

St. John's United Church of Christ

6 P.M. Worship

Feb 18, 2026

Ash Wednesday

WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR THE WORD OF GOD

Ringling of the Chimes

Welcome

*(Please note the * indicates when you should stand*

Members and Visitors please make note of your attendance by signing in on the pew pads.)

Prelude		
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*The Call to Worship

To come into your presence, O God, is a humbling experience.

We come aware of our faults, ready to be renewed.

To come into your presence, O God, is a learning experience.

We come aware of our ignorance, eager to receive new truth.

To come into your presence, O God, is a challenging experience.

We come aware of the crying needs of our city and world, ready to serve the downtrodden, and the exploited.

To come into your presence, O God, is the experience of a lifetime.

We come aware of your eternal goodness, ready to witness to your glorious presence in Jesus Christ. Amen.

* Hymn	"Lord, Prepare Me"	(three times)
	Lord prepare me to be a sanctuary, Pure and holy, tried and true. With thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for You.	

*Gathering Prayer (*In Unison*)

Holy One, open our hearts, lips, minds, and spirits, and we will declare your praise. We gather in your name and in your presence to worship you, to reorient our lives, and to direct our attention toward you. May your power flow through us as spirit meets spirit. As we reflect upon your goodness and the needs of the world, stir our hearts toward compassion and our lives toward active participation in your realm. Hear our prayers, delight in our songs, and speak through our words. Amen.

Special Music		
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*Invitation to Confession

* Prayer of Confession

On this first day of Lent we pause, look within and examine our consciousness.

Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love.

Where we have neglected prayer, been apathetic in worship, found reasons to avoid generosity, or lacked compassion:

Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love.

Where we have colluded in the oppression of those who become invisible in their suffering, and ignored on the streets:

Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love.

Where anxiety has eroded the gift of Your peace, and where we have cared too much about what others think:

Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love. Amen.

***Words of Grace**

As Lent begins, know that God understands how we struggle to stay open and compassionate. The invitation is not to focus on our inadequacies, but on God's gift of grace and love which transforms our hearts and minds. That gift is given to us again, here and now. You are forgiven.

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

Scriptures: Psalm 51:1-12

Prayer for Cleansing and Pardon

To the leader. A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy,
blot out my transgressions.
- 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.
- 3 For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
- 4 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.
- 5 Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
- 6 You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
- 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- 8 Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
- 9 Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
- 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
- 11 Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
- 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit..

Reading "Ash Wednesday" By Jim Burklo

Scripture: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

2 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—

2 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;
13 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.

14 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?

15 Blow the trumpet in Zion;
 consecrate a fast;

call a solemn assembly;

16 gather the people.

Consecrate the congregation;

 assemble the aged;

gather the children,

 even infants at the breast.

Let the bridegroom leave his room
 and the bride her canopy.

17 Between the vestibule and the altar,
 let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep.

Let them say, "Spare your people, O Lord,
 and do not make your heritage a mockery,
 a byword among the nations.

Why should it be said among the peoples,
 'Where is their God?' "

One: This is the Word of the Lord.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

*** Hymn**

"There's a Wideness in God's Mercy"

#73

**There's a wideness in God's mercy,
like the wideness of the sea;
there's a kindness in God's justice,
which is more than liberty.**

**For the love of God is broader
than the measure of our mind;
and the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.**

**There is welcome for the sinner,
and more graces for the good!
There is mercy with the Savior;
there is healing in his blood.**

**If our love were but more simple,
we would rest upon God's word;
and our lives would be illumined
by the presence of our Lord.**

WE RESPOND TO THE WORD OF GOD

Invitation to Give Generously

(Thank you for being so generous in your care of St. John's UCC and its mission, through your participation and giving. Your stewardship makes a difference. You may make your offering several ways including in church, online or mail. We are grateful for your support.)

Offertory

***Doxology**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, you heavenly hosts;
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One. Amen.**

Prayer of Dedication *(In Unison)

Generous God, we thank you for opening our hearts to the needs of your creation. May your glory and love be revealed in our community by our simple, everyday offerings. Amen.

Imposition of Ashes

COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table

Telling the Story

Blessing the Elements

Sharing the Meal

Prayer of Thanksgiving

O God, even as we come to the table tonight remembering our frailty with the dust on our heads, we also give you our thanks for this meal. We give our gratitude that we have come together as one Body of Christ. In these next 40 days and as we walk the road to the crucifixion, continue to keep us awake to the ways we can bring Jesus' peace and love to our world. Amen.

WE GO FORTH TO SERVE

* Hymn

"Lord, I Want to Be a Christian"

#589

Lord, I want to be a Christian in-a my heart, in-a my heart;
Lord, I want to be a Christian in-a my heart.
In-a my heart, in-a my heart,
Lord, I want to be a Christian in-a my heart.

Lord, I want to be more loving in-a my heart, in-a my heart;
Lord, I want to be more loving in-a my heart.
In-a my heart, in-a my heart,
Lord, I want to be more loving in-a my heart.

Lord, I want to be like Jesus in-a my heart, in-a my heart;
Lord, I want to be like Jesus in-a my heart.
In-a my heart, in-a my heart,
Lord, I want to be like Jesus in-a my heart.

Benediction

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Pastor: **Rev. Katie Jo Bielke**
Director of Music: **Ruth Notch**
Technology: **Steve Hawkinson**
