

St. John United Church of Christ

Arlington Heights, Illinois



Ash Wednesday
February 22, 2023



Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the season of Lent in the Christian Church. The 40 days of Lent (not counting Sundays) is a period focused on self-reflection and repentance – turning our lives towards God.

On Ash Wednesday we are marked with the sign of our humble beginning and common end: *“From dust you came, and to dust you shall return.” Ecclesiastes 3.20*

Gathering Music

Call to Worship (Leader and People)

The world around us is upside down—
violence, hatred, natural disaster, poverty, hunger!

Have mercy Lord!

Our own lives are often upside down —
afflictions, hardships, sleepless nights, transgressions!

Have mercy Lord!

We know that our world is broken.

We know that we are broken.

God calls out, “Return to me, return to me with all your heart!”

We gather before you and call out to you,

“Have mercy on us and on our world, O God. Have mercy on us!”

Prayer of Preparation (Unison)

Holy God, we embark on this Lenten journey grateful for your presence along the way. Walk alongside us to call us to repentance, to woo us from our idols, to open our eyes to our neighbor in need, to guide us in the way of sacrifice.

Meet us in our fears and joys alike and sustain us in our weakness.

Pour out your Spirit upon us, that these 40 days might become for us a journey that renews our hope, strengthens our faith and prepares us for the agony of the cross as well as the new life of resurrection. Amen.

Opening Hymn #211

Lord Jesus, Who through Forty Days

First Reading Joel 2.1-2, 12-13

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain!

Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near—

² a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness!

Like blackness spread upon the mountains a great and powerful army comes;
their like has never been from of old, nor will be again after them in ages to come.

¹² Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing.
Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger,
and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.

Response

Change My Heart, O God

Change my heart oh God
Make it ever true
Change my heart oh God
May I be like You

You are the potter
I am the clay
Mold me and make me
This is what I pray

Chorus

CCLI Song # 1565 Eddie Espinosa © 1982 Mercy / Vineyard Publishing (Admin. by Integrity Music)
For use solely with the SongSelect® Terms of Use. All rights reserved. www.ccli.com CCLI License
3266027

Psalm of Confession (Leader and People)

Psalm 51.1-17

¹ Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.
² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

³ **For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.**

⁴ **Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgement.**

⁵ **Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.**

⁶ You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.

⁹ Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

¹⁰ **Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.**

¹¹ **Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.**

¹² **Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.**

¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

¹⁵ **O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.**

¹⁶ **For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt-offering,
you would not be pleased.**

¹⁷ **The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart,
O God, you will not despise.**

Response #188

Give Me A Clean Heart

Second Reading

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

'Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

'So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

'And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Musical Offering Come as You Are

CCLI Song # 7017790 Ben Glover | David Crowder | Matt Maher © 2014 Ariose Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing) sixsteps Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing) Thankyou Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing) Valley Of Songs Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing) worshiptogether.com songs (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing) For use solely with the SongSelect® Terms of Use. All rights reserved. www.ccli.com CCLI License # 3266027

Reflection

Imposition of Ashes

When you are ready, you are welcome to come forward and receive the ashes on your forehead or the back of your hand.

Prayer (Unison)

Loving God, you created us from the dust of the earth. We have been told that to dust we must all one day return. May these ashes be for us a sign of our penitence and our mortality, and a reminder of your promise of eternal life. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Closing Hymn #100

All Praise Be Yours, My God, This Night

Benediction

Postlude