The background of the poster is a stylized, textured flame in shades of orange, red, and yellow. The flame is composed of several pointed, overlapping shapes that create a sense of movement and heat. The overall color palette is warm and dramatic, with the flame's colors contrasting against a dark, almost black background at the bottom.

# ASH

WEDNESDAY

February 18, 2026

On Ash Wednesday we begin our forty-day journey toward Easter with a day of fasting and repentance. Marking our foreheads with dust, we acknowledge that we die and return to the earth. At the same time, the dust traces the life-giving cross indelibly marked on our foreheads at baptism. While we journey through Lent to return to God, we have already been reconciled to God through Christ. We humbly pray for God to make our hearts clean while we rejoice that “now is the day of salvation.” Returning to our baptismal call, we more intentionally bear the fruits of mercy and justice in the world.

***Welcome in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!***

Our worship follows a traditional order inspired by scripture and rooted in ancient patterns. The full order for worship (liturgy) is found in this bulletin.

\*Please stand as you are able. Spoken congregational responses are in **Bold**.

**GATHERING**

*Worship begins with the organ prelude. It's a time for silent meditation as we turn our hearts and minds to God.*

**\*CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever. **Amen.**

Let us return to God, confessing our sin in the assurance of God's abiding love.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Compassionate One, **you are slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, but our lives do not always reflect you and your love for the world. We do not show others the tender compassion you have shown to us. We do not welcome others with the radical hospitality you grant to all people. We**

**oppress others, even though you have set us free again and again. We squander the abundant gifts of the earth. Transform our lives and guide us again in the way of the cross. Amen.**

Beloved in Christ, God's arms are always stretched open wide to welcome the wandering ones home. In ☩ Christ your sins are forgiven. You have a place in God's house forever. **Amen.**

\*GATHERING HYMN -

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross ..... Hymn 803

\*GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

\*PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty and ever-living God, you hate nothing you have made, and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and honest hearts, so that, truly repenting of our sins, we may receive from you, the God of all mercy, full pardon and forgiveness through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### THE WORD OF GOD

FIRST READING - Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

*Because of the coming Day of the LORD, the prophet Joel calls the people to a community lament. The repentant community reminds God of his gracious character and asks God to spare the people, lest the nations doubt God's power to save.*

<sup>1</sup>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— <sup>2</sup>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.  
<sup>12</sup>Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD, your God? <sup>15</sup>Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; <sup>16</sup>gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her canopy. <sup>17</sup>Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep. Let them say, "Spare your people, O LORD, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, 'Where is their God?' " The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM: Psalm 51:1-17 (*spoken responsively*)

<sup>1</sup>Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;  
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

<sup>2</sup>**Wash me through and through from my wickedness,  
and cleanse me from my sin.**

<sup>3</sup>For I know my offenses,  
and my sin is ever before me.

<sup>4</sup>**Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight;  
so you are justified when you speak and right in your judgment.**

<sup>5</sup>Indeed, I was born steeped in wickedness,  
a sinner from my mother's womb.

<sup>6</sup>**Indeed, you delight in truth deep within me,  
and would have me know wisdom deep within.**

<sup>7</sup>Remove my sins with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be purer than snow.

<sup>8</sup>**Let me hear joy and gladness;  
that the body you have broken may rejoice.**

<sup>9</sup>Hide your face from my sins,  
and blot out all my wickedness.

- <sup>10</sup>**Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and renew a right spirit within me.**
- <sup>11</sup>Cast me not away from your presence,  
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
- <sup>12</sup>**Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.**
- <sup>13</sup>Let me teach your ways to offenders,  
and sinners shall be restored to you.
- <sup>14</sup>**Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of my salvation,  
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness.**
- <sup>15</sup>O Lord, open my lips,  
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
- <sup>16</sup>**For you take no delight in sacrifice, or I would give it.  
You are not pleased with burnt offering.**
- <sup>17</sup>The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit;  
a troubled and broken heart, O God, you will not despise.

SECOND READING - 2 Corinthians 5:20b--6:10

*The ministry of the gospel endures many challenges and hardships. Through this ministry, God's reconciling activity in the death of Christ reaches into the depths of our lives to bring us into a right relationship with God. In this way, God accepts us into the reality of divine salvation.*

<sup>20b</sup>We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. <sup>6:1</sup>As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. <sup>2</sup>For he says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you." See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! <sup>3</sup>We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, <sup>4</sup>but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup>beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; <sup>6</sup>by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, <sup>7</sup>truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons

of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; <sup>8</sup>in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; <sup>9</sup>as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; <sup>10</sup>as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything. The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

SENIOR CHOIR - Contemplative Spiritual ..... arr. Donald Moore

\*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Re - turn to the Lord, your God, for he is gra - cious and mer - ci - ful,



slow to an - ger, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love.

\*GOSPEL - Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew the 6th chapter.

**Glory to you, O Lord.** (*spoken*)

*In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commends almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, but emphasizes that spiritual devotion must not be done for show.*

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>1</sup>“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. <sup>2</sup>“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. <sup>3</sup>But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is

doing, <sup>4</sup>so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. <sup>5</sup>“And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. <sup>6</sup>But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. <sup>16</sup>“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. <sup>17</sup>But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>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. <sup>19</sup>“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; <sup>20</sup>but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON ..... The Rev. Althea Seidel

\*HYMN OF THE DAY - Savior, When in Dust to You ..... Hymn 601

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Response: Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.** (After the prayer) **Amen.**

**IMPOSITION OF ASHES**

Almighty God, you created us out of the dust of the earth and breathed into us the breath of life. By your hand we live and to your hands we return when all our days are done. Grant that the awareness of our mortality, marked by ashes, may lead us not to fear, but to faith. In our weakness, teach us to look to you for strength; in our failures, to turn to you and find forgiveness, and in our dying to await the gift of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Savior.

**Amen.**

*(Those who desire to receive the ashes may come forward. The pastor marks the forehead or hand of each person, using the following words:)*

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

*(After all who desire ashes have received them, the service continues below.)*

Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation,  
**that we may show forth your glory in the world.**

By the cross and passion of your Son, our Savior,  
**bring us with all your saints to the joy of Christ's resurrection.**

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. **Amen.**

OFFERING - *(offering plates are located in the narthex as you exit the sanctuary.)*

\*OFFERTORY PRAYER

Gracious Provider, you set your immense treasures among us, opening your heart to the world. As we prepare to feast on your bountiful love, deepen our commitment to sharing those treasures with others, through our Savior, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

\*THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power,  
and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

THE SENDING

\*BLESSING

Beloved, we are God's own people, holy, washed, renewed. God bless you and keep you, shower you with mercy, fill you with courage, and ✠ give you peace. **Amen.**

\*SENDING HYMN -

In the Cross of Christ I Glory ..... Hymn 324

\*DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Care for others as God cares for you. **Thanks be to God!**

**PARTICIPANTS**

The Rev. Althea Seidel - Pastor

Paul Copenhaver - Minister of Music

Heather Buffington - Accompanist

Heather Buffington - Bell Choir Director

Hans Gartner - Organist

Neal Galbraith - Lay Assistant

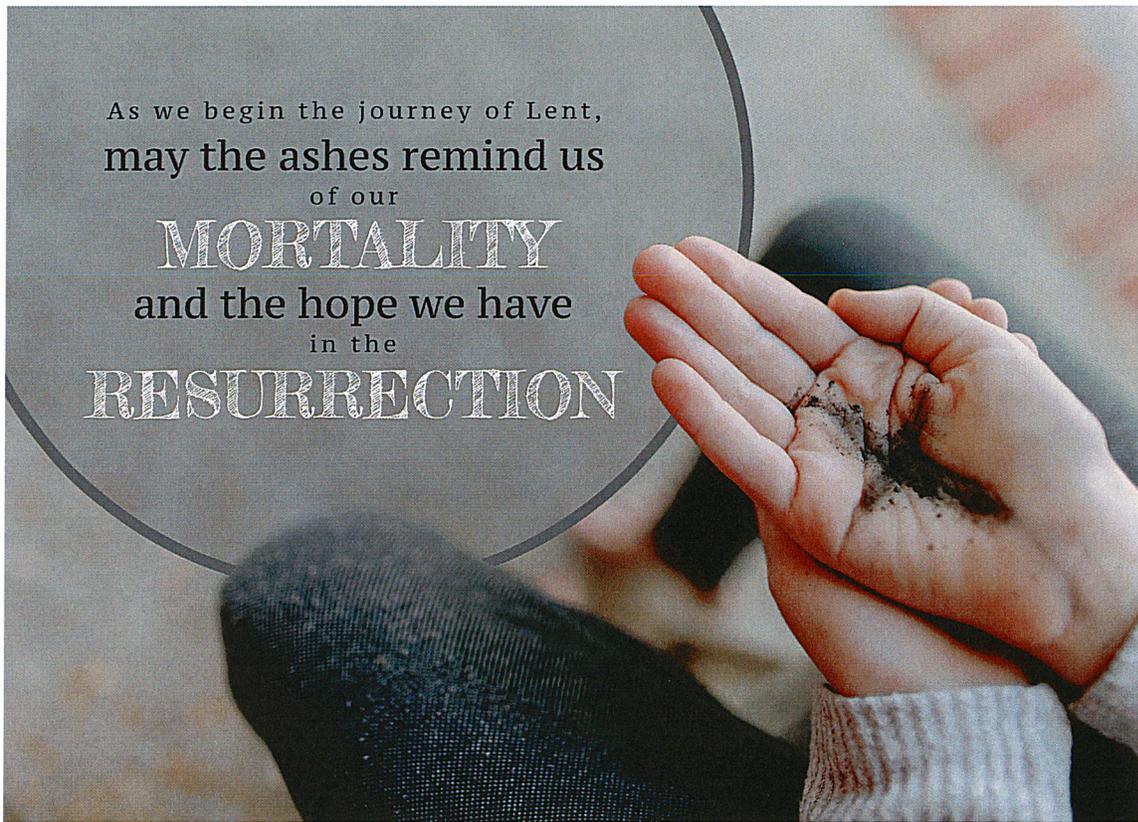
Jay Brown & Denise Rhoades - Greeters

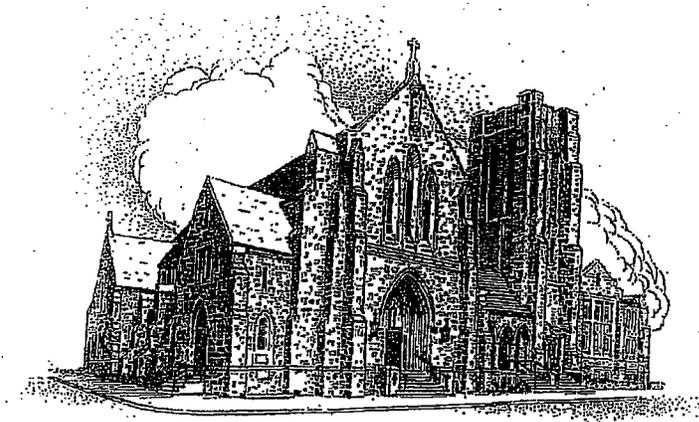
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*♿ Elevator access to upper and lower levels is located  
at rear entrance of church.*

*📵 Remember to silence cell phones & other electronic device*

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