

About today's Ash Wednesday service

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of a powerful journey to the cross and the empty tomb. Today's service allows us to look inward and discover that we are mortal people who have sinned against God and our neighbor.

Ash Wednesday emphasizes repentance and reflection as we confront our own mortality and confess our sin before God. It then moves us toward renewal as we see our sin and death in the light of God's redeeming love in Jesus Christ.

Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins today on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. Lent comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *lencten*, which means, "spring."

The season is a preparation for celebrating Easter. Historically, Lent began as a period of fasting and preparation for baptism by converts and then became a time for penance by all Christians.

Because Sundays are always known as "little Easters," the penitential spirit of Lent should be balanced with joyful expectation of the Resurrection.

This year for Lent, we know that the journey to the cross will be a different one; COVID has caused us to be creative in how we observe not only Ash Wednesday but also Holy Week. We do hope you will remain engaged on the journey with Jesus and with us throughout this season. All throughout Lent we will be continuing to read and preach through the Gospel of John, learning lessons along the way from Jesus in that Upper Room in Jerusalem.

Join us to experience the life that comes from the Light of the World!

St. James UMC | 321 Pleasant Valley Drive | Little Rock, AR 72212
www.StJamesLR.org

ASH WEDNESDAY

February 17, 2021

Opening Voluntary

Be Thou My Vision

Larry Visser

† Greeting

One: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins.

All: God's mercy endures forever.

† Hymn No. 269

Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days

LAND OF REST

Opening Prayer

UMH No. 353

O God,
maker of every thing and judge of all that you have made,
from the dust of the earth you have formed us
and from the dust of death you would raise us up.
By the redemptive power of the cross,
create in us clean hearts
and put within us a new spirit.
that we may repent of our sins
and lead lives worthy of your calling;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Litany of Penitence

Holy and merciful God,
we confess to you and to one another,
and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth,
that we have sinned by our own fault in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart, mind, and strength.
We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven.
Have mercy on us, O God.

We have not listened to your call to serve as Christ served us.
We have not been true to the mind of Christ.
We have grieved your Holy Spirit.
Have mercy on us, O God. *Silence*

We confess to you, O God, all our past unfaithfulness:
the pride, hypocrisy, and impatience in our lives,
we confess to you, O God.

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways
and our exploitation of other people,
we confess to you, O God.

Our anger at our own frustration
and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves,
we confess to you, O God.

Our excessive love of worldly goods and comforts,
and our dishonesty in daily life and work,
we confess to you, O God.

Our negligence in prayer and worship,
and our failure to commend the faith that is in us,
we confess to you, O God. *Silence*

O God, for the wrongs we have done,
for our neglect of human need and suffering
and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,
accept our repentance, O God.

For all false judgments,
for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors,
and for our prejudice and contempt
toward those who differ from us,
accept our repentance, O God.

For our waste and pollution of your creation
and our lack of concern for those who come after us,
accept our repentance, O God. *Silence*

Restore us, O God, and let your anger depart from us.
Favorably hear us, O God, for your mercy is great. Amen.

Anthem Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God Carl Mueller
The Chancel Choir
Previously recorded February 10, 2019

Scripture Reading John 11:45-53

This is the Word of God for the people of God.
Thanks be to God.

Meditation Reverend Carness Vaughan
**Life in the Gospel of John:
The Turn**

Invitation to the Observance of Lenten Discipline

Thanksgiving Over the Ashes

Almighty God,
you have created us out of the dust of the earth.
Grant that these ashes may be to us
a sign of our mortality and penitence,
so that we may remember that only by your gracious gift
are we given everlasting life;
through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

† Benediction

† Closing Voluntary Here I Am, Lord Janet Linker

Leading in Worship

Reverend Carness Vaughan - *Senior Pastor*
Reverend Claire Caldwell - *Senior Associate Pastor*
Reverend Greg Schick - *Associate Pastor of Connections*
Kira Keating - *Director of Music & Worship*
Robert Lindley - *Organist & Associate Director of Music*