


**WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**

Ash Wednesday

February 17, 2021

7:00 p.m.

GATHERING

(The community gathers in silence and in a meditative spirit.)

PRELUDE

A Clare Blessing

John Rutter

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

Kate Linley

Let us worship God!

(Those who are able may stand.)

God is our refuge and strength,
a present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear

though the earth should change,

though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;

though the waters roar and foam,

though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

God's love endures forever.

***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Taylor Renwick and McKensie Miller

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

All those days you felt like dust,

Like dirt, as if all you had to do was turn your face toward the wind and be
scattered to the four corners

Or swept away by the smallest breath as insubstantial—

Did you not know what the Holy One can do with dust?

This is the day we freely say we are scorched.
 This is the hour we are marked by what has made it through the burning.
 This is the moment we ask for the blessing that lives within the ancient ashes,
 that makes its home inside of the soil of this sacred earth.

So let us be marked, not for sorrow. And let us be marked, not for shame.
 Let us be marked not for false humility or for thinking we are less than we are.
 But for claiming what God can do within the dust, within the dirt, within the
 stuff of which the world is made,
 And the stars that blaze in our bones and the galaxies that spiral inside the
 smudge we bear.

(Jan Richardson)

*HYMN 165

ERHALT UNS, HERR

The Glory of These Forty Days

1 The glo - ry of these for - ty days we
 2 A - lone and fast - ing Mo - ses saw the
 3 So Dan - iel trained his mys - tic sight, de -
 4 Then grant that we like them be true, con -

cel - e - brate with songs of praise; for Christ, by whom all
 lov - ing God who gave the law; and to E - li - jah,
 liv - ered from the li - ons' might; and John, the Bride-groom's
 sumed in fast and prayer with you; our spir - its strength-en

things were made, him - self has fast - ed and has prayed.
 fast - ing, came the steeds and char - i - ots of flame.
 friend, be - came the her - ald of Mes - si - ah's name.
 with your grace, and give us joy to see your face.

THE WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Hear the Word of God! **Our ears are open.**

Isaiah 58:1-12

Grace Douglas

A LITANY FOR LENT

If you have ever snapped back or punched first.
 If you have every quietly stolen inconsequential things, small pieces of candy from a store, a magazine from a waiting room.
 If you have wiped your mouth on a dish towel and hung it back up.
 If you don't wash your hands, not much.

If you have ever left the dog poop on the ground in the public park, and not cleaned it up.

If you have stood up first on a flight and walked to the front to get off first, being *that person*.

If you have driven by *The Contributor* vendor and looked the other way.

If you forget to tip the waitstaff, who worked tirelessly on their feet all day.

If you walk by figures sleeping on the concrete under rough, gray blankets and quietly wonder where they screwed up to get themselves there; and then feel incredibly judgmental for thinking such things. And then wondering again: really, what did they do?

If you have ever felt that you were too good for this, and this could be anything.

If you cringe at the other political party's bumper stickers on cars and drive faster to see who is sitting in the passenger's seat, so that you can glare at them.

If you still long to tell people your ACT score.

Or if you humbly refuse to tell them your ACT score when they ask, saying only, “I don’t want to boast, you guys, I don’t want to boast.”

If there is a hint of irony or sarcasm in everything you do and thus no one feels like they know you.

If you are really, honestly, just not very nice. Not to anybody.

If you don’t think that your pastors are doing a very good job with this Covid thing and you long to switch churches to the one down the street.

If you haven’t watched a virtual service once during this season.

If you meet with lawyers and sign papers and pack boxes and are still unable to admit that you and your wife are getting a divorce.

If you swear to donate to that cause when your brother sends you the link, but then you forget or feel too lazy to see it through.

If you have never tithed.

If you have had little injections into those lines between your eyebrows, and your daughters ask you if they should get them, too.

If you don’t think much of yourself.

If every time you start talking about other people you begin by pointing out that you don’t usually talk about other people.

If your quest for moral perfection is slowly killing you.

If you text and drive. Like, a lot.

If you do any of this, or any of it is done to you—the flaws, the sins, the marks missed; an unhinged world pressed on your soul, or your unhinged sins visited on the world; if this is the case, then this church season of Lent has been for you. This season, and this week, and its charred days; these days are for you not even because you are necessarily Christian or believe in God or saints or crucifixes. But because other people do.

And those other people take time to name those wrongs. They name them and so, like Adam and his beasts, have some dominion over them. Through incense and kneelers and soft lulling chants they are grounding down, getting into the deep sadness of themselves. Putting their conscience through its paces. And something about Jesus, and something about redemption. Something about laying all on the king.

But first taking firm hold of the flaws, no matter how small, and gazing in confusion and sorrow and wonder.

(Excerpts from Joe Hoover’s poem, “*Flaw.*” Edited and added to by Margie Quinn.)

2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10

²⁰ So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

6 As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. ² 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! ³ We are putting no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴ but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵ beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶ by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, ⁷ truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸ in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹ as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰ as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

SERMON

Margie Quinn

“Refusing to Sleepwalk through Lent ... and Life”

(Silent reflection)

INVITATION TO THE OBSERVANCE OF THE LENTEN DISCIPLINE

LITANY OF PENITENCE

Ferrell Wilson

Here and now, O Holy One,
we bring our sins to you; we lie open in your sight.
You despise nothing you have made,
and you restore all who come you to in humility and honesty.
Let your piercing light be our healing,
for the sake of Jesus Christ,
who both taught us and brought us your forgiveness.
In Jesus’ name we pray. **Amen.**

Refrain

There is a long-ing in our hearts, O Lord, for

you to re-veal your-self to us.

There is a long-ing in our hearts for love we

on-ly find in you, our God.

Leader or All

1 For jus-tice, for free-dom, for mer-cy:
 2 For wis-dom, for cour-age, for com-fort:
 3 For heal-ing, for whole-ness, for new life:
 4 Lord save us, take pit-y, Light in our

hear our prayer. In sor-row, in grief:
 hear our prayer. In weak-ness, in fear:
 hear our prayer. In sick-ness, in death:
 dark-ness. We call you; we wait:

be near; hear our prayer, O God.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Claire Kurtz

**Creator God,
out of your love and mercy
you breathed into the dust the breath of life,
creating us to love you and each other.
May these ashes be a symbol of our mortality and repentance, and
remind us of your gift of life,
through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.
Please take time to mark yourself with ash, remembering that you are
dust, and to dust you will return.**

***PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Conner Folk

**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 debts,
as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, forever. Amen.**

PASSING OF THE PEACE

Kate Shurden

Be kind to one another, and tenderhearted,
forgiving one another,
as God in Christ has forgiven you.
The Peace of Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

*(Please exchange the peace with the words,
"The peace of Christ be with you.")*

SENDING

*BLESSING

Ode to Dirt---MARY NEELY YOUNG

Written and read by [Sharon Olds](#)

Dear dirt, I am sorry I slighted you,
I thought that you were only the background
for the leading characters—the plants
and animals and human animals.
It's as if I had loved only the stars
and not the sky which gave them space
in which to shine. Subtle, various,
sensitive, you are the skin of our terrain,
you're our democracy. When I understood
I had never honored you as a living
equal, I was ashamed of myself,
as if I had not recognized
a character who looked so different from me,
but now I can see us all, made of the
same basic materials—
cousins of that first exploding from nothing—
in our intricate equation together. O dirt,
help us find ways to serve your life,
you who have brought us forth, and fed us,
and who at the end will take us in
and rotate with us, and wobble, and orbit.

**(Those who are able may stand.)*

SERVICE NOTES

MUSICIANS: Keith Cole, Soloist; John Semingson, Director of Music Ministries.

LENT: The word “Lent” is derived from the Old English word *lencten*, meaning “Spring,” which in turn derives from the Old High German *lenzin*, referring to “the lengthening of days.” The season we know as Spring was originally called Lent. Lent gradually adhered strictly to church practice, and Spring came to designate the season following Winter.

Lent lasts for forty weekdays plus Sundays, a number richly grounded in Biblical tradition. In the Bible there are 120 references to the number forty, among them: the days of Noah's deluge; the days that Moses spent on the mountain; the years Israel wandered in the wilderness; the days of Elijah's journey to the cave of the "still, small voice;" and Jesus' forty-day wilderness sojourn during which he was tempted by Satan.

Lent has traditionally been a time when Christians have engaged in self-reflection, fasting, prayer, confession and repentance in anticipation of the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ. At Westminster, in order to emphasize the meaning of Lent, we adopt a more penitential posture in worship. There are no flowers; no festive choir processional; no *Act of Praise*, following the *Confession and Pardon*; and at several points in the service we incorporate the ancient and plaintive supplication from Psalm 51: "Create in me a clean heart, O God."

LENTEN MID-DAY PRAYER EVERY WEDNESDAY THROUGH LENT: Westminster's staff will be leading Lenten Mid-Day Prayer in the Sanctuary every Wednesday from 11:45 a.m.—12:15 p.m. beginning Ash Wednesday, February 17th to March 31st. The services will be simple and meditative, befitting the season. Attendees will need to register prior to each service.

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Westminster Presbyterian Church

Purpose Statement

*Ordinary people testifying to the extraordinary light
found in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

"For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us."

(2 Corinthians 4:6-7)

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