



About ASH WEDNESDAY

Ash Wednesday begins the season of Christian worship and devotion called "**Lent.**" Lent is a season of forty days (excluding Sundays) which comes to an end on "Holy Saturday" (the day before Easter Sunday). The word comes from the Old English word *lengten*, which designated the time of year when the days begin to grow noticeably longer (spring). Historically, Lent has been observed as a "**penitential**" season, as a time, literally, of "penitence" or sorrow for sin. This involves self-examination intended to lead to a renewed awareness of the presence of sin in our lives, and to our making changes in our lives that will increasingly deny sin its power over us. It has traditionally also included the practices of fasting and of works of mercy intended to reacquaint Christians with the suffering and self-sacrifice of Jesus as he went to Jerusalem to die on the cross.

In our Ash Wednesday worship we confront our own **mortality** (the fact that we are creatures and not the Creator), the "power of **sin**" (Romans 3:9) to alienate us from our Creator, and from one another, and our utter dependence on God for our deliverance from this power. We acknowledge with Paul that "*the wages of sin is death,*" but also claim the promise that "*the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Romans 6:23).

A biblical symbol of both our mortality and sin is **ashes**. In the Old Testament we read of how the first human ("Adam") was formed "from the dust of the ground" (Genesis 2:7). There too we read of Abraham referring to himself (Genesis 18:27) as being "but dust and ashes." And we read frequently of those who put on "sackcloth and ashes" as a sign of sorrow for their sins (for example, Esther 4:1).

The **cross** of ashes we receive as a part of this service signifies to us the cross of Christ, and how it frees us from our slavery to sin and death when we take up our own cross and follow him -- conforming our lives to that of Christ's own life -- in the faith and hope that in so following we will come to experience with Christ *unending Easter joy*.

Rev. W. Russell Freeman, Sr.
Pastor

Rev. Emily Kirby
Associate Pastor

Sally Koontz, Organist

12:00 & 7:00 PM

Prelude	<i>“Lord, Who Throughout these Forty Days”</i>	Sally Koontz
Greeting		Rev. Emily Kirby
Prayer and the Lord’s Prayer		Rev. Emily Kirby
New Testament Reading	Matthew 6: 1 – 6; 16 - 21	
Homily	<i>“In the Midst of Death”</i>	Rev. Russell Freeman

Invitation to the Observance of Lenten Discipline

~ Responsive reading

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

the early Christians observed with great devotion
the days of our Lord’s passion and resurrection,
and it became the custom of the Church that before Easter Celebration
there should be a forty-day season of spiritual preparation.

During this season converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism.

It was also a time when a person who had committed serious sins

and had separated themselves from the community of faith

were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness,

and restored to participation in the life of the church.

In this way the whole congregation was reminded

of the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

and the need we all have to renew our faith.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church,

to observe a holy Lent:

by self-examination and repentance;

by prayer, fasting, and self-denial;

and by reading and meditating on God’s Holy Word.

To make a right beginning of repentance,

and as a mark of our mortal nature,

let us now kneel before our Creator and Redeemer.

Thanksgiving over the Ashes

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 that we may remember that only by your gracious gift

are we given everlasting life;

Through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen**

Impositions of Ashes**Special Music***“What Wondrous Love Is This”*

Sally Koontz

Dismissal with Blessing**Going Forth**