

Ash Wednesday Worship

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.
~ Joel 2:12-13

Words of Welcome

Call to Worship

(Joel 2, Ps. 51)

Return to me with all your heart, says the Lord.

We open our hearts to soulful examination.

Return to the Lord who is gracious and merciful.

We open our hearts to God's steadfast love.

With your hearts open to the Lord, what do you seek?

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a right spirit within me.

Hymn

In the Lord, I'll Be Ever Thankful

Insert

Opening Poem/Prayer

A Purification

Wendell Berry

At start of spring I open a trench
in the ground. I put into it
the winter's accumulation of paper,
pages I do not want to read
again, useless words, fragments,
errors. And I put into it
the contents of the outhouse:
light of the sun, growth of the ground,
finished with one of their journeys.
To the sky, to the wind, then,
and to the faithful trees, I confess
my sins: that I have not been happy
enough, considering my good luck;
have listened to too much noise;
have been inattentive to wonders;
have lusted after praise.
And then upon the gathered refuse
of mind and body, I close the trench,
folding shut again the dark, the deathless earth.
Beneath that seal the old escapes into the new.

Prayer of Confession

Eternal and most merciful God, we are children of dust and unworthy of the favors and goodness you shower upon us. We have not loved as you have loved us, nor have we lived as we ought, and our years are soon gone. God, have mercy upon us. Lift us above every past regret and present failure; reveal to us our true selves; and give us grace to accept your mercy and courage to live by your promise. Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; grant us your peace. We have no other hope save in you. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Through grace and forgiveness, the Lord restores the joy of our salvation and sustains in us a willing spirit. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. **Amen.**

Hymn

Create in Me a Clean Heart

Insert

Hearing the Word

Joel 2:12-13

Pastor Trevor

Hymn

O Lord, Hear My Prayer

Insert

Reflecting Upon the Word, and Imposition of Ashes

Please write down on the notecard in your pew a sin that you would like to confess to the Lord. Fold the card. When you are prompted, please come forward and place your card in the bowl on the communion table. When everyone has placed their cards in the bowl, we will light them on fire and turn them to ashes. When you are prompted again, please come forward to receive the imposition of ashes.

Sending Hymn

Bless the Lord My Soul

Insert

Benediction

Allowing for continued meditation and worship, please exit the sanctuary quietly. Greetings may be exchanged after the service in the narthex.

Marked By Ashes *Dr. Walter Brueggemann

Ruler of the Night, Guarantor of the day...

This day — a gift from you.

This day — like none other you have ever given, or we have ever received.

This Wednesday dazzles us with gift and newness and possibility.

This Wednesday burdens us with the tasks of the day, for we are already halfway home

halfway back to committees and memos,

halfway back to calls and appointments,

halfway on to next Sunday,

halfway back, half frazzled, half expectant,

half turned toward you, half rather not.

This Wednesday is a long way from Ash Wednesday,

but all our Wednesdays are marked by ashes —

we begin this day with that taste of ash in our mouth:

of failed hope and broken promises,

of forgotten children and frightened women,

we ourselves are ashes to ashes, dust to dust;

we can taste our mortality as we roll the ash around on our tongues.

We are able to ponder our ashness with

some confidence, only because our every Wednesday of ashes

anticipates your Easter victory over that dry, flaky taste of death.

On this Wednesday, we submit our ashen way to you —

you Easter parade of newness.

Before the sun sets, take our Wednesday and Easter us,

Easter us to joy and energy and courage and freedom;

Easter us that we may be fearless for your truth.

Come here and Easter our Wednesday with

mercy and justice and peace and generosity.

We pray as we wait for the Risen One who comes soon.



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February 18, 2026 Noon