

ASH WEDNESDAY

February 26, 2019

7:00 PM

So let the ashes come as beginning . . . and not as end;
the first sign . . . but not the final.

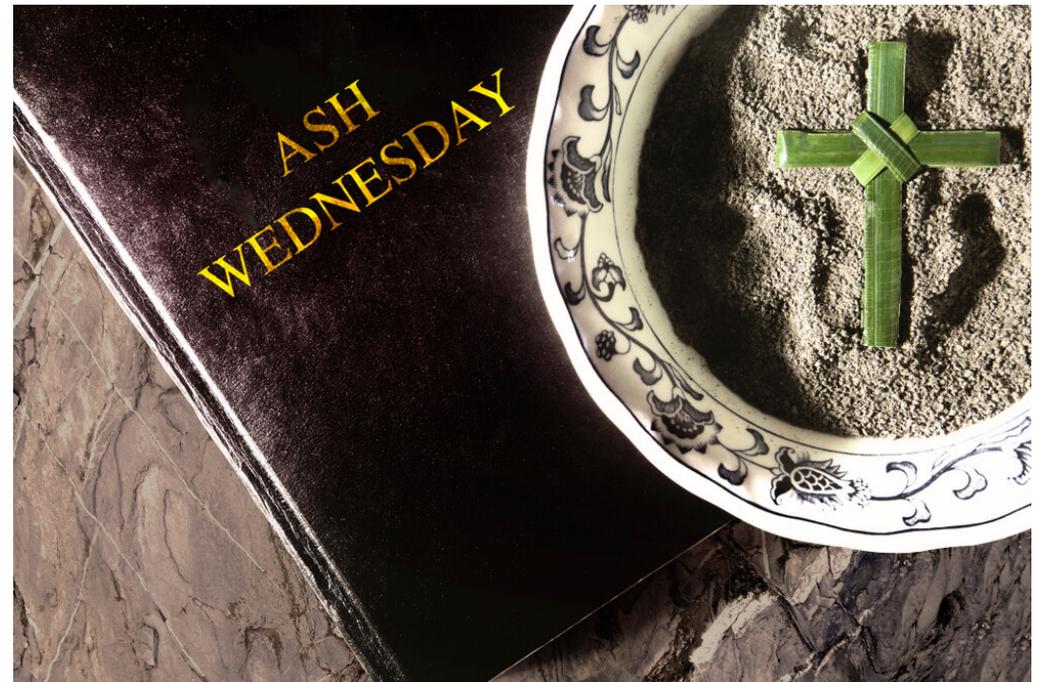
Let them rest upon you as invocation and invitation,
and let them take you the way that ashes know to go.

May they mark you with the memory of fire
and of the life that came before the burning:
the life that rises and returns and finds its way again.

See what shimmers amid their darkness,
what endures within their dust.

See how they draw us toward the mystery
that will consume but not destroy,
that will blossom from the blazing,
that will scorch us with its joy.

Jan Richardson



*First Congregational Church of Hanover
Hanover, Massachusetts
Reverend John Terry
Hal Thomas, Lay Reader*

GREETING AND WELCOME

One: Ashes on our foreheads, seeds of hope in our hearts. As we begin the journey to and beyond the cross, let us remember: God prepares us for life

All: and not for death;

One: for resurrection,

All: and not for crucifixion;

One: for love,

All: and not for hate.

One: In a world where death holds us bound and violence seems to reign in thought, word and deed, may this journey of Lent get us ready

All: to be God's good news of hope and wholeness and resurrection life.

INVITATION TO THE OBSERVANCE OF LENT

LITANY OF CONFESSION

PASTOR: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

PEOPLE: For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment.

PASTOR: Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me. You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be purer than snow.

PEOPLE: Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

PASTOR: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not

take your holy spirit from me.

PEOPLE: Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

PASTOR: Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

PEOPLE: O God, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

PASTOR: For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.

PEOPLE: The sacrifice acceptable to God is a troubled spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Isaiah 58:1-12 Old Testament page #688

Matthew 6:1 – 6, 16 – 21 New Testament page #5

BLESSING OF THE ASHES (in unison)

Let us be marked not for sorrow. And let us be marked not for shame. Let us be marked not for false humility or for thinking we are less than we are, but for claiming what God can do within the dust, within the dirt, within the stuff of which the world is made, and the stars in our bones, and the galaxies that spiral inside the smudge we bear.

SILENT CONFESSION AND PRAYER

***IMPOSITION OF ASHES**

BENEDICTION