

*Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,*

On a sunny morning like today, I could be fooled into thinking spring is just around the corner. Even while scraping frost from my windshield, I can also see crocus and daffodil sprouts poking hopefully through a bed of moist, rich soil.

Lent is often called the “springtime of the soul,” six weeks set aside for spiritual renewal on the way to Holy Week and Easter. As we “return to the Lord our God,” the traditional practices of *prayer, fasting, and acts of charity* can help to focus us.

I encourage you to make an intentional faith plan this Lent, choosing one or two specific actions you can carry through on. You might create a quiet space and time for prayer, journaling or scripture reading. My favorite guide for meditation is *Sacred Space*, created by Jesuits in Ireland, available by app or online at [sacredspace.ie](http://sacredspace.ie). You could join First Immanuel’s prayer chain—send an email to Suzanne Nelson at [firstimmanuelprayers@gmail.com](mailto:firstimmanuelprayers@gmail.com). You might try a free Bible app that provide a daily verse or reading plan—examples include *HarperCollins Olive Tree Bible* and *Our Bible*, a site that’s LGBTQ-friendly. Read a meaningful book, tune in to Krista Tippett’s “On Being” NPR podcast, pick up a list of scriptures at church. Because Christian community is so important, I hope you’ll join us for Sunday worship, Ash Wednesday, and the beautiful Holden Evening Prayer on Thursdays.

I also encourage you to put your faith into action. What might you choose as an intentional practice of caring for the earth and your neighbors? A simple example: In the adult forum, we discussed the sacredness of dirt and how the earth’s *humus* or topsoil is being depleted at an alarming rate. We drew hope from the idea that composting is one simple way we can each help renew the topsoil. Composting does more than just reduce landfill waste—it literally renews the earth. We got pretty excited about composting as a spiritual practice, which could explain why Joan Pendergast (who doesn’t have composting at her condo) brought me a bag of frozen food waste to take home to our curbside bin. Possible Lenten discipline? Why not?

Spring will eventually come. And just as God is renewing the earth, we ask God to renew our relationship with Christ and renew our service to others. I wonder how you will invite God to renew you...in peace, hope, trust, courage, compassion, forgiveness, justice. Lord, let our hearts be good soil.

*Pastor Melinda*

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## **Two Services on Ash Wednesday March 6, 12 noon and 7 p.m.**



ASH WEDNESDAY

The Ash Wednesday liturgy is a gift to us from the ancient church and is as meaningful for us today as it was for early Christians. The service leads us to reflect on the quality of our faith and life. This worship starts our journey through the season of Lent and helps us to focus on the mystery of God’s saving work in Christ. Through these weeks, we are brought anew to the gift of our Baptism, as we are reminded of God’s great mercy.

The service includes the imposition of ashes. Ashes remind us that this life is a temporary gift, and that we are totally dependent upon God for life. We receive these ashes in a solemn but not despairing mood. We recognize our mortality and open our hearts to God’s renewal through the gift of Christ. Please join us for this special worship.