

**Minden United Methodist Church**  
**February 14, 2024**  
**7:00 PM**



**Ash  
Wednesday**

**Prelude**

**Words of Welcome**

**Prayer of Releasing**

Holy, holy, holy God, we are grateful for your presence. We rest in the promise of your grace. Our minds and our spirits are restless. Our attention is tugged away from you.

Let us unclench our hands and release these things:

We release all that we have done recently—whether for good or for ill.

We release all that we feel like we should have done today but did not do.

We release all that we need to do soon.

We release our fear.

We release our anxiety.

We release our impatience.

We release our pride—and our shame.

Everything that pulls us away from you, O God, we release.

**Silent prayer**

Holy One, fill us now with the joy and the peace of your deep, abiding presence. We offer all of ourselves to you, our One God: Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer. Amen

**Gathering Song**

**“Come and Find the Quiet Center”**

**TFWS#2128**

**Joel 2:1-2 & 12-17 (NIV)**

**An Army of Locusts**

Blow the trumpet in Zion;  
sound the alarm on my holy hill.  
Let all who live in the land tremble,  
for the day of the Lord is coming.  
It is close at hand—  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of clouds and blackness.  
Like dawn spreading across the mountains  
a large and mighty army comes,  
such as never was in ancient times  
nor ever will be in ages to come.

**Rend Your Heart**

“Even now,” declares the Lord,  
“return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting and weeping and mourning.”  
Rend your heart and not your garments.  
Return to the Lord your God,  
for he is gracious and compassionate,  
slow to anger and abounding in love,  
and he relents from sending calamity.  
Who knows? He may turn and relent  
and leave behind a blessing—  
grain offerings and drink offerings for the Lord your God.  
Blow the trumpet in Zion,  
declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly.  
Gather the people, consecrate the assembly;  
bring together the elders,  
gather the children, those nursing at the breast.  
Let the bridegroom leave his room  
and the bride her chamber.  
Let the priests, who minister before the Lord,  
weep between the portico and the altar.  
Let them say, “Spare your people, Lord.  
Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn,  
a byword among the nations.  
Why should they say among the peoples,  
‘Where is their God?’”

**(Silence)**

**Psalm 51:1-17 (NIV) For the director of music. A psalm of David.  
When the prophet Nathan came to him after David  
had committed adultery with Bathsheba.**

Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your unfailing love;  
according to your great compassion  
blot out my transgressions.  
Wash away all my iniquity  
and cleanse me from my sin.  
For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is always before me.  
Against you, you only, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight;  
so you are right in your verdict  
and justified when you judge.  
Surely I was sinful at birth,  
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.  
Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;  
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.  
Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;  
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.  
Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.  
Hide your face from my sins  
and blot out all my iniquity.  
Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
Do not cast me from your presence  
or take your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.  
Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
so that sinners will turn back to you.  
Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,  
you who are God my Savior,  
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.  
Open my lips, Lord,  
and my mouth will declare your praise.  
You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;  
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.  
My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart  
you, God, will not despise.

## **Prayer of Confession**

God of Compassion, we turn toward you now.

We rend our hearts.

Forgive our pride and forgive our insecurities.

Forgive our self-absorption and forgive our self-destruction.

Forgive our doubts and forgive our certainties.

Forgive our longing for attention and forgive our desire to hide.

Forgive each step we take away from you.

## **Silence**

Create in us clean hearts, O God. And renew right spirits within us. Do not cast us away from your presence. Do not take your Holy Spirit from us. Restore to us the joy of our salvation and grant willing spirits to sustain us. Amen.

## **Assurance of Pardon**

God says, “At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.’ See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!” Know that in Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. May the peace of Christ be with you.

**Hymn      “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing”      UMH#400**

## **2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10 (NIV)**

We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

As God’s co-workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain. For he says, “In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.”

I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.

## **Paul’s Hardships**

We put no stumbling block in anyone’s path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

**(Silence)**

## **Matthew 6:1-6 (NIV)**

### **Giving to the Needy**

“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them.

If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

### **Prayer**

“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

## **Matthew 6:16-21 (NIV)**

### **Fasting**

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

### **Treasures in Heaven**

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

## **Lord’s Prayer**

### **Blessing the Dust: For Ash Wednesday**

All those days, you felt like dust, like dirt, as if all you had to do was turn your face toward the wind and be scattered to the four corners or swept away by the smallest breath as insubstantial— did you not know what the Holy One can do with dust?

This is the day we freely say we are scorched. This is the hour we are marked by what has made it through the burning. This is the moment we ask for the blessing that lives within the ancient ashes that make its home inside the soil of this sacred earth.

So 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 that blaze in our bones and the galaxies that spiral inside the smudge we bear.

### **Thanksgiving over the Ashes**

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence, so that we may remember that only by your gracious gift are we given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

### **Imposition of Ashes**

While we sing "**I Surrender All**," **UMH 354**, I invite you to come forward to receive the cross in the ashes.

**Remember that you are dust, and to dust, you shall return.**

**Closing Song**

**"The Servant Song"**

**TFWS#2222**

### **Dismissal with Blessing**

As you enter the sacred darkness of this season, know that you are led by God's grace, restored by God's spirit, and held always in God's steadfast love. Amen.

**Postlude**