

Ash Wednesday Worship  
February 22, 2023  
Communion  
Imposition of Ashes  
Theme: Seeking: Is this the fast I choose?  
6:30 PM

THEME PARAGRAPH :

*Is this the fast that I choose? As we begin our series, we must examine if our actions match what we profess. As we practice seeking this Lent, what kind of fast will you choose? How will you live your faith? How will you live the questions of your faith? In our spiritual practices, will we seek to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? (Isaiah 58:6)*

NO PRELUDE

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather together at the edge of a new season.

**We stand together on the cusp of something new.**

Will we wade into self-reflection?

**Will we invite honesty to dance?**

Will we listen for God's invitation?

**Will we seek deeper faith?**

What kind of fast do we choose? What kind of faith will we build?

**We gather together at the edge of a new season.**

Listen, God is speaking.

GATHERING HYMN ELW 601 Savior, When in Dust to You

Savior, when in dust to you  
low we bow in homage due;  
when, repentant, to the skies  
scarce we lift our weeping eyes;  
oh, by all your pains and woe  
suffered once for us below,  
bending from your throne on high,  
hear our penitential cry!

By your helpless infant years,  
by your life of want and tears,  
by your days of deep distress  
in the savage wilderness,  
by the dread, mysterious hour  
of the insulting tempter's pow'r,  
turn, oh, turn a fav'ring eye;  
hear our penitential cry!

By your hour of dire despair,  
by your agony of prayer,  
by the cross, the nail, the thorn,  
piercing spear, and torturing scorn,  
by the gloom that veiled the skies  
o'er the dreadful sacrifice,  
listen to our humble sigh;  
hear our penitential cry!

#### GREETING

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of the Way, give us willing hearts for the Lenten journey that lies ahead. Remind us that you honor our questions and can be trusted with our longings. Help us remember that you are seeking us, and we can rest in being found, even as we venture into the unknown. Guide our steps and bring clarity and love more fully into our hearts. May our way be the Jesus way, whatever steps we take. **Amen.**

#### CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

READING: Isaiah 58:1-12

*At the conclusion of the reading:*

Word of God. Word of Life.

**Thanks be to God.**

#### SERMON

#### INVITATION TO LENT

#### CONFESSION OF SIN

Our scripture passage for today tells the story of people who are trying hard to be faithful...  
So let us turn to God in prayer, using the confession printed in your bulletin.

Let us pray:

Merciful God,

How many times in a day could we choose love?

**How many times could we choose justice?**

How many times could we speak kindly to ourselves?

**How many times could we offer grace?**

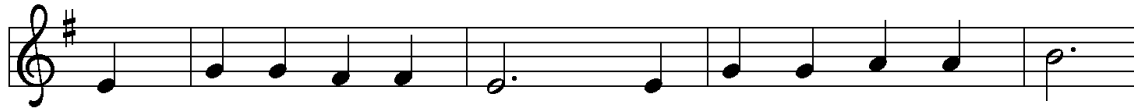
How many times, God? And how often do we miss it?

**Forgive us for choosing the path you did not travel.**

Forgive us for hitching our horse to the world's measure of goodness, instead of yours.

**Return our hearts to you, and guide us continually, even in the parched places.**

With hope and gratitude, we sing:



1 Have mer - cy on us, Lord, and hear our sol - emn prayer.  
2 Have mer - cy on us, Christ, and wash a - way our sin.  
3 Have mer - cy on us, Lord; make sin and shame de - part.



We come to hear your liv - ing word; it saves us from de - spair.  
Pour out your grace and make us whole that new life may be - gin.  
Re - new us with your sav - ing pow'r; cre - ate in us new hearts!

### IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. May these ashes be a sign of our mortality and penitence, reminding us that only by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ are we given eternal life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

*If you wish to receive the imposition of ashes, you are invited to come forward down the center aisle to the base of the steps. The pastor will mark the forehead of each person with a cross of ashes, saying: Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. You may then return to your seats by the side aisles.*

*After those who desire ashes have received them, all may kneel or sit, and the pastor continues.*

A POEM by Maya Angelou

When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I'm not shouting "I'm clean livin'."  
**I'm whispering "I was lost,  
Now I'm found and forgiven."**

When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I don't speak of this with pride.  
**I'm confessing that I stumble  
and need Christ to be my guide.**

When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I'm not trying to be strong.  
**I'm professing that I'm weak  
And need His strength to carry on.**

When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I'm not bragging of success.  
**I'm admitting I have failed**  
**And need God to clean my mess.**

When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I'm not claiming to be perfect,  
**My flaws are far too visible**  
**But, God believes I am worth it.**

When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I still feel the sting of pain.  
**I have my share of heartaches**  
**So I call upon His name.**

When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I'm not holier than thou,  
**I'm just a simple sinner**  
**Who received God's good grace, somehow.**

Family of faith...

So hear and believe the good news of the gospel: no matter how many times we fall, no matter how many times we choose the wrong path, God is waiting for us at the end with open arms. We are forgiven. We are invited. We belong.

**Thanks be to God for a love like that. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

OFFERING

MUSICAL OFFERING

Out of the Depths - Sigfrid Karg-Elert

OFFERING PRAYER

+ MEAL +

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

We come to the table tonight,  
open to receive God's grace as we remember that...  
do this in remembrance of me.

LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.  
**Our Father...**

SHARING OF COMMUNION

MUSIC DURING COMMUNION ELW 607 Come, Ye Disconsolate

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

BENEDICTION

As you leave this place,  
may God bless you with seeking.  
Seek out the hungry.  
Seek the weary.  
Seek the good in every person you pass.  
Seek out the hopeful.  
Seek the faithful.  
Seek God in each of us.  
As you seek and as you wonder,  
may you find what you are looking for.  
In the name of God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**Amen**

SENDING HYMN ELW 712 Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service

Lord, whose love in humble service  
bore the weight of human need,  
who upon the cross, forsaken,  
worked your mercy's perfect deed:  
we, your servants, bring the worship  
not of voice alone, but heart;  
consecrating to your purpose  
ev'ry gift which you impart.

Still your children wander homeless;  
still the hungry cry for bread;  
still the captives long for freedom;  
still in grief we mourn our dead.  
As you, Lord, in deep compassion  
healed the sick and freed the soul,  
by your Spirit send your power  
to our world to make it whole.

Called by worship to your service,  
forth in your dear name we go,  
to the child, the youth, the aged,  
love in living deeds to show;  
hope and health, good will and comfort,  
counsel, aid and peace we give,  
that your servants, Lord, in freedom  
may your mercy know and live.

DISMISSAL

In the name of our loving God,  
who is always seeking us,  
go now in peace.

**In the name of Christ. Amen**

## NO POSTLUDES IN LENT

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### **Black History Month – Poet for Ash Wednesday**

Maya Angelou (April 4, 1928 — May 28, 2014) was an American memoirist, popular poet, and civil rights activist. She published seven autobiographies, three books of essays, several books of poetry, and is credited with a list of plays, movies, and television shows spanning over 50 years. She received dozens of awards and more than 50 honorary degrees. Angelou is best known for her series of seven autobiographies, which focus on her childhood and early adult experiences. The first, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, tells of her life up to the age of 17 and brought her international recognition and acclaim.



## PRAYER LIST

Please continue to keep the following people connected to our congregation in your prayers: Bob Moran, Brian Allebach, Charles Krupp, David Mounts, Leah Crater, Steve Keyser, Silas Reed, Ruth Jadick, Pat Ernst, Pastor Jennifer Phelps, Paige & Peyton Seacock, Tal Umstead, Sandra Umstead, Donald Moyer and family, Linda Hart, Gladys Ditzler, Judy Ockenlaender and Andrew Renninger.

### **Blessed to be a Blessing**

**For the month of February**, we will be supporting The Open Link with donations of canned soup and stew. As the soup and stew congregation in the Upper Perkiomen Valley, we made a commitment years ago to make sure that the food pantry never runs out of soup and stew. As we prepare to celebrate the Super Bowl in the month of February, join us in creating our own Souper Bowl of donations to support Open Link!



## **SIGN UP ENDS TONIGHT**

### **Lenten Prayer Partners**

During the season of Lent, we will be offering the opportunity to receive a prayer partner.

A few changes this season include:

-Prayer partners will be randomly selected— sign up online or on the paper outside Pastor Becky's office **by Ash Wednesday**. (Your prayer partner's name will be emailed to you by the First Sunday in Lent, Feb. 26th.

-Prayer partners will not be secret—this will allow you, if you choose, to contact your prayer partner and receive specific prayer partner requests to offer up. Your prayers can then be more intentional around the needs and concerns of the person for whom you are praying. Contact is not required, but simply optional.

**Lenten Worship Experiment** During the season of Lent, St. John's will be adding an early morning worship experience to our Sunday mornings. This service will take place at 8 AM, starting February 26 thru Easter Sunday, April 9. It will be a more quiet, reflective style of worship with minimal music - and will be 35-45 minutes in length to allow participation in 9 AM Sunday school. At the conclusion of the Lenten season, the Worship & Music Team will evaluate participation in this early service during Lent to help determine our fall 2023 worship schedule. If you have any questions, please feel free to speak with Pastor Becky or Erika Haldeman, chair of Worship & Music.

### **Lenten Small Group    Soup and Book Discussion**

**Tuesdays at 5:30 PM, starting February 28 thru April 4**

Join Pastor Becky on the Tuesdays in Lent for soup supper and discussion on the book *The World is About to Turn: Mending a Nation's Broken Faith*. All are welcome.

Books are available for \$10 in the main office.

**Our Mid-week Lenten Worship** this year will zoom in on a question raised by the Sunday reading, inviting participants to make connections between their own stories and the Bible. We will also be resuming our post-worship fellowship this year as well. Worship will begin each Wednesday at 7 PM with fellowship afterwards. The schedule is below:

**March 1: St. Mark's Lutheran – Questions That Divide, Questions That Bind**

March 8: Pennsburg UCC – Simple Questions

March 15: Palm Schwenkfelder – Questions for the Curious

March 22: St. John's Lutheran – Questions That Change, Questions That Change You

March 29: New Goshenhoppen UCC – Questions That Kick

**Lent in the Home** Everyone keeps the season of Lent differently. Some choose to give something up. Others choose to add something in. Resources to guide you in keeping Lent at home will be available in the narthex and parlor from Sunday, Feb 19 thru Sunday, February 26. Please take whatever will help you to keep the season of Lent faithfully when you are apart from this faith community.