

# ASH WEDNESDAY

February 26, 2020

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## WELCOME

### In the pew

You are invited to enter the silence and music, read and reflect using the guide below, and pray.

### At the altar

When you are ready, you are invited to light a candle on the altar as an act of prayer.

### Receive ashes

An Elder seated on the stage will impose the ashes for you. You can receive the ashes on your forehead, or extend your arm to the Elder and indicate you would like them on your hand instead.

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

**Ash Wednesday begins Lent, a season of forty days leading up to Easter.** Lent comes from the Anglo Saxon word “lencten”, which means “spring.” The forty days represent the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, enduring temptation and preparing to begin his ministry. Lent is a time in church life for repentance, fasting and preparation for the death and resurrection of Christ. It is a time of self-examination and reflection.

Learn more at [southelkhorncc.org/lent](https://southelkhorncc.org/lent)

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## SCRIPTURE

### Joel 2:12-13

*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.*

### Job 42:6

*“I repent in dust and ashes.”*

### Isaiah 61:1-3

*The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,  
because the Lord has anointed me;*

*he has sent me to bring good news to the  
oppressed,*

*to bind up the broken-hearted,*

*to proclaim liberty to the captives,*

*and release to the prisoners;*

*to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour,*

*and the day of vengeance of our God;*

*to comfort all who mourn;*

*to provide for those who mourn in Zion—*

*to give them a garland instead of ashes,*

*the oil of gladness instead of mourning,*

*the mantle of praise instead of a faint*

*spirit.*

*They will be called oaks of righteousness,*

*the planting of the Lord, to display his*

*glory.*

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## Rend Your Heart

### *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 rupture  
that will return you  
to the One who waits,  
who watches,  
who works within  
the rending  
to make your heart  
whole.

—Jan Richardson

### Reflect

1. Read the scripture passages and prayer slowly. What stands out to you or touches your heart?
2. Ash Wednesday is about entering the wilderness of our brokenness, grief, resentment or loneliness. Transformation begins in brave, honest self-examination. What is heavy in your heart?
3. What might repentance mean for you at this moment in your life? What needs forgiving, mending, or healing?
4. The ashes we wear are not so much about endings as an opportunity to *begin again* in light of the end. What needs to begin again in you? How will you practice that new beginning this Lent? How will you share the journey?