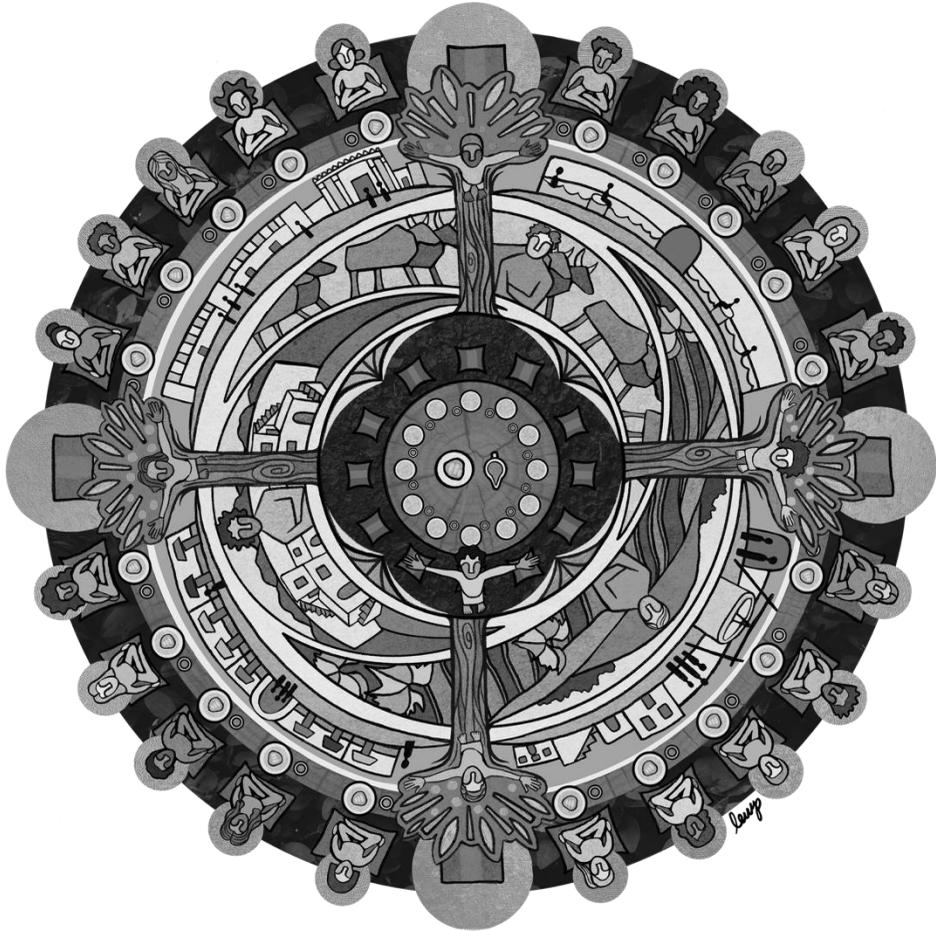


ST JOHN

UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
Freeport, Illinois



ASH WEDNESDAY

March 5, 2025 • 7:00 pm

The Season of Lent

Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent for many in the Christian church. The season's forty days of fasting (not counting Sundays) begins with the imposition of the ashes on the foreheads of the faithful, and ends with Holy Week's remembering the last days of Christ's ministry on the Earth. During the moving ancient ceremony, the ashes—from which Ash Wednesday gets its name—were placed on the foreheads of the faithful with the words from Genesis:

“Remember that you born of the Earth, and to the Earth you shall return.”

The Season of Lent continues each day until Easter's sunrise on April 5.

Sundays in Lent

- 2/18 Ash Wednesday *The good news is... all are invited*
- 2/22 First Week of Lent *The good news is... so good it catches us by surprise*
- 3/1 Second Week of Lent *The good news is... great love for God and neighbor*
- 3/8 Third Week of Lent *The good news is... together, the impossible is possible*
- 3/15 Fourth Week of Lent *The good news is... protection and care for the vulnerable*
- 3/22 Fifth Week of Lent *The good news is... rooted in justice, mercy, and faithfulness*

Holy Week

- 3/29 Palm / Passion Sunday *The good news is... inspiring us to act*
- 4/2 Maundy Thursday *The good news is... Even Judas gets his feet washed*
Service of Communion and the Tenebrae, 7:00 pm
- 4/3 Good Friday *The good news is... revealed through nonviolence*
A day of prayerful self-reflection and meditation. No community gathering will be held
- 4/5 Easter /Resurrection Sunday *The good news is... alive in the world!*
Sunrise Service, with Communion, 6:00 am
Easter Celebration, 10:00 am

The bulletin artwork, *There is Still Room* (digital drawing with collage) was created by Lauren Wright Pittman, and was inspired by Luke 14:15-24. It is printed in monochrome for the observation of Ash Wednesday. Please visit the Chapel Hearth Room to enjoy it, and the other Lent-inspired art, in their original colors.

Tonight's liturgy was written by Rev. Sarah A. Speed, and are used with permission from the 2026 Lent resource *Tell Me Something Good: Grounding ourselves in the good news this Lent*.

*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit
into the wilderness to be tested by the devil.
Matthew 4:1 (NRSVUE)*

WELCOMING MUSIC

PRELUDE

Prelude on "Beecher"

Charles Callahan

WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS

* CALL TO WORSHIP

One: This is the good news:

All: God is throwing a party.

One: God is hosting a dinner.

**All: God is preparing a banquet,
and all are invited.**

One: Let us worship this invitational God.

* HYMN (VU #109)

Now Quit Your Care

STAR IN THE EAST

Printed on the following page

** An asterisk is an invitation to rise as one is able (in body or spirit).*

Please note that tonight's offering will be collected at the Giving Table in the Narthex.

Now Quit Your Care

STAR IN THE EAST (11.10.11.10 D)



1. Now quit your care, and anx - ious fear and wor - ry;
2. For is not this the fast that I have cho - sen?



for schemes are vain and fret - ting brings no gain.
(The pro - phet spoke) To Shat - ter ev - ery yoke,



Lent calls for prayer, and for trust and ded - i - ca - tion;
of wick - ed - ness the griev - ous bands to loo - sen,



God brings new beau - ty with love most high.
op - res - sion put to flight, 'till every wrong's set right.



To bow the head in sack - cloth and in ashes,
Then shall your light break forth as does the mor - ning;



or rend the soul, such a grief is not Lent's goal;
your health shall spring, and the friends you make shall bring



but to be led to where God's glor - y flash - es,
God's glo - ry bright, your way through this life a - dor - ing;



when love makes clear where truth and light ap - pear.
and love the prize. Rise, and make par - a - dise!

GATHERING PRAYERS

Silent Centering

Prayer of Reflection (speaking together)

Loving God, you invite us
deeper into faith,
deeper into relationship,
and deeper into community.

You invite us to your table,
but we cling to the wall.
We RSVP “Maybe.”
We come up with excuses for why we can’t attend.

Welcome our doubting the invitation,
and challenge us for doubting our worth.

Show us how to respond to you
with confidence instead of hesitancy,
and joy instead of doubt.

With gratitude we pray,
and accept your invitation into Lent’s good news. Amen.

The Prayer of Our Savior

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread,
and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into
temptation but deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

GOD’S WORD IN SCRIPTURE

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10 (NRSVUE)

Dust and Ashes Touch our Face

Tune: DUST AND ASHES

1 Dust and ash - es touch our face, mark our fail - ure and our
2 Dust and ash - es soil our hands— greed of mar - ket, pride of
3 Dust and ash - es choke our tongue in the waste-land of de -

fall - ing. Ho-ly Spir-it, come, walk with us to - mor-row,
na - tion. Ho-ly Spir-it, come, walk with us to - mor-row
pres - sion. Ho-ly Spir-it, come, walk with us to - mor-row

take us as dis - ci - ples, washed and wak-ened by your call - ing.
as we pray and strug-gle through the mesh-es of op - pres - sion.
through all gloom and griev-ing to the paths of res - ur - rec - tion.

Refrain

Take us by the hand and lead us, lead us through the des - ert sands,

bring us liv-ing wa-ter, Ho - ly Spir - it, come.

Words: Brian Wren (1989); Music: Hal H. Hopson (1989)

© 1989 by Hope Publishing Company; from: The New Century Hymnal, #186

GOD'S WORD IN POETRY

"The Gospel According to Mrs. Farnell's Pre-K Class" by Sarah A. Speed

ANTHEM

And Can It Be?
The Chancel Choir

Dan Forrest

GOD'S WORD IN SCRIPTURE

Luke 14:15-24 (NRSVUE)

REFLECTION

Set for Supper

Rev. Hank Fairman

HYMN (NCH #186)

Dust and Ashes Touch our Face

DUST AND ASHES

Printed on the preceding page

IMPOSITION OF ASHES AND CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table

Prayer of Confession

One: Jesus said, "Follow me."

All: And I said, let me get ready.

Prayer of Confession (read together)

Gracious God,
you invite all of us to your table:
the faithful and the doubting,
the restless and the hopeless,
the addicted and the lonely,
the lost and the confused.

You invite all of us,
regardless of who we are or where we've been,
but we fail to do the same.

When given the opportunity,
we are guilty of casting judgment on our neighbors.
We draw lines, assume the worst, create cliques,
and accept exclusion.

Forgive our harmful ways.

This Lent, show us how to love others the way you love us.
With hope we pray, Amen.

Words of Assurance

One: Friends, no matter how many times we mess up,
no matter how many times we lose our way,
no matter how many times we decline God's invitation,
God will never stop inviting us to the table.

There is and always will be a seat saved for you.
So join me in these good news words:

**All: We are forgiven, again and again.
We are invited, again and again.
We are loved, from beginning to end.
Thanks be to God, our Inviter. Amen.**

Prayer over the Ashes and Prayer over our Communion

Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine

Christ's table is open to all who wish to participate.

Red Wine and White Grape juice are served to welcome all.

*Please raise your hand to receive a **gluten free** option.*

Imposition of Ashes

If you wish, take this time to receive a sign of earthy-ness. You may come forward in the sanctuary; or at home, mark yourself or have another mark you, saying the words: "Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

***HYMN (TFWA #2138)** *Sunday's Palms are Wednesday's Ashes*

ABBOTT'S LEIGH

Printed on the following page

***BENEDICTION**

We have entered in worship from a world full of shadows.

We know the Spirit goes before us to make a clear path.

We depart to serve, ready to follow the steps to go out in peace.

Amen

RESPONSE

From Gray Until Golden

ST. DENIO

Hank Fairman © 2026

From gray until golden, in prayer and in praise,

from ashes of memory, to stones rolled away;

From Hope born of starlight, to Palms, Passion-raised,
we walk through Lent's journey; as God guides each day.

POSTLUDE

The Glory of These Forty Days

Robert J. Powell

Sunday's Palms are Wednesday's Ashes



Sun - day's palms are Wednes - day's ash - es,
We have failed to lo - ve our neigh - bors,
Help us to for - get our judge - ments,
as a - noth - er Lent be - gins.
their of - fens - es to for - give.
nor be blind to hu - man need.

9
We join hands and come to - geth - er,
We will lis - ten to their troub - les,
Spark our hearts for un - der - stand - ing,
13
ask - ing God for peace from sin.
and help will care just and how they live.
us live, and do, and be.

17
We have made Bap - tis - mal pledg - es
We are jea - lous, proud, im - pat - ient,
We stand rea - dy as Dis - cip - les;
21
to stand firm and walk Christ's Way.
lov - ing o - ver - much our things.
preach - ing hon - es - ty and peace.

25
Now, re - turn - ing, seek - ing wis - dom,
May our learn - ing from our fail - ures
Come and bless us, then em - power us;
29
grant us cour - age, God, this day!
be our Lent - en of - fer - ing.
make new hearts with - in us, God!

THE SEASON OF LENT AT ST. JOHN UCC

Please join us for one, two, three, or all four weeks of this conversation. Feel our extravagant welcome to come as you can. Each week will build on each other, but is its own journey, too, and you'll be fed just the same!



ADULT FAITH FORMATION SERIES

Sundays in Lent, 9:00 am

On Sundays during Education Hour, gather with Christina Fairman in weekly sessions, sharing Kate Bowler's *Bless the Lent We Actually Have*.

Each week, we will reflect together on sacred scripture and personal reflections. Because when we do the hard part, something else happens: we get to the good part.

The accompanying study guides for both the Sunday and Wednesday series are available in the Narthex. These can also be used for your personal Lenten devotions!



LENTEN SUPPER & DISCUSSION SERIES

Wednesdays, 2/25-3/25

6:00 meal / 6:30-8:00 program

On Wednesdays, gather for supper at 6:00 pm, and continue or join up at 6:30 with Pastor Hank for a wider view of our Lenten focus, A Sanctified Art's *Tell me something good: Grounded in the good news this Lent*.

Each week, we'll talk through the parallels, following along with the stories in Sunday's worship of the *Narrative Lectionary*.

PLAYLIST FOR LENT



Be intentional this Lenten season and dive deeper into your faith by listening to Kate Bowler's companion Spotify playlist for inspiration, encouragement, and love: <https://bit.ly/BlesstheLentWeActuallyHave>.



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an Open and Affirming, Racial Justice Congregation,
where God is Still Speaking,