ASH WEDNESDAY
February 26, 2020
7:00 a.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.
Today the service begins 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 justice will not come on its own._

Now is the time to choose our fast,
_for the day will come when it is too late._

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,
_to observe a holy Lent:_
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.
Strength 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._

_Old Testament, page 652_