

Ash Wednesday
February 18, 2026



 **LIVING OUT THE WORD**
LOVE • RECONCILE • SHINE • TRANSFORM

About the Prelude

The Prelude is a musical offering to help move the hearts and minds of the gathering community from the daily struggles of life to the worship of God.

Brahms sets the melody from the Chorale, "O God, thou Faithful God" with syncopations and suspensions that invoke a sense of anguish in this organ piece.

Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent with a public act of confession. Aware of our failure and frailty, we express our utter reliance on God's saving grace. Ashes are an ancient symbol of repentance, sorrow, and sacrifice. Traditionally, the ashes are made from the palm branches of the previous year; thus the ashes and palms together frame the season of Lent.

About Hymn 415

The differing voices of this text indicate that its parts were not created together. The stanzas are cast in the voice of a preacher or exhorter, but the refrain (added later) takes the voice of a penitent heeding that call in language like that of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:18)
TEXT: Stanzas, Joseph Hart, 1759; alt.; refrain, anon.; MUSIC: Walker's Southern Harmony, 1835.

GATHERING

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Let us worship God!

(Those who are able may stand.)

We come to God with full and prayerful hearts.

We yearn to turn to God.

We mark on our foreheads our need for grace,
giving thanks and praise for mercy.

Hear our call to be in your will, O God.

PRELUDE

Johannes Brahms

O Gott du frommer Gott, Op. 122 No. 7

*PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

Holy God,

**in the stillness of the hour, we listen for the
Spirit's voice.**

**With broken hearts, we remember our faults
and fears.**

**And still, the Comforter comes and soothes
so that we may feel the power of promised
forgiveness.**

**As we journey with Christ and seek strength for
the life of faith,
may we be reconciled unto God. Amen.**

*HYMN 415

RESTORATION

Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy

THE WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

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

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

(Old Testament, pages 846-847 in your pew Bible)

(Sung responsively after each scripture reading.)

Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Psalm 51:10

Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Renew a right spirit within me.

Renew a right spirit within me.

Psalm 51:1-17, All sing

PTOMEY

Have Mercy on Us, Living Lord



1. Have mer - cy on us, liv - ing Lord, Re - mem - ber not our sin.
2. Our sin and guilt are heav - y, Lord, And e - vil in Your sight.
3. We're born in - to a guilt - y world, And sin - ful in our ways.
4. So come and pu - ri - fy our lives, Our hearts with love re - deem.



Ac - cord - ing to Your stead - fast love Come, cleanse us deep with-in.
A - gainst You on - ly have we sinned; Your judg - ment, Lord, is right.
Lord, teach us wis-dom in our hearts And lead us all our days.
Re - store us to Your life - filled ways. Come, Lord, and make us clean.

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

(New Testament, pages 5-6 in your pew Bible)

SERMON

"Beloved Dust"

Stephanie Boaz

INVITATION TO THE OBSERVANCE OF THE LENTEN DISCIPLINE

LITANY OF PENITENCE

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

Rend your hearts and not your garments; return to your God.
**For God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and
abounding in steadfast love.**

We know well our misdeeds, and our sin is ever before us.
Wash away our guilt, O God, and heal our brokenness.

Break forth light into the dark places of our hearts, and confront us with our hidden and secret sins — all that we keep in the dark.

O God, open our hearts.

We lay before you our preoccupation with ourselves,
O God, open our hearts.

Our lustful imaginations and our arrogant ambitions,
O God, open our hearts.

Our simmering grudges and our half-acknowledged animosities,
O God, open our hearts.

Our rush to judge others and our intermittent compassion,
O God, open our hearts.

Our past bitterness that we have not yet offered to you,
O God, open our hearts.

The stinginess of our kindness toward ourselves and toward others,
O God, open our hearts.

The private comforts to which we cling,
O God, open our hearts.

The fear of failure, which saps our initiative and our courage,
O God, open our hearts.

The pessimism that is an insult to your will and power,
O God, open our hearts.

(Time of silent prayer)

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 to you 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.**

(Silence)

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

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

**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.**

*(The people will move forward as directed
by the ushers. Ashes in the sign of the cross
are placed on foreheads with the words,*

*“Remember that you are dust
and to dust you shall return.”*

*Once you have received the ashes, please
return to your seat, using the outside aisles.)*

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 our Savior,
**bring us with all your saints
to the joy of Christ's resurrection and eternal life.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

(Prayed in unison; see page 35 of your hymnal for text)

SENDING

About Hymn 215

With its ballad-like repetitions before and after each stanza's central narrative lines, this meditative text needs performance in order to be effective. Its haunting melody proves the means of convincing us that the only adequate response to "wondrous love" is to "sing on." TEXT: American folk hymn, c. 1811; MUSIC: Walker's *Southern Harmony*, 1835.

***HYMN 215**

What Wondrous Love is This WONDROUS LOVE

***BLESSING AND CHARGE**

***RESPONSE**

Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Renew a right spirit within me.

Renew a right spirit within me.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

(All may depart in silence.)

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

Tonight at Westminster

Liturgists

Rev. Stephanie Boaz
Associate Pastor for Congregational Care

Rev. Dr. Guy D. Griffith
Associate Pastor for Adult Faith Formation

Music

Westminster Choir

John Semingson
Director of Music Ministries

Dale Nickell
Organist
Associate Director of Music Ministries

LENT: The word “Lent” is derived from the Old English word *lecten*, 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 one hundred-twenty 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 in which he was tempted by Satan.

Lent has traditionally been a time in which 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

On the Cover

Moyers, Mike. *Ash*, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. Original source: Mike Moyers, www.mikemoyersfineart.com.

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