



seeking:
*Is this the fast
that I choose?*

ASH WEDNESDAY WORSHIP

FEBRUARY 22, 2023, 6 P.M.

All Are Welcome

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the reflective season of Lent. We are marked with ashes to remind us that we are from God and that we ultimately return to God. Over the next 40 days, we'll be Seeking: (Asking) Honest Questions for Deeper Faith. Today's question of faith asks: Is this the fast that I choose?

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 loosen 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)

Whether you are a guest or member, we invite you to register your attendance (scan the QR code in the pew) so we know you're here and we can get to know you better.

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OUR LENTEN JOURNEY BEGINS

**Please stand as you are comfortable.
Bold indicates congregational response.*

Prelude

Terry Byars

The Call to Gather

Rev. Lane Cotton Winn

There is a wisdom in ash that we need so much but seldom hear.

It's the wisdom of grief that reminds us of our mortality
and that Life is more than this dust can contain.

It's the wisdom of confession that brings our darkness out of hiding
and opens the windows to Light.

It's the wisdom of repentance that stops us in our tracks and charts
the way to Love.

There is a wisdom in ash and we welcome it, Jesus,
thankful for the renewing gifts it brings.

Words of 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.

*Hymn

Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days
The United Methodist Hymnal 269, vs. 1 & 4

A Prayer for the Journey

Rev. Larry Norman

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

God of the Way,

Give us willing hearts for the Lenten quest 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.**

Anthem

Kyrie
Arr. by Ruth Elaine Schram
Chancel Choir

Call to Confession

Pastor Lane

In the prayer of confession we linger in tension for a moment.
We acknowledge that we are works in progress
and we ask for God's help.
God may challenge us, but fortunately, God will never abandon us.
So let us turn to God in prayer.

Prayer of Confession

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 gratitude we pray, amen.**

Words of Forgiveness and Grace

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.
Through Jesus, the Christ, we are forgiven.

We are invited. We belong.
Thanks be to God for a love like that.

May the Peace of Christ dwell within you.
And with your spirit.

*Hymn

Sunday's Palms Are Wednesday's Ashes
The Faith We Sing Songbook 2138, vs. 1 - 3

Scripture Reading

Isaiah 58:1-12

Rev. Larry

For the word of God in scripture,
for the word of God among us,
for the word of God within us,

Thanks be to God.

Meditation

"Is This the Fast I Choose?"

Pastor Lane

Thanksgiving Over the Ashes

Pastor Lane

Almighty God,
you have created us out of the dust of the earth.
Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign
of our mortality and penitence,
so that we may remember that
only by your gracious gift we are given
everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Savior.
Amen.

Imposition of Ashes

Invitation to the Lenten Experience

Pastor Lane

Is this the fast I choose?
Will I wake with the sun each morning?
Will I start with thank you?
Will I peel back the cage around my frame to let you in
or will I get too busy?

Will my Bible collect dust on the shelf,
along with my journal, along with my sense of self,
or will I roll back the stone and wade in?

Every new season beckons something of us—
attention, beauty, the chance to create.
This season is no different.
So, like moths to the light, will we find our way toward God,
or will we hover, circling fake suns?

We are seeking something deeper.
We are kicking off our shoes.
We are starting this season on holy ground.

*Hymn

Be Thou My Vision

The United Methodist Hymnal 451, vs. 1 - 3

*Benediction

Rev. Larry

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 our loving God,
who is always seeking us, go now in peace.
Amen.

*Postlude

Terry Byars

*Most of our liturgy and prayers were written
by Rev. Sarah A. Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org*

a lenten quest for a love that makes us whole

REFLECTION PROMPTS FOR THE LENTEN JOURNEY
BY REV. DANIELLE SHROYER

This Lent we are **seeking**: seeking clarity, seeking wisdom, seeking a love that makes us whole. Christians have a long tradition of embarking on a spiritual quest, which invites us to look with fresh eyes at our life and the world, and listen for the longing in our souls.

All you need to begin is a willing heart.

May you journey with bravery and discover how trust meets you along the way. And may these questions guide you closer to the heart of God and the sanctuary of your soul.

PACK YOUR BAGS

As the season of Lent begins, journal, pray, or meditate on these questions:

- **What do you need for your journey?**
- **What needs to be left behind?**

QUESTION MAP Throughout the Lenten season, we invite you to return to these questions often. Unpack them in conversations, include them in your prayers, write about them in a journal, and see where the Spirit of God leads you.

What is your soul yearning for?

What is holding you back from soulful, wholehearted exploration?

What do you need to know about God to trust God more fully?

Is there another question your soul needs to ask during this Lenten quest?

DAILY BREAD

Choose one spiritual practice to accompany you on this journey. Choose something simple, like a daily gratitude practice, five minutes of centering prayer, or leaving burdens to God as you go to bed.

What spiritual practice will you commit to?

RETURNING HOME

On **Easter Sunday**, reflect on your Lenten journey as a whole.

- What do you see in God more clearly after this journey?
- Where do your explorations need to continue?
- What would it look like to follow God wholeheartedly in the season of Eastertide?

This Year's Lenten Theme:



seeking:
honest questions
for deeper faith

Join us as we unpack big questions about life and faith.

This Lent, we invite you to engage in the spiritual practice of SEEKING. We encourage you to stay curious, open and nimble. We hope you will soften your assumptions and expand your perspectives. Over the six weeks of Lent we will explore stories of Jesus encountering people who were seeking – a new beginning, a different life, a deeper faith. Like those in scripture, we are also seeking many things: clarity, connection, wonder, balance. We are seeking our calling, the sacred, and how to live as disciples. Throughout the turbulence of the past few years and with the ongoing discernment about the future of our community, many of us are asking big questions about our lives and our faith. This series will help us unpack some of those big questions in ways that are honest and faithful, as we ask ourselves what am I seeking? What is God seeking?

We pray that these questions will create a safe space to explore – to be drawn more deeply into the fullness of life, into the heart of God.

To guide your Lenten journey, we are offering each household a set of **Daily Devotional Cards**, which you can take home today or pick up from the church during office hours. Each card has a reflection question and prayer, and the 48-card set begins on Ash Wednesday, February 22, and continues through the week of Easter. You can also follow St. John's on Facebook and Instagram (@stjohnsbr) for daily reflections during Lent.



**seeking
sanctuary**

**OUR SANCTUARY IS OPEN FOR REFLECTION
AND PRAYER EVERY WEDNESDAY IN LENT
NOON - 1PM | 5PM - 6PM**