

**Ash Wednesday**  
**February 17, 2010 7:00 p.m.**

**Lighting of the Altar Candles**

*In many traditions around the world, the time just before Lent is a time of trying out other identities, wearing masks, a carnival. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of a time of inner revealing. We confront the reality that sometimes our prayers are efforts to show God our best sides, rather than our most broken selves. It is a time to unveil to our own awareness the true contours of our hearts, including the shadowy parts.*

*We see and wear ashes not only in grief for our mortality, but also in our sense of freedom. In God's loving way, forgiveness, justice, and renewal aren't all up to our efforts and goodness. Our spiritual work is to make all dimensions of life and community available to the renewing love of the Holy One.*

**Opening Words**

**L:** Have mercy on us, O God. Create in us a clean heart, and put a new and right spirit within us. Restore to us the joy of your salvation, and sustain in us a willing spirit.

**Gathering Prayer**

Merciful Midwife, carry us in love through this journey of exploration and spiritual refreshment. Like birds who prepare nests from mud and pieces of life, may we humbly prepare a space in our lives for the bold truth of resurrection. Amen.

**Opening Song**            *"Change My Heart, O God"*            **#2152**

**Prayer of Confession**

We gather in this community of worship aware, O Steady One, how we often live out of rhythm with your Heart of Love. We come longing for renewal, with hearts broken, so we might hear anew the pulse of your Word, be nurtured by one another's prayers, and restore the treasures of our hearts in the way of the Christ. Amen.

**Silent prayers for healing and renewal**

**Assurance of forgiveness**

**Reading of the Word**

**Hebrew Scripture**    *Joel 2:1-2, 12-16*

*Moment of Silence*

**Psalter**                    *Psalm 51: 1-17*                    **#785**

*Moment of Silence*

**Gospel**                    *Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21*

*Moment of Silence*

**\*Hymn**                    *"Of My Hands"*                    **Insert**

**Celebration of Holy Communion**

**Invitation**

**Prayer**

**Sharing of the Bread and Cup**

**Anthem**                    *"Lay Your Burden Down"*

**Ritual of ashes**

**Prayer**

Thank you, O Savior, for the symbolic power of ashes to expose our mortality and renew our focus. Unite us with all who bear the mark of ash and all who bear the mark of mortality by their very lives. Send us forth with our symbols of making room for new life so that we might become vessels of worship in the midst of brokenness. In the name of Christ, we pray.

**Sending Forth**

**Closing Song**            *"Open Our Eyes, Lord"*            **#2086**

Ash Wednesday Prayer

O God,

Maker of everything and judge of all you have made,

from the dust of the earth you have formed us

And from the dust of death you would raise us up.

By the redemptive power of the cross,

Create in us clean hearts

And put within us a new spirit,

That we may repent of our sins

And lead lives worthy of your calling;

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.