

Observing Ash Wednesday

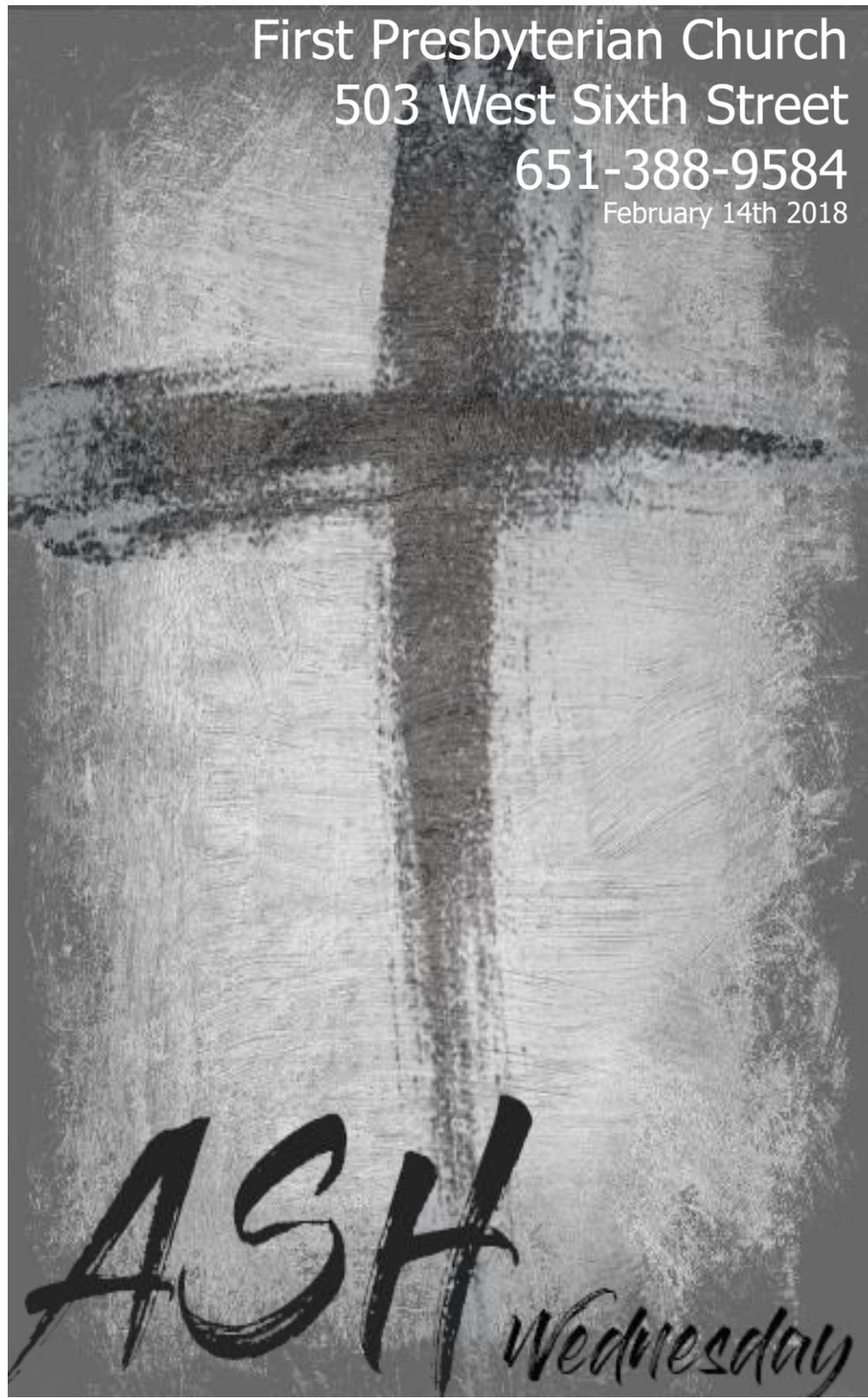
Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, a time in the church calendar where we undergo a discipline that helps us become better disciples. Lent was traditionally a time set aside for catechumens to learn about the faith before their Easter baptism. Although you'll hear people talk about giving something up for Lent, giving something up for Lent is like pruning dead branches off a plant so that energy can be directed toward new growth. Lent isn't about dying; it's about discipline so that new life can emerge, which sometimes means dying to what is dead (and death-dealing) in and among us so that there is room for the vigor of new life.

Traditional Ash Wednesday services include an imposition of ashes, which is the marking of an ashen cross on our foreheads with the pastor's thumb dipped in a little olive oil mixed with the ashes of last year's Palm Sunday branches. The elements used for the imposition of ashes are important to note. In the ancient world people used ashes to symbolize their mourning upon a death and to signify sorrow for their sins. Olive oil was used to anoint people at death, to help with childbirth, to light lamps and to wash. Perfumed olive oil was used to anoint prophets, priests and kings for service to God. Notice the double meaning of both the olive oil and ashes, meanings pertaining to both life and death.

The mark of the cross upon the forehead is God's mark of grace upon us that we might not die even though we are obvious sinners. Indeed, the sign of the cross, spiritually branded upon us at our baptism, marks us as God's own beloved, sealing us against the deadly power of the Adversary. Through the grace of Christ, we are destined ultimately for life, not death. Though the words during the imposition of ashes remind us of our mortality ("Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return"), they are uttered simultaneously with the sign of the cross to remind us of our baptism into Christ's mortal death and life eternal.

First Presbyterian Church
503 West Sixth Street
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February 14th 2018



ASH
Wednesday

GATHERING AROUND THE WORD

(Please find your seat in silence. There is information on the last page of the bulletin about Ash Wednesday if you would like to read this during your time of reflection before worship.)

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Return to the Lord your God,

Many: for God is gracious.

One: Confess to the Lord your God,

Many: for God is merciful.

One: Repent to the Lord your God,

Many: for God is slow to anger.

One: Praise the Lord your God,

Many: for God abounds in steadfast love.

One: Worship the Lord your God.

Many: Together, let us worship God!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

THE WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

FIRST READING

Psalm 23

CHOIR ANTHEM

“Order My Steps”

SECOND READING

1 Peter 2: 1-18

*HYMN #415

“Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy”

GOSPEL READING

John 10: 1-18

One: The Word of the Lord.

Many: Thanks be to God!

INVITATION TO THE OBSERVANCE OF THE LENTEN DISCIPLINE

Merciful God, we have sinned

in what we have thought and said, in the wrong we have done and in the good we have not done.

We have sinned in ignorance: we have sinned in weakness: we have sinned through our own deliberate fault.

We are truly sorry.

We repent and turn to you.

Forgive us, for our Savior Christ's sake, and renew our lives to the glory of your name. Amen.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

People are invited to come forward to receive the imposition of ashes.

SENDING

*HYMN #433

“Sign Us with Ashes”

BLESSING AND CHARGE

All silently depart

Order My Steps, arr. Jack Schrader

Order my steps in your Word, dear Lord,
Lead me, guide me, every day.
Send your anointing, Father, I pray.
Order my steps in your Word, please,
Order my steps in your Word.

Humbly I ask Thee, teach me your will,
While You are working, help me be still.
Tho' Satan is busy, God is real!
Order my steps in your Word, please,
Order my steps in your Word!

I want to walk worthy, my calling to fulfill:
Please order my steps, Lord,
Order my steps, and I'll do your blessed will.
The world is ever changing, but You are still the same,
If You order my steps, I'll praise your name.

Order my steps in your Word,
Order my tongue in your Word;
Guide my feet in your Word,
Wash my heart, O Lord, in your Word.
Show me how to walk in your Word,
Show me how to talk in your Word.
When I need a brand new song to sing,
Show me how to let your praises ring, in your Word!
Please, order my steps in your Word.



TIME OF SILENCE

(Silence is kept for reflection and self-examination.)

PSALM 51

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving-kindness; in your great compassion blot out my offenses.
- 2 **Wash me through and through from my wickedness and cleanse me from my sin.**
- 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.
- 4 **Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.**
- 5 And so, you are justified when you speak and upright in your judgment.
- 6 **Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth, a sinner from my mother's womb.**
- 7 For behold, you look for truth deep within me, and will make me understand wisdom secretly.
- 8 **Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure; wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.**
- 9 Make me hear of joy and gladness, that the body you have broken may rejoice.
- 10 **Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.**
- 11 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.
- 12 **Cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me.**
- 13 Give me the joy of your saving help again and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.
- 14 **I shall teach your ways to the wicked, and sinners shall return to you.**
- 15 Deliver me from death, O God, and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness, O God of my salvation.
- 16 **Open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.**
- 17 Had you desired it, I would have offered sacrifice, but you take no delight in burnt offerings.
- 18 **The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**

LITANY OF PENITENCE

Let us kneel or sit and in silence call to mind our sin and the infinite mercy of God.

(silence)

- We have not loved you with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength.**
We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven.
Lord have mercy.
Lord have mercy.
- We have been deaf to your call to serve.**
We have been unfaithful, proud, and hypocritical. Christ have mercy.
Christ have mercy.
- We have been self-centered and have taken advantage of others. Lord have mercy.**
Lord have mercy.
- We have been envious of those more fortunate than ourselves.**
Christ have mercy.
Christ have mercy.
- We have loved worldly goods and comforts too much.**
We have been dishonest in daily life and work. Lord have mercy.
Lord have mercy.
- We have neglected prayer and worship and have failed to commend the faith that is in us. Christ have mercy.**
Christ have mercy.
- We have been blind to human need and suffering, and indifferent to injustice and cruelty. Lord have mercy.**
Lord have mercy.
- We have thought uncharitably about others, and we have been prejudiced towards those who differ from us. Christ have mercy.**
Christ have mercy.
- We have wasted and polluted your creation and lacked concern for those who come after us. Lord have mercy.**
Lord have mercy.

**Please rise in body or spirit*