



*Pittsburgh Theological Seminary*  
**Ash Wednesday Service**

Hicks Memorial Chapel  
Wednesday, March 6, 2019

**GATHERING**

**Prelude**

*Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley*

American Spiritual/arr. C.E. Walz

*Jesus walked this lonesome valley, he had to walk it by Himself:  
O, nobody else could walk it for Him, he had to walk it by Himself.*

**A Call to True Worship**

Isaiah 58, a choral reading

**Opening Prayer**

*Leader:* Gracious God,  
you make beautiful things out of dust  
and you make beautiful things out of us.  
Out of your love and mercy  
you breathed into dust the breath of life,  
creating us to serve you and neighbors.  
Call forth our prayers and acts of tenderness,  
and strengthen us to face our mortality,  
that we may reach with confidence for your mercy;  
in Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever.

*People: Amen.*

***Sinfulness and Mortality: Our Need of a Savior***

*Create in Me a Clean Heart*  
(stanza 1)

GtG #423

**Invitation to the Observance of the Lenten Discipline**

*Leader:* ...Let us bow before God, our Creator and Redeemer,  
and confess our sin.

*Silence is kept for reflection and self-examination*

\*please rise in body and/or spirit

**Responsive Psalm: Psalm 51:1-17**

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

**Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin.**

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

**Against you, you alone, have I sinned,  
and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you are justified in your sentence  
and blameless when you pass judgment.**

Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.

**You desire truth in the inward being;  
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.**

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

**Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.**

Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

**Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.**

Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.

**Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing spirit.**

**Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
and sinners will return to you.**

Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,

O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

**O Lord, open my lips,  
and my mouth will declare your praise.**

For you have no delight in sacrifice;

if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.

**The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**

*Create in Me a Clean Heart  
(stanza 2)*

GtG #423

**Confession**

*As the music continues, all are invited to write a confession,  
bring your confession card forward, and place it in the bowl.*

**Assurance of Forgiveness**

*Create in Me a Clean Heart  
(stanza 3)*

GtG #423

**Imposition of Ashes**

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth.

May these ashes be for us a sign of our mortality and penitence,

and a reminder that only by your gracious gift are we given everlasting life;  
through Jesus Christ our Savior.

**Amen.**

*Congregants are invited to come forward to receive the imposition of ashes*

**Congregational Song**

*Sign Us With Ashes*

GtG #433

*(Cantors sing refrain once, then all join. Cantors will sing verses.)*

**\*Blessing**

May the God of peace  
make you holy in every way  
and keep your whole being  
free from every fault  
at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Postlude**

*A sign of peace may be exchanged by all.*

**Worship Notes**

The Lenten journey from the ashes of death to resurrected life begins on the first day of Lent, Ash Wednesday, which signifies a time to turn around, to change directions, to repent. This first day of Lent reminds us that unless we are willing to die to our old selves, we cannot be raised to new life with Christ. The first step of this journey calls us to acknowledge and confront our mortality, individually and corporately. In many traditions, this is symbolized through the imposition of ashes — placing a cross on one’s forehead.

In Scripture, sometimes people weep and mourn either in ashes or with ashes upon their heads (cf. 2 Sam 13:19; Job 2:8). When Job is finally confronted by the Lord himself, he repents “in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6). Jesus warns some towns that if he had appeared in the past, former sinful cities would have “repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes” (Matt 11:21; Luke 10:13).

In this centuries-old practice, ashes created by burning palm leaves from the previous year’s Palm Sunday celebration are ‘imposed’ upon Christians’ foreheads in the form of a cross, recalling the words from Genesis 3:19 by saying: “Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return.” This reminds us of our sinfulness and mortality (via the words spoken) and need for repentance (via the ashes themselves) *in light of* the grace of God in Christ (hence the sign of the cross). Lent is not a matter of being good, and wearing ashes is not to show off one’s faith. The ashes are a reminder to us and our communities of our finite creatureliness. The ashes we wear on our Lenten journey symbolize the dust and broken debris of our lives as well as the reality that eventually each of us will die.

Trusting in the “accomplished fact” of Christ’s resurrection, however, we listen for the Word of God in the time-honored stories of the church’s Lenten journey. We follow Jesus into the wilderness, resist temptation, fast, and proceed “on the way” to Jerusalem and the cross. Our Lenten journey is one of *metanoia* (“turning around”), of changing directions from self-serving toward the self-giving way of the cross. see *Companion to the Book of Common Worship* (Geneva Press, 2003, 109-110)

**Leaders in Worship**

Joshua Demi ♦ The Rev. Dr. Leanna Fuller ♦ The Rev. Dr. Angela Hancock

Amanda Horan ♦ Michael Ondrick ♦ Reeder ♦ The Rev. Dr. John Welch

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The Rev. Kendra Buckwalter Smith, *Director of the Worship Program*

Michael P. Frank III, *Chapel Musician*

Ciera (Cici) James, *Audio Visual Technician*