Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. O cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit.

Psalm 51: 10-12

PRAYER OVER THE ASHES

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Those who desire to be marked with ashes in the form of a cross may come to the communion rail. You may leave an offering of money on the communion rail for the church’s ministry. The following hymns are sung during the imposition of ashes:

402 Lord, I Want to Be a Christian
356 When We Are Living
382 Have Thine Own Way, Lord
354 I Surrender All

PRAYER AFTER THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES

The good in us, O Lord, comes from you. Out of the ashes of our lives and our world, you are able to form something holy and new. We give ourselves to you for this Lenten journey. Give us grace for the commitments we make. Bear fruit within us, that we may be holy, and make our lives the seeds of justice in this world. Amen.

*BENEDICTION

With the ash of repentance, we have entered Lent. With contrite hearts, we await our Lord. Go forth and make preparations to receive the power of God.

*HYMN 269 Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days

ASH WEDNESDAY
February 26, 2020
7:30 p.m.

Will You Meet Us?

Will you meet us in the ashes will you meet us in the ache and show your face within our sorrow and offer us your word of grace:

That you are life within the dying that you abide within the dust that you are what survives the burning that you arise to make us new.

And in our aching you are breathing and in our weeping you are here within the hands that bear your blessing enfolding us within your love.
TONIGHT WE BEGIN IN SILENCE.
Asterisks (*) indicate stand as you are able.

CALL TO WORSHIP
Now is the time to return to God,
for we are God’s creation.
Now is the time to repent of our sin,
for we live each day with brokenness.
Now is the time to choose our fast,
for justice will not come on its own.
Now is the time to depend on God’s grace.
Now we submit to God’s time, God’s work.

HYMN
Sunday’s Palms Are Wednesday’s Ashes

OPENING PRAYER
We turn to you, God of life, on this first day of Lent,
as we recall our own mortality,
pride,
and complicity with evil,
especially the evil of racism.
With hearts torn open by our actions,
we need your guidance and your healing forgiveness.
Ready us to receive your mercy and grace,
and cleanse us of the ash of human failing.
Give us courage to choose the fast
that will produce justice for all of your beloved creatures.
Amen.

SCRIPTURE
Isaiah 58:1-12

SERMON
Choosing

INVITATION TO LENTEN DISCIPLINES
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 the Easter celebration
there should be a forty-day season of spiritual preparation.
As we continue this ancient practice,
we turn our focus to our need
to connect our inward spiritual work
with the work of racial justice.
We are reminded that the evidence of a fruitful spiritual life
is a life that exudes love,
works for justice,
and embodies the humility of Christ.
I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church,
by self-examination, honesty, and repentance
for your participation in racism;
by prayer and fasting from denial, despair, and defensiveness;
and by reading and meditating on God’s Holy Word,
which calls us to a new way of living.
As a mark of our humble, mortal nature,
and to begin the hard work of honest repentance,
let us confess our sin.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION
O God,
we confess that the sin of racial hatred and prejudice
distorts your divine plan for our human lives.
You created us in divine likeness, diverse and beautiful;
in every person,
every race is your image.
But too often we fail to recognize your image in all;
forgive us.
You created us in divine freedom, to be free;
in every decision,
every choice is your possibility of justice.
But too often we fail to choose
to advocate for your justice for all;
forgive us.
You created us for divine abundance, to tend and share;
in every garden,
every social structure is your seed of community.
But too often we fail to create
that community which includes all
and gives to all equal access to your abundant life;
forgive us.
Open our eyes to distinguish good from evil.
Open our hearts to desire good over evil.
Strengthen our wills to choose good over evil,
so that we may create among us
your beloved community.

SILENT PRAYER

WORDS OF ASSURANCE
Hear the good news:
God’s gift of grace in Jesus Christ
forgives us and sets us free
to live full human lives in community.
We may go forth confident of the grace
to see with new eyes beyond racial prejudice;
to imagine with renewed fervor justice and mercy for all,
and to create with a new will a community
where all are given access to God’s abundant life.