

## Ash Wednesday 2023

Lent is a season of 40 days, not counting Sundays, that begins on Ash Wednesday and ends the day before Easter.

Ash Wednesday emphasizes a dual encounter: we confront our own mortality – and because of that, we come before God with a desire for wholeness, healing and reconciliation.

Lent is the time to take the time

To let the power of our faith story take hold of us,

A time to let the events

Get up and walk around in us,

A time to intensify

Our living unto Christ

A time to hover over

The thoughts of our hearts

A time to place our feet in the streets of Jerusalem

Or to walk along the sea and listen to his word,

A time to touch his robe

And feel the healing surge through us,

A time to ponder and a time to wonder...

Ann Weems *Kneeling in Jerusalem*

Responsive Reading based on Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

L: Blow the ram's horn trumpet in Zion! Trumpet the alarm on my holy mountain! Shake the country up!

**P: GOD's Judgment's on its way--the Day's almost here!**

L: But there's also this, it's not too late-- GOD's personal message to you is: "Come back to me and really mean it! Come fasting and weeping, sorry for your sins! Change your life not just you clothes.

**P: God is kind and merciful.**

L: He takes a deep breath, puts up with a lot,

**P: This most patient God, extravagant in love, always ready to redeem His people.**

L: Who knows? Maybe he'll do it now, maybe he'll turn around and show pity. Maybe, when all's said and done, there'll be blessings full and robust from your GOD!

**P: Blow the ram's horn trumpet in Zion! This is a holy day of repentance.**

Opening Hymn: "God of Grace and God of Glory" UMH 577

Opening Prayer:

We come here, Lord, to look inside, deeper inside than we are totally comfortable with. It's tough to be honest. We fear the truth that might be discovered and wonder what we'll do with the mess. We don't really know if we have what it takes to be authentic inside and out. As we start

this Lenten journey, give us strength and courage to face what may be in the closet. Thank you for the promise of your presence, the promise of real life for all who dare to come clean. You felt so strongly about this that you gave your very life to make it possible. We thank you. Amen.

Special Music: "Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days" UMH 269

Scripture 2 Kings 14:23-25

Hymn: "Just As I Am, Without One Plea" UMH 357

Scripture Luke 14:11

Imposition of the ashes:

The Peace

Let us offer one another signs of reconciliation and love.

Offering

Silent Prayer

Prayer

Tonight we receive the smudges of ashes. We come forward and are marked as disciples, as those who have been called, cleansed, forgiven, and healed. We do not step foot on this journey lightly - for it will not be easy. There will be times of great joy and wonder; and there will be times of confusion and fear. But through all of this, God you are with us, guiding, comforting, leading us. We have raised in prayer names of those we love who need your healing mercies, O Lord. We have lifted up situations of pain, loneliness in confidence of your amazing grace. Though the night is dark, and there is much darkness in the world, we will place our trust in your Son, whom you have blessed and given to us. Help us to follow in His steps and place our trust in Him as we enter this Lenten journey; for it is in His name that we pray. AMEN.

Depart in Silence