



First Presbyterian
CHURCH OF EASTON



A Service for the Worship of God
March 2, 2022
Ash Wednesday

**Indicates an invitation to rise in body and/or spirit as you are able.*

WE GATHER TO WORSHIP GOD

PRELUDE

Amazing Grace

arr. Gilbert Martin

GREETING

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WE GIVE THANKS TO GOD

INVITATION TO LENTEN DISCIPLINE

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the season in the church year known as Lent. Lent is a time to prepare for the celebration of Easter – when we mark and celebrate the mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We begin our journey to Easter with the sign of ashes, a biblical symbol of mourning and remorse. This ancient symbol of ashes and dust speaks of the fragility of human life and our need to be humble.

We invite you, therefore, in the name of Christ, to observe a holy Lent – by self-examination and reflection, by commitment to doing good, by prayer and fasting, by works of love, and by reading and meditating on the Word of God – beginning with this service today.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come to the Lord your God,

for God is gracious.

Confess to the Lord your God,

for God is merciful.

Repent to the Lord your God,

for God is slow to anger.

Praise the Lord your God,

for God abounds in steadfast love.

Worship the Lord your God.

Together, let us worship God!

*HYMN No. 403, V.1-3

What a Friend We Have in Jesus

What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged:
Take it to the Lord in prayer!
Can we find a friend so faithful,
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness;
Take it to the Lord in prayer!

Are we weak and heavy laden,
Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge –
Take it to the Lord in prayer!
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In His arms He'll take and shield thee,
Thou wilt find a solace there.

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalms 103

LITANY OF GRIEF

We are mortal. Death has been and is all around us. We cannot escape how fragile and frail we are: Covid has taken our loved ones. Five million, nine hundred fifty-six thousand, five hundred nine lives have been lost across our globe.

We are dust and to dust we shall return.

War looms. We become newly and acutely aware of the harm of violent conflict as we see war in Ukraine. War and violent conflict means people are displaced, families torn apart, and the rhythms of work, worship and everyday living are utterly disrupted. In war, lives are lost.

We are dust and to dust we shall return.

Our bodies are fragile. We are mindful of injuries and illness in all our lives and in the lives of loved ones. We are flesh and blood, we break and we bleed.

We are dust and to dust we shall return.

We are getting older. Many of us juggle doctor appointments and ongoing medical concerns as well as feeling the aches and pain of aging.

We are dust and to dust we shall return.

We are tired and stressed. Our frailty is not only in our human body but in our human heart, mind and souls. Loss weighs upon us. Burdens of human needs for food and security are real. Struggles with addictions and mental wellness are undeniable realities.

We are dust and to dust we shall return.

ASSURANCE OF GRACE

We are made of the dust and the dirt of God's creation and to dust and ashes we will return. We walk with Christ in Lent, we witness his hunger in the wilderness, we watch as he endures betrayal, trial, and death, and finally we stand at the stone rolled in front of his tomb. We know there is more to the journey – death will not have the last word – but we pause, name our mortality, grieve our loss, and put our trust in God.

ANTHEM

Wineskins in the Smoke

R. Gelson

"Though I am like a wineskin in the smoke, I do not forget your decrees." -Psalm 119

Wineskins in the smoke...dried up empathy, depleted hope. Thirsty is the nation.

Who's going to serve the best for the last? Is anyone blameless? Is everyone blessed?

Is anybody forsaken who is steadfast? In whom do we delight?

We who are dust? What promises preserve? What decrees guide us?

Wineskins in the smoke...dried up empathy, depleted hope. Thirsty is the nation.

Who's going to serve the best for the last? Are any of you longing? Are any of you living?

Wineskins in the smoke...dried up empathy, depleted hope. Thirsty is the nation.

Who is going to serve the best for the last? Take, drink, remember...

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 51:1, 10-12

LITANY OF CONFESSION

Creator God, you fashioned us out of dust, breathing your Spirit into us, so we might sing your praise.

But we have denounced your gift of life in order to be our own gods, clinging to death-dealing idols of our own making. We have denied our creaturely status, seeking to lord it over those we label "less-than".

Cleanse our hearts and breathe your life-giving Spirit into us.

We squelch all who are different through ignoring, belittling, murdering, and bombing. We believe survival-of-the-fittest lies, discounting the weak, and profiting by others' pain.

Cleanse our hearts and breathe your life-giving Spirit into us.

Not trusting in your providence, we stop our ears to cries of those in need because we're afraid we won't have enough. We have been unfaithful stewards, O Lord. We live in a state of sin among a people of sin.

Cleanse our hearts and breathe your life-giving Spirit into us.

Save for your grace, we perish. Remember our making, Creator-God; remember we are dust.

SILENT CONFESSION OF SIN

Have mercy on us according to your loving kindness. Breathe new life into us once more, so we might be the people you created us to be. Restore unto us the joy of your salvation that we might do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Those who so desire may come forward to receive an imposition of ashes as a sign of penitence not only for our individual sin, but also in recognition of our complicity in the sin of the world.

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 19:17

PRAYER OF HOPE

We are hopeful...

Acknowledging our mortality... God offers to make all things new. God gave us life. Let us trust the promises of life everlasting God offers us in Christ.

Repentant of our sin... God offers to make all things new. God created us for good. God calls us to repent and turn from sin. We see the depth of God's forgiving grace, in Christ.

In the challenges of our lives today, God offers to make all things new. The God who breathes life into dust to make humankind; the God who overcomes death in Easter glory – this God can refresh and refill us.

Let us turn to God aware of our mortality and repentant of our sin – with rising hope that our dry and dusty lives are never without hope.

*HYMN 81, V. 1-4

Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days

Lord, who throughout these forty days
For us didst fast and pray,
Teach us with Thee to mourn our sins,
And close by Thee to stay.

As Thou with Satan didst contend,
And didst the victory win,
O give us strength in Thee to fight,
In Thee to conquer sin.

And through these days of penitence,
And through Thy Passion-tide,
Yea, evermore, in life and death,
O Lord, with us abide.

Abide with us, that so, this life
Of suffering overpast,
An Easter of unending joy
We may attain at last!

WE GO IN GOD'S NAME

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days

arr. Willan

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Worship Leaders

Rev. Stefanie Muntzel

Rev. Rich Gelson

Gloria Snyder, Organist

Elizabeth Campbell, Chancel Choir Director

Tech Support: Jacob Van Norman, Bill Bartlett, Rich Linnell, Pat Koefoed, Luke McGloughlin

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Psalm 103

As far as east is from west—that's how far God has removed our sin from us. Like a parent feels compassion for their children— that's how the Lord feels compassion for those who honor him. Because God knows how we're made. God remembers we are dust. The days of a human life are like grass: they bloom like a wildflower; but when the wind blows through it, it's gone; even the ground where it stood doesn't remember it. But the Lord's faithful love is from forever ago to forever from now for those who honor him.

Psalm 51:1, 10-12

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Matthew 19:17

No one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the old skins would burst from the pressure, spilling the wine and ruining the skins. New wine is stored in new wineskins so that both are preserved.