, he shared one last table.

Pastor: Jesus embraced the bread in his weathered hands, broke it, and gave it to his friends asking them to remember him.

Jesus clasped the cup containing the fruit of the vine, gave thanks one last time and asked them to remember him.

Elder: In remembering him, we pray: **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.**

Pastor: The bread of life. The cup of the new covenant. Both given to us. Both we partake in together as we remember our servant-leader Jesus the Christ.

Importance of Ashes

Pastor Sally Ann

We begin our journey to Easter with the sign of ashes. This ancient sign speaks of the frailty and uncertainty of human life, and calls us to place our hope in God alone. You are invited, 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 reading and meditating on the Word of God. Ashes have been distributed as temporary tattoos, or you may use soil from your garden mixed with a bit of water. You may place the Ash on your hand or on your forehead in the sign of the cross during the singing of the hymn.

Hymn (sung while imposing your ashes)

With These Ashes

Kathy Douglass

With these ashes, we remember, what we're made of, what we're made of

With these ashes we remember, we are made of dust

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust so it has always been

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, we return again

**Remember that you are God's beloved dust,
and to God's beloved dust you shall return.**

Unison Prayer of Thanksgiving

Nancy Gessner

Even as we come to the table tonight remembering our frailty with the dust on our heads, we also give God our thanks for this meal. We give our gratitude that we have come together as one Body of Christ. In these next 40 days and as we walk the road to the crucifixion, continue to keep us awake to the ways we can bring Jesus the Christ's servant-leadership to our world. Amen.

Communion liturgy written by Michelle Torrigan @ michelletorigian.com.

Instrumental

Fantasia in e-minor (I. Largo)

G.F. Telemann

Soloist - Simon Walsh (Flute)

Closing Prayer

Pearl Liao

Gracious God, out of your love and mercy you breathed into dust the breath of life, creating us to serve you and our neighbors. In this season of repentance, restore to us the joy of our salvation; strengthen us to face our mortality that we may reach with confidence for your mercy; in Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Closing Hymn

Return to God

Marty Haugen

Return to God with all your heart, the source of grace and mercy;
Come seek the tender faithfulness of God
Now the time of grace has come, the day of salvation;
Come and learn now the way of our God. (Refrain)

I will take your heart of stone and place a heart within you,
A heart of compassion and love. (Refrain)

Benediction

Pastor Sally Ann

Blessings, like God's love, are not one-way experiences.

As you have been blessed with the mark of God's love you are now called to go out and bless others.

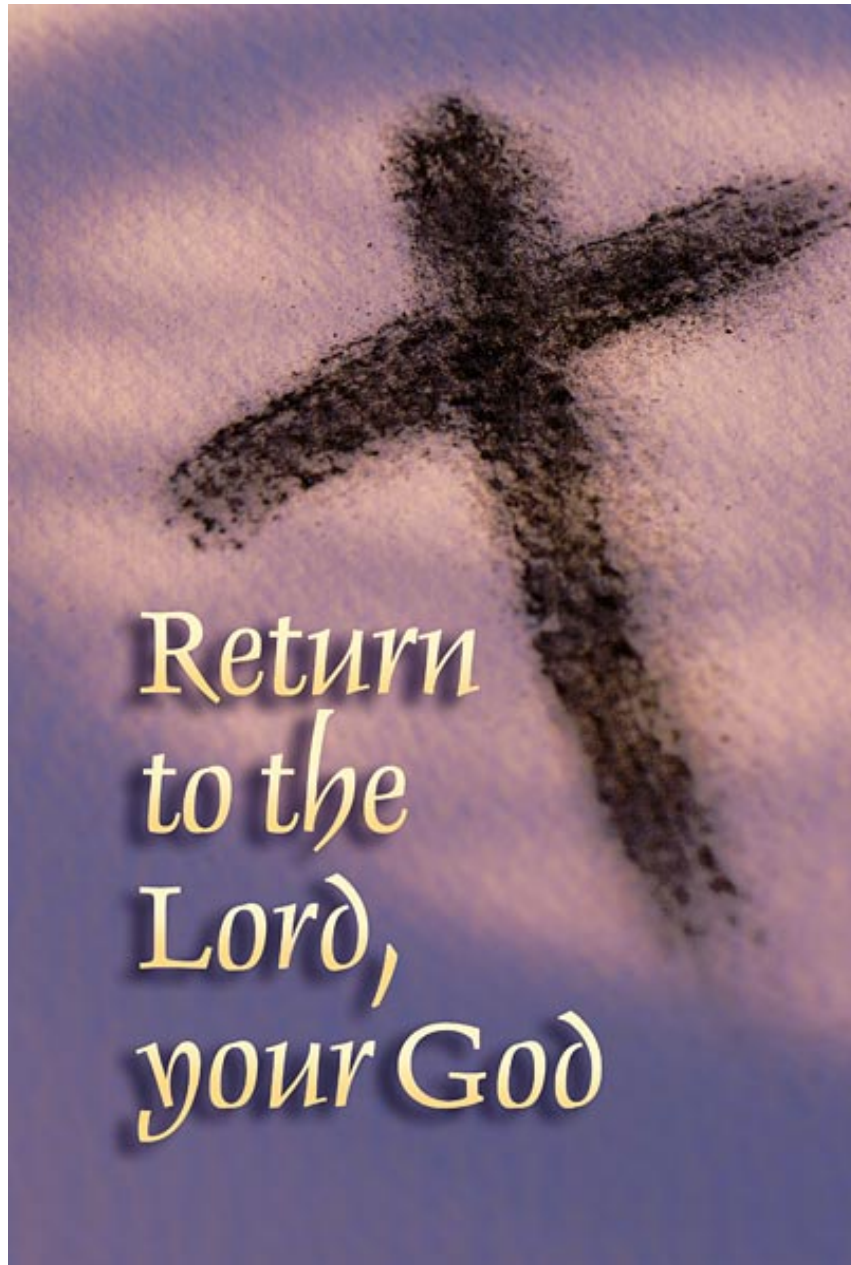
May the God who created you create opportunities of serving others.

May the Christ who teaches you teach you during Lent how to love all.

And may the Spirit of Gentleness be your companion along this Lenten journey.

Amen.

Please depart in silence



Church on the Hill

A congregation of the

Reformed Church in America

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Rev. Sally Ann Castle — Interim Minister

Mr. Sean Cotty — Music Director