

# ASH WEDNESDAY

Rev. Kevin M. Pleas  
Online Worship  
February 17, 2021

## SERVICE OF WELCOME

### PRELUDE

*“Faith” by Mark Hayes*

Adam Peithmann

### CALL TO WORSHIP (Responsive)

Kevin: Our help is in the name of the Lord,

**All: Who made heaven and earth.**

Barbara: Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?

**All: Hope in God; for we shall again praise him, our help and our God.**

### OPENING PRAYER (Unison)

Kevin: Brothers and sisters in Christ, every year at Easter, during the time of the “Christian Passover,” 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 practice with discipline a daily repentance, a daily dying and rising in union with Christ.

Barbara: We begin this season by acknowledging our need for repentance and for the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let us begin with prayer...

**All: O Lord our God, long-suffering and full of compassion, be present with us as we enter this season in which we recall our Savior’s sufferings and celebrate his triumph. Give us your Holy Spirit, so that we acknowledge our sins and implore your pardon, we may also have the strength to deny ourselves and be upheld in times of temptation, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

### OPENING HYMN

*“Come Down, O Love Divine”*

#582

## SERVICE OF REPENTENCE AND FORGIVENESS

### LITANY OF CONFESSION

Kevin: As we prepare to meet Jesus Christ at the table, let us confess to God our brokenness and need.

**All: Gracious God, we come before You a people too nearly conformed to this world and its values.**

Barbara: We fail to develop our God-given abilities, then envy those who do. Too busy for the care of our bodies or the development of our minds and spirits, we neglect the nurture of our own best selves.

**All: We serve, but sometimes with resentment, because we say “Yes” to the most insistent caller more than to You. Expecting too much of ourselves, we resent others who seem not to do their share.**

Kevin: We waffle between weakness that allows others to walk all over us, and defensiveness that ignores the rights of others.

Barbara: We spend our money on that which is not bread and turn our eyes away from images of those who have no bread. Yet we ignore our own hunger and thirst for You and your righteousness.

**All: Transform us by your Spirit and renew our minds. May we find the joy and peace that come from seeking your will, through Jesus, your faithful servant. Amen.**

**RESPONSIVE SCRIPTURE**

“Taken from *Psalm 51*”

*Those who wish to may follow us in making the sign of the cross on your foreheads after each verse, followed by placing your hand over your heart.*

Sung Response: Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Kevin Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love (*sign of the cross...*)  
Barbara According to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.  
Kevin Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.  
Barbara You desire truth in the inward being. Therefore, teach me wisdom in my secret heart.  
Kevin Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Sung Response: Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Barbara Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.  
Kevin Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.  
Barbara Restore to me the joy of your salvation and sustain in me a willing spirit.  
Kevin O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

Sung Response: Create in me a clean heart, O God.

**PRAYER OF HEALING**

Kevin: In our striving to follow Christ, God is a sure and constant presence, never coercing commitment but always inviting it.  
Barbara: God holds before us priorities that emerge from the Word; God enlightens us when our understandings are dim; God beckons us to embody belief in deed; God strengthens us in spirit and truth. It is so that we are loved by God.  
**People: The One whose light illuminates our defects and flaws is the same One who died regardless of them. “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,” offering forever the gift of forgiveness. It is God who said, “Let light shine!” who makes of us what no striving, no system can. It is God’s light, shining in our hearts, that makes us children of light.**

**SERVICE OF THE WORD**

**Scripture Reading**

John 12:1-8 (New Revised Standard Version)

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus’ feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, “Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?” (He said this not because he

cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, “Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.”

**MEDITATION**

*The Mission of Christ*

**PASTORAL PRAYER**

Barbara Papagian

**TIME OF SILENCE**

**OUR LORD’S PRAYER**

**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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

**SERVICE OF COMMUNION**

*All are welcome to join in the sacrament using your own version of the bread and the wine.*

**INVITATION**

**PRAYER OF CONSECRATION**

**WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

**SHARING OF THE BREAD AND THE CUP**

**PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

**For the healing You have given us in the breaking of the bread and the pouring out of the cup, we thank You. For the community that You have restored in us through the sharing of life, we thank You. For the courage and strength that You have promised to us, even as we have honored the ones of courage in our own past, we thank You. Send us forth from this place in love, letting justice be worked out with gentleness and power known in the presence of your Spirit. Amen.**

**CLOSING HYMN**

*“Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days”*

#180

**BENEDICTION**

**POSTLUDE**

*“Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley” arranged by Colin Curtis*

**WHY DO WE GATHER**

Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent with a moving and ancient ceremony that originated in Gaul in the sixth century. Our Ash Wednesday worship service is penitential in nature. It calls upon us to humbly face in ourselves those ways in which we fall short of God’s will for our lives. In this way, we open ourselves to the possibility of God’s healing grace and forgiveness.

The ashes are traditionally produced by burning the dried palms left over from the previous year’s Palm Sunday service. In the burning of the palms, we recognize that those who cheered Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday were some of the same people who called for his crucifixion the following

Friday. Ash Wednesday invites us to recognize that, in much the same way, by our own failures of love and faith, we too participate in the crucifixion of Christ. Yet, as our faith in Christ affirms, all those who come before God seeking forgiveness will be joyfully received.

The service of ashes is one of confession and healing, as well as a rededication to the ministry of Christ. The ashes are placed on the forehead in the sign of the cross as a reminder of Paul's words, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." This year, in recognition of our need to conduct this service virtually, we will not be using actual ashes, but will make the sign of the cross on our foreheads.

**Opening Hymn # 582**

**“Come Down, O Love Divine”**

1. Come down, O Love divine, seek now this soul of mine, and visit it with your own ardor glowing; O Comforter, draw near, within my heart appear, and kindle it, your holy flame bestowing.
2. O let it freely burn, till earthly passions turn to dust and ashes it its heat consuming; and let your glorious light shine ever on my sight, and clothe me round, the while my path illumining.
3. And so the yearning strong, with which the soul will long, shall far out pass the power of human telling; for none can guess its grace, till love creates the place wherein the Holy Spirit makes its dwelling.

**Closing Hymn # 180**

**“Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days”**

1. Lord, who throughout these forty days for us did fast and pray, teach us with you to mourn our sins and close by you to stay.
2. As you with Satan did contend, and did the victory win, O give us strength in you to fight, in you to conquer sin.
3. And thro' these days of penitence, and thro' your passion tide, forevermore, in life and death, O Christ with us abide.
3. Abide with us, that through this life of doubts and hope and pain, an Easter of unending joy we may at last attain!