

Countryside Community Church WORSHIP



Stardust by Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity, Inspired by Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21
Acrylic on raw canvas with digital drawing [Sanctifiedart.org](https://www.sanctifiedart.org)

Ash Wednesday

February 14, 2024

Order of Worship

"Gathering"

Prelude

Words of Welcome

Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas

Call to Worship

One: The grace of Jesus be with you.

Many: And also with you.

One: Bless the One who forgives all our sins.

Many: God's mercy endures forever.

Opening Prayer

***Opening Hymn** *Ash Wednesday Comes, And Lord, We Hear*

Prayer of Confession & Assurance of Grace

Rev. Sarah Rentzel-Jones

One: We confess that we are both broken and beautiful.

Many: We confess a God of love who gives us the freedom to choose love or reject it.

One: Sometimes we fail to see ourselves worthy of God's love and thus neglect God, other times we simply seek to self-indulge and push God's love beyond our sight.

Many: God of unfailing love, For the times we fail to love ourselves, or push your love away, please forgive us.

One: Many times in our deepest despair the light of hope breaks through. With these ashes and glitter we receive and announce the forgiveness of God.

Many: We believe the light. We believe love.

“Hearing of the Word”

Readings

First Lesson: Joel 2:1-2, 12-14

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—
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.

Yet even now, says the Lord,
return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
rend your hearts and not your clothing.
Return to the Lord your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love,
and relenting from punishment.
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?

Second Lesson: Isaiah 58:6

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the servitude, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?

“Responding to the Word”

Hymn *Throughout These Lenten Days and Nights*

Invitation to a Lenten Observation

Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas

Poem

Rend Your Heart Rev. Sarah Rentzel-Jones
A Blessing for Ash Wednesday

To receive this blessing, all you have to do is let your heart break.
Let it crack open. Let it fall apart so that you can see its secret chambers,
the hidden spaces where you have hesitated to go.
Your entire life is here, inscribed whole upon your heart's walls:
every path taken or left behind,
every face you turned toward or turned away,
every word spoken in love or in rage,
every line of your life you would prefer to leave in shadow,
every story that shimmers with treasures known and those you have yet to
find.
It could take you days to wander these rooms.
Forty, at least.
And so let this be a season for wandering
for trusting the breaking
for tracing the tear that will return you to the One who waits;
who watches; who works within the rending to make your heart whole.
(Jan Richardson)

Thanksgiving Over the Ashes

Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth and added stardust to every breath we take. In the Ashes we are mortal beings who suffer. In the glitter we are immortal souls celebrating life. Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence – our immortality and thirst for justice as did Jesus who was willing to die for us. Amen.

All who would be marked with the Ashes of humility and the Glitter of life, come now to receive a blessing.

Imposition of Ashes

As we share the ashes with one another, please do so mindful that these ashes remind us of the God who is with and within us.

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

Affirmation

Rev. Sarah Rentzel-Jones

Lent is a time for us to return to God who formed us from the dust of the earth. Our lives are finite, so we want to spend every precious moment in tune with God’s love and light, living whole, abundant lives—the kind of lives we were created to lead. And so in recognition of our origins in the earth, as stardust we acknowledge our finite days, in receiving these ashes we remember: dust we are, and to dust we shall return.

Choral Response

God Be In My Head

John Rutter

“Sending”

Benediction

Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas

Beloved wanderer,
as you leave this place,
may you carry your curious heart on your sleeve.
May you look for God in every face.
May you find the courage to get out of the boat,
to run to the tomb,
and to speak of your faith.
And when the world falls apart,
may you hear God’s voice deep within,
saying, “Take heart, it is I, be not afraid.”
You are called.
You are blessed.
In both your ups and your downs,
you always belong to God.
Go now in peace.
Go trusting that good news.
Amen.

Ash Wednesday Comes and, Lord, We Hear

Ash Wednesday comes, and Lord, we hear
The word for which our spirits yearn;
Amid this world's distress and fear,
We hear your loving call: "Return!"
"Return to me with all your heart"
With fasting, weeping, mourning, too.
O God, we seek a brand new start,
A new beginning here with you.

You call to us – the old, the young;
You summon nations strong and weak.
When we have drifted toward the wrong,
You call us back, your way to seek.

O God most merciful and kind,
Your love is not a prize we earn;
Yet in our life with you we find
The joy that comes when we return.

Throughout These Lenten Days and Nights

Throughout these Lenten days and nights
we turn to walk the inward way,
where, meeting Christ, our guide and light,
we live in hope 'till Easter Day.

The pilgrim Christ, the Lamb of God,
who found in weakness greater power,
embraces us, though lost and flawed,
and leads us to his Rising Hour.

We bear the silence, cross and pain
of human burdens, human strife,
while sisters, brothers help sustain
our courage 'till the Feast of Life.

And though the road is hard and steep,
the Spirit ever calls us on
through Calv'ry's dying, dark and deep,
until we see the coming Dawn.

So let us choose the path of One
who wore, for us the crown of thorn,
and slept in death that we might wake
to life on Resurrection Morn!