

**Call to Worship** Based on Joel 2:1,12-13

Blow the trumpet! Sound the alarm! Return your hearts and rededicate yourselves to God.  
Come fasting and weeping, sorry for your sins! Change your life, not just your clothes.  
For God is gracious and compassionate. slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.  
*We return to God with all our heart.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 51:1-12, Psalm 22:14-15

**Hymn:** StF 429 (Martin Leckebusch ©1999 Kevin Mayhew)

Lord we turn to you for mercy:  
may our prayerful words express  
something of our heartfelt sorrow  
for the sins we now confess.

Your forgiveness lifts our burdens,  
setting hearts and spirits free  
to fulfil our true potential,  
all that we were meant to be.

**Reflection** (Taken from *Worship at Home: Lent 2021 A Season of Promise* written by Mary Scifres and B. J. Beu)

The psalmist calls for a spring cleaning of the heart and soul. Such cleaning cannot be undertaken alone. God is the one who can do this, the one who can put a new and faithful spirit within you. Yet, God cannot do this without your eager consent, or without your willingness to turn a heart of stone into a heart of flesh. Ash Wednesday is a day to tear down the walls of the heart—walls that are built to keep out hurt and pain, but ultimately keep the hurt locked inside; walls that tell God to go away. Ash Wednesday is a day to heed the warning of the prophet Joel and return to the Lord with a full heart, a clean heart—for God’s mercy, compassion, and forgiveness are greater than God’s anger at human failings.

*Take a small scrap of paper and write down something you would like to give up—something that saps your strength and makes your spirit feel like a piece of broken pottery. Tear it into pieces and bury the pieces in a container of soil. Take a moment to remember that when you turn your burdens over to God, Christ’s saving love lifts you from the dust of death through the power of the Holy Spirit. Moisten your thumb and dip it in the soil and mark a cross on your forehead or wrist, as a sign of your commitment to be free of this burden. Return to your commitment, this promise you are making to yourself, throughout the season of Lent, that your spirit may be lifted up with Christ on Good Friday. You may keep the remaining bowl of soil on your altar as a reminder of your commitment throughout the season.*

**Prayer**

Eternal God, we are works in progress. We build up walls, gather clutter, and feel our strength sapped. We give to you now the burdens that we wrote on our pieces of paper. ... ..  
In these days of Lent, transform our hearts as we give ourselves to you and let go of what is holding us back. Forgive us. Guide us. Heal us. Create in us, clean hearts. Gratefully we pray, Amen.

**Blessing**

We go from here turning away from sin and embracing God’s love.  
And may God the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer be with us all, now and always. Amen.