**Ash Wednesday**

**Springfield Presbyterian Church**

**February 22, 2023 7:00 pm**

**ENTER IN SILENCE**

*When you enter this space, enter into a sacred stillness. Discover the beauty of the presence of God here, beside you and within you. May you take this time to pause, contemplate the candle flame and the simple beauty of the cross, and the silent strength of prayer. These ordinary things invite us to live in tune with the Spirit. Sit quietly in the presence of the Holy Spirit as you would sit with a trusted friend. No words are necessary…*

*Before our Call to Worship, let us join in singing from Taize, “Come to Me” - we will repeat several times.*

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**CALL TO WORSHIP**

Leader: We gather together at the edge of a new season.

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

Leader: Will we wade into self-reflection?

**People: Will we invite honesty to dance?**

Leader: Will we listen for God’s invitation?

**People: Will we seek deeper faith?**

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

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

Leader: Listen, God is speaking.

**OPENING PRAYER**

O God, you sent Christ in the world not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. You are our refuge and our strength, a present help in trouble. Therefore, we shall not fear though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though the waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. Your love endures forever. Amen.

**PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD**

**PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION**

Holy God, we want to hear your voice. Shout loudly; do not hold back. Move in our spirits the way you moved over the waters of all creation. We are beginning a new season today, God, and we do not want to begin anything without you. So speak to us today – through silence, scripture, and song. Speak to us as you spoke to the Israelites so long ago. Speak to us like a gentle breeze or a loud trumpet. We just want to hear your voice. Do not hold back. We are here. We are listening. Amen.

**FIRST READING:** *Isaiah 58:1-12*

**SECOND READING:** *2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10*

**LENTEN MEDITATION** *Seeking Something New* Rev. Becca Price

**SILENCE**

**INVITATION TO THE OBSERVANCE OF THE LENTEN DISCIPLINE**

Beloved people of God: every year at the time of the Christian Passover we celebrate our redemption through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Lent is a time to prepare for this celebration and to renew our life in the paschal mystery. We begin this holy season by acknowledging our need for repentance, and for the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I admit that this Lenten season can sometimes get a negative reputation. It’s viewed as the season in our faith when we give things up, when we prepare for the worst. However, I cannot help but imagine that God wants more for us than just six weeks of discipline or six weeks without our favorite thing. I cannot help but imagine that God wants a life for us so expansive that faith, joy, and hope flow over the edges. So we confess our sin, not because we have to suffer our way through Lent, but because the truth moves us one step closer to that expansive faith.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of Christ, to observe a holy Lent, by self-examination and penitence, by prayer and fasting, by works of love, and by meditating on God’s Word. Let us now confess our sin together:

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Leader: Merciful God, how many times in a day could we choose love?

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

Leader: How many times could we speak kindly to ourselves?

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

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

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

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

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

Leader: With gratitude we pray,

**ALL: Amen.**

**SILENT CONFESSION**

**ANTHEM** *Fall Slow Tears* by Ruth Elaine Schram

**BLESSING AND 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, for it is only by your gracious gift are we given everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.**

**Imposition: Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.**

**CHORAL RESPONSE***:  Bless the Lord*



**RECONCILIATION AND COMMENDATION** *[2 Corinthians 5:16-19]*

**From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know Him no longer in this way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!  All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.**

**THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD’S SUPPER**

**INVITATION**

Jesus has always been one to invite.

He said, “Drop your nets and follow me.”

He said, “Let the little children come to me.”

He said, “Stand up from your mat, you are healed.”

Jesus has always been one to invite, and that has not changed.

So friends, you are invited to this Table. Each and every one of us – with our doubts, our fears, our scars, our joy, our dreams, our hopes, our questions – we are invited to God’s table.

And here we will be met. Here we will be fed. Here we are given a taste of an expansive life that is full to the brim with love, overflowing with joy.

So come. Not because you must, but because you can. Come. You are invited. This table is for you.

**PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING**

Leader: The Lord be with you.

**People: And also with you.**

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

**People: We lift them up to the Lord.**

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord God.

**People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

God who knows us, we are amazed by you.

Your love never runs out, your hope never runs dry, your joy never gives up.

We wish that we could be more like you in that way.

In a world that loves scarcity, your abundance is overwhelming.

In a world that knows fear, your joy is compelling.

In a world that knows anxiety, your peace is captivating.

We long for those things.

So today we ask you -- be with us in this journey.

Be with us when compassion fatigue comes upon us.

Be with us when stress makes it hard to breathe.

Be with us when self-doubt pushes in close.

Be with us when exhaustion becomes constant or when loneliness becomes our primary language.

Be with us, and show us the way to the life you long for us.

Show us a life of expansive faith.

Show us a life of overflowing joy.

Show us a life of absorbing beauty.

Show us a life of engrossing purpose.

Show us a life that is as honest, and rich, and meaningful as the one Jesus led.

And until that expansive and holy day, we will continue to gather at this holy Table.

Until that day we will continue to look for you in our midst.

So pour out a double portion of yourself onto this bread and cup so that we might catch a glimpse of your goodness.

God, we are amazed by you.

Your love never runs out.

We are a grateful people, so together we sing with the angels here on earth and up above…

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,**

**Heaven and earth all full of your glory, Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

**PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD’S PRAYER**

**THE COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE**

Remembering all your mighty and merciful acts, we take this bread and this wine from the gifts you have given us and celebrate with joy the redemption won for us in Jesus Christ. For the bread that has been broken, for the cup of the covenant, we praise you for healing our hunger and thirst for better days. Let us share this holy meal together.

**CLOSING PRAYER** (in Unison)

**God of compassion, through your Son Jesus Christ you reconciled your people to yourself. Following His example of prayer and fasting, may we obey you with willing hearts and serve one another in holy love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**\* BENEDICTION**

As you leave this place, may God bless you with seeking. Seek out the hungry. Seek out 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.

**\* CLOSING HYMN**  *O God of Love, The Fast You Choose* by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

(to the Tune of #757 *Today We All Are Called to Be Disciples*)

O God of love, the fast you choose Is not some great display.
It's everything we gladly do to serve you day by day.
It's not a moment set apart when we will mourn our sin;
For you require a change of heart — a change from what has been.

Lord, we confess we often sing that you are our delight,
Then we go shouting words that sting; we bicker and we fight.
Oppressing others for our gain, we put our interests first.
We overlook our neighbors' pain while praying here in church.

You teach us what it means to be a church that worships you:
In setting captive people free, we praise you as you choose.
In sharing bread with hungry folk, bringing the homeless in,
And breaking every bitter yoke we worship you again.

God, bless us as we journey on to live in loving ways.
Then darkness will turn into dawn and gloom will turn to praise.
When justice is our offering, we also will be blest,
And we will know the fast we bring will be our very best.

Biblical Reference: Isaiah 58:1-12

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