

**St John's United Church of Christ**  
**Service of Ashes**

**February 18, 2026**

**7:30p.m.**

Prelude: "What Wondrous Love Is This" Thomas Chesterton  
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Welcome

Rev. Becky Sausser

Call to Worship based on "Change my Heart" by Eddie Espinosa

One: Change my heart, O God, Make it ever true;

**All: Change my heart, O God, May I be like you.**

One: You are the Potter, I am the clay

**All: Mold me and make me, This is what I pray.**

One: Change my heart, O God, Make it ever true;

**All: Change my heart, O God, May I be like you.**

**Hymn #205..... "Forty Days and Forty Nights"**

Call to Confession

One: No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here! When we come before the Lord to profess our need for grace and salvation, we are washed clean in the blood of the lamb.

**All: Creator, Son, and Spirit One, we confess our desperate need for your presence in our lives. We are not perfect, and there are places where we fall short. We need your mercy and grace. Thank you Lord, that as we begin this Lenten journey, that you are with us. Fill us with your spirit and your light as we walk the road of mercy and forgiveness. When we don these ashes tonight, they no longer symbolize our final destination of returning to the dust from which we were formed, but instead serve to remind us of your redemption and restoration. Amen.**

Confession Response ♫ Hymn #202, Verse 3

**O God of all the living, both banished and restored,  
Compassionate, forgiving, our peace and hope assured.  
Grant now that our transgressing, our faithlessness may cease.  
Stretch out your hand in blessing, in pardon, and in peace.**

Words of Assurance

One: Receive this assurance, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for our sins so that we might not perish, but have everlasting life!

**205**      Forty Days and Forty Nights

George Hunt Smyttan, 1856; alt.

1. For-ty days and for-ty nights  
you were fast-ing in the wild;  
For-ty days and for-ty nights  
tempt-ed, and yet un-de-filed.
  
2. Shall we not your sor-row share  
and from world-ly joys ab-stain,  
Fast-ing with un-ceas-ing prayer,  
strong with you to suf-fer pain?
  
3. Then if Sa-tan on us press,  
flesh or spir-it to as-sail,  
Vic-tor in the wil-der-ness,  
grant that we not faint or fail!
  
4. So shall we have peace di-vine:  
ho-lier glad-ness ours shall be;  
'Round us, too, shall an-gels shine,  
such as served you faith-ful-ly.
  
5. Keep, O keep us, Sav-ior dear,  
ev-er con-stant by your side;  
That with you we may ap-pear  
at the e-ter-nal Eas-ter-tide.

Matt. 4:1-11; Heb. 2:18

All: "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you, and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." -Ezekiel 36:26

Response to words of Assurance ♫ Hymn #208 Verse 4

**Be of good cheer, for God in Christ  
Forgives the flock, by sin enticed,  
And justified by Jesus' blood,  
Your baptism grants the highest good.**

Scriptures

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17  
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Janet Cook

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Congregational Response ♫

**Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me;  
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me;  
Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.  
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.**

Reflection on Ash Wednesday

Rev. Becky Sausser

**Hymn #185..... "Savior, When in Tears and Dust"**

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give  
us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive  
our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.  
Amen.**

Prayer Response ♫ Hymn #204, verse 2

**Take up your cross, let not its weight  
fill your weak spirit with alarm;  
Christ's strength will bear your spirit up  
and brace your heart, support your arm.**

Chancel Choir Anthem:

"A Lenten Prayer"

Lloyd Larson

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Robert Grant, 1815; alt.

1. Sav-ior, when in tears and dust, low we bow to you in trust,  
When re-pen-tant, to the skies scarce we lift our weep-ing eyes,  
Mind-ful how you suf-fered pain that God's love in us might reign—  
Help us claim what we would be, hear our sol-emn lit-a-ny.
2. By your help-less in-fant years, by your life of want and tears,  
By your days of sore dis-tress in the sav-age wil-der-ness,  
By the dread mys-te-rious hour of the in-sult-ing tempt-er's power:  
Turn, O turn a fa-voring eye, hear our sol-emn lit-a-ny.
3. By your hour of dire de-spair, by your ag-o-ny of prayer,  
By the cross, the nail, the thorn, pierc-ing spear, and tor-turing scorn,  
By the gloom that veiled the skies o'er the dread-ful sac-ri-fice:  
Lis-ten to our hum-ble cry, hear our sol-emn lit-a-ny.
4. By your deep ex-pir-ing groan, by the sad se-pul-chral stone,  
By the vault whose cold a-bode held in vain the ris-ing God:  
O from earth to realms of light, Christ re-stored in power and might,  
Lis-ten, lis-ten to the cry of our sol-emn lit-a-ny.

## Blessing of the Ashes

One: We don these ashes as a sign of our repentance from the imperfect lives that we lead, and as a reminder of the true death that befalls those who do not accept eternal life and salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.  
**All: We turn away from our sins and turn toward the good news found in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Amen.**

*(At this time, you are invited to come forward to receive ashes. Please extend your hand with your palm facing down if you wish to receive ashes on your hand rather than your forehead. Ashes will be administered with a Q-tip for health and safety.)*

## Music for the Imposition of Ashes

“Lamb of God, Pure and Holy” Johann Pachelbel  
Copyright 1956 Concordia Publishing House

## Offering

Offertory “Aus Der Tiefe” June Nixon  
Copyright 1995 Kevin Mayhew Ltd.

## \*Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all you creatures here below;  
Praise God above, ye heav’ly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen!

## \*Prayer of Dedication

**\*Hymn #197..... “Jesus Keep Me near the Cross”**

## \*Commission and Blessing

## \*Threefold Amen

Postlude: “Lord Jesus, Think On Me” Colin Hand  
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## 197      Jesus, Keep Me near the Cross

Fanny Crosby, 1869; alt.

1. Je-sus, keep me near the cross; there a pre-cious foun-tain,  
free to all, a heal-ing stream, flows from Cal-vary's moun-tain.  
In the cross, in the cross, be my glo-ry ev-er,  
till my ran-somed soul shall find rest be-yond the riv-er.
2. Near the cross, a trem-bling soul, love and mer-cy found me;  
there the bright and morn-ing star sheds its beams a-round me.  
In the cross, in the cross, be my glo-ry ev-er,  
till my ran-somed soul shall find rest be-yond the riv-er.
3. Near the cross! O Lamb of God, bring its scenes be-fore me;  
help me live from day to day with its shad-ow o'er me.  
In the cross, in the cross, be my glo-ry ev-er,  
till my ran-somed soul shall find rest be-yond the riv-er.
4. Near the cross I'll watch and wait, hop-ing, trust-ing ev-er,  
till I reach the gold-en strand just be-yond the riv-er.  
In the cross, in the cross, be my glo-ry ev-er,  
till my ran-somed soul shall find rest be-yond the riv-er.

Gal. 6:14; Rev. 22:1-5

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**Personal hearing devices** are available from an usher in rear of church.

Use of **electronic devices** during worship may be distracting to your neighbor. Please refrain unless a personal emergency.

**In emergencies**, please use exits found to left and right of the altar, to the right of the front pew, and at the rear of the sanctuary.  
Follow **EXIT** signs.

Please make sure your name has been added to the church attendance each Sunday. Then if contact tracing is necessary, we will be able to notify you. Thank you.

