

Lent & Ash Wednesday

Lent was originally seen as a time of preparation (catechesis) prior to baptism. Candidates for baptism engaged in a period of intensive faith formation that concluded with baptism during the Easter Vigil, which is the Saturday night before Easter Sunday. It was a time of learning the creed of the church and exploring the meaning of baptism. The original two days of fasting was changed to 40 days (not including Sundays) in the fourth century.

Ash Wednesday, which is always 46 days prior to Easter, marks the beginning of Lent. Traditionally ashes are created by burning palm branches from the previous year's Palm Sunday. As a symbol of our mortality and finitude, ashes remind us of our desire to repent (turn back to God). The placing of ashes is accompanied by the phrase, "Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return," (Genesis 3:19). It is a sign of humility, and a reminder of our commitment to following Christ.

According to the *Companion to the Book of Common Worship*, "Ashes on the forehead is a sign of our humanity and a reminder of our mortality. Lent is not a matter of being good, and wearing ashes is not to show off one's faith. The ashes are a reminder to us and our communities of our finite creatureliness. The ashes we wear on our Lenten journey symbolize the dust and broken debris of our lives as well as the reality that eventually each of us will die."



February 14, 2024

WOODLAWN CHAPEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Ash Wednesday, February 14, 2024

11:00 AM & 5:00 PM

Gathering Before God

Call to Worship

Prayer of the Day

Hymn #695

“Change My Heart, O God”

Listening to God’s Word

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17,

2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10, and Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Meditation

Invitation to Observe a Holy Lent

Psalm 51:1-17 (read responsively)

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

Wash me through and through from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my offenses, and my sin is ever before me.

Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are justified when you speak and right in your judgment.

Indeed, I was born steeped in wickedness, a sinner from my mother’s womb.

Indeed, you delight in truth deep within me, and would have me know wisdom deep within.

Remove my sins with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be purer than snow.

Let me hear joy and gladness; that the body you have broken may rejoice.

Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my wickedness.

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

Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

Let me teach your ways to offenders, and sinners shall be restored to you.

Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness.

O LORD, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare your praise.

For you take no delight in sacrifice, or I would give it. You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; a troubled and broken heart, O God, you will not despise.

Offering Ourselves to God

Penitential Prayer (our response will be “*Have mercy on us, O God.*”)

Imposition of Ashes

Hymn #544

“Bless The Lord”

Blessing & Charge