

# Countryside Community Church WORSHIP



*Toward Jerusalem*, Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman, digital painting,  
[Sanctifiedart.org](http://Sanctifiedart.org)

## Ash Wednesday

March 5, 2025

† Indicates those places where those who are able are invited to stand.

Text in **bold** indicates places where the congregation is invited to join in response.

## *Gathering*

### PRELUDE

*Ah, Holy Jesus*

Johannes Brahms

### WORDS OF WELCOME

Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas

### CALL TO WORSHIP

One: If you have days when you feel a little bit lost and a little bit found,

**Many: then you are in the right place.**

One: If you have days when you are desperate for rest and eager to grow,

**Many: then you are in the right place.**

One: If you have days when your prayers could be both shouts and silence,

**Many: then you are in the right place.**

One: God meets us here, in the messy middle of our lives.

**Many: So may we bring our full selves into this service and into this season.**

One: With God's help, may it be so.

**Many: Let us worship our all-loving God.**

### OPENING HYMN

*Hymn #88 All My Hope On God Is Founded*

### PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones

One: From lack of reverence for truth and beauty;

from a calculating or sentimental mind;

from going along with mean and ugly things;

**Many: Holy One, deliver us.**

One: From cowardice that dares not face truth;  
laziness content with half-truth;  
or arrogance that purports to know it all;

**Many: Holy One, deliver us.**

One: From artificial life and worship;  
from all that is hollow or insincere;  
from trite ideals and cheap pleasures;  
from mistaking vulgarity for humour;

**Many: Holy One, deliver us.**

One: From being pompous, or rude;  
from cynicism about others;  
from intolerance or cruel indifference;

**Many: Holy One, deliver us.**

One: From being satisfied with things as they are,  
in the church or in the world;  
from failing to share your outrage about injustice;

**Many: Holy One, deliver us.**

One: From selfishness,  
self-indulgence,  
or self-pity;

**Many: Holy One, deliver us.**

One: From token concern for the poor,  
for lonely or loveless people;  
from confusing faith with good feeling,  
or love with wanting to be loved;

**Many: Holy One, deliver us.**

One: For everything in us that may hide your light;

**Many: Holy One, light of life, forgive us. Amen.**

## *Hearing the Word*

**LESSON: Joel 2:1-2, 12-14**

Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas

Blow the trumpet in Zion;  
sound the alarm on my holy mountain!  
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,  
for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near—  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of clouds and thick darkness!  
Like blackness spread upon the mountains,  
a great and powerful army comes;  
their like has never been from of old,  
nor will be again after them  
in ages to come.  
-- Yet even now, says the Lord,  
return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;  
rend your hearts and not your clothing.  
Return to the Lord your God,  
for he is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love,  
and relenting from punishment.  
Who knows whether he will not turn and relent  
and leave a blessing behind him,  
a grain offering and a drink offering  
for the Lord your God?

*Responding to the Word***INVITATION TO A LENTEN OBSERVATION**

Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones

**POEM**

Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas

*Rend Your Heart: A Blessing for Ash Wednesday* ~ Jan Richardson

To receive this blessing, all you have to do is let your heart break.  
Let it crack open. Let it fall apart so that you can see its secret chambers,  
the hidden spaces where you have hesitated to go.  
Your entire life is here, inscribed whole upon your heart's walls:  
every path taken or left behind,  
every face you turned toward or turned away,  
every word spoken in love or in rage,  
every line of your life you would prefer to leave in shadow,  
every story that shimmers with treasures known and those you have yet to find.  
It could take you days to wander these rooms.  
Forty, at least.  
And so let this be a season for wandering  
for trusting the breaking  
for tracing the tear that will return you to the One who waits;  
who watches; who works within the rending to make your heart whole.

## THANKSGIVING OVER ASHES

Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth and added stardust to every breath we take. In the Ashes we are mortal beings who suffer. In the glitter we are immortal souls celebrating life. Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence – our immortality and thirst for justice as did Jesus who was willing to die for us. Amen.

All who would be marked with the Ashes of humility and the Glitter of life, come now to receive a blessing.

### Imposition of Ashes

*As we share the ashes with one another, please do so mindful that these ashes remind us of the God who is with and within us.*

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

*(Congregants are invited to approach the chancel to receive ashes)*

### Reflection in Music

#### Affirmation

Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones

Lent is a time for us to return to God who formed us from the dust of the earth. Our lives are finite, so we want to spend every precious moment in tune with God's love and light, living whole, abundant lives—the kind of lives we were created to lead. And so in recognition of our origins in the earth, as stardust we acknowledge our finite days, in receiving these ashes we remember; dust we are, and to dust we shall return.

#### MUSIC RESPONSE

*Create in Me a Clean Heart*

Cathy Stemeagna

# Sending

## **BENEDICTION**

Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas

As you leave this place,  
may you find God in every messy middle.  
May you know that the world is bigger than two sides.  
May you trust that you are made in the image of God,  
and therefore, you contain multitudes.  
So may you move through this world with an open heart,  
with a curious mind, and with the confidence that you do not go alone.  
God is with you in the mountains,  
in the valleys,  
and everywhere in between.  
Believe that good news, and go in peace.

## **POSTLUDE**

*Deck Thyself, Thy Soul With Gladness*

Johannes Brahms

Adam Witte, vocals - Alex Ritter, organ and piano

ASH WEDNESDAY

everything [in] between intention & action



## Both. Please

It's one thing to speak of love. It's another  
to hold a newborn in your arms,  
to sing someone to sleep,  
to lean down and listen for their breathing.  
It's one thing to speak of faith. It's another  
to press your forehead to the floor,  
to cry out in prayer,  
to ask the hard questions and still  
thank God for the meal.

It's one thing to speak of the Divine. It's another  
to walk under a tunnel of wisteria,  
to stand barefoot at the edge of the sea,  
to hear the birds sing as the sun returns  
and whisper, Thank you, thank you, thank you.  
It's one thing and another, so I pray,  
Give me both, please. Show me both, please.

*Poem by*

*Rev. Sarah Speed*