



WILLIAMSBURG PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

ASH WEDNESDAY

A SERVICE OF ASHES, REPENTANCE AND COMMITMENT

MARCH 5, 2025

PRAYER OF THE EVENING

“It’s a season of unmasking, of veils lifted. We are seeing our collective soul with a clarity that is disorienting. Listen for the apathy, the cruelty, and neglect. Then listen closely for all who dare resist.”

THE GATHERING

PRELUDE Chorale Prelude on “*Vater unser im Himmelreich*” Zachau

CALL TO WORSHIP (responsive)

Leader: God sent Christ into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

All: God’s love endures forever.

Leader: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though the waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

All: God’s love endures forever.

Leader: God abides with us and teaches us to die to self and to live repentant lives.

**All: God’s love endures forever. We return, we remember, and we will listen well.
Let us worship God.**

PRAYER OF INVOCATION (unison)

God of Ashes, today, let us hold the tension of the story of our making – born of the dirt, beautifully connected to the earth we walk on. And yet, possessing the knowledge of our own mortality – that our common decay cannot be escaped. As we begin Lent, help us to become honest about the ways our societies and selfhoods are marred by injustice, cruelty, neglect, and greed. Help us to see our own role in the degeneration of the world; that as we push back evil around us, we might also admit those secret evils that dwell in us. As we name how we’ve been complicit in the ashes of this world, help us to bear them in solidarity and hope. Amen. + (Cole Arthur Riley)

*To all who are able, please stand as we offer God thanks and praise.

Bold type face indicates that the congregation participates in word or song.

THE WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Leader: Gracious God, we pause for a moment, to pay attention to the gift of breath, which is as ancient as we are old, as new as this morning's dawn. (Pause)

By your Spirit, your Word is made new. In the hearing of Scripture, ancient and new, may we be inclined to speak the truth in loving kindness, obey the law of your love, and to keep your peace that passes all understanding. Amen.

FIRST LESSON: *Isaiah 58:1-12*

This is the Word of the Lord!
Thanks be to God!

PSALM 51

Refrain to be sung by the Choir and Congregation



Have mer - cy, God, up - on my life, and make me clean with - in.

Have mercy on me, O God, in your kindness;
in your compassion blot out my offense.

Wash me through and through from my wickedness,
and cleanse me from my sin. (Refrain)

For I know my offenses,
my sin is always before me.

Against you, you alone, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight.

And so you are justified when you speak
and upright in your judgment. (Refrain)

Indeed, in guilt I was born,
a sinner was I conceived.

For behold, you look for truth deep within me,
and will make me understand wisdom secretly. (Refrain)

(Psalm continues on the next page.)

435 There's a Wideness in God's Mercy

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) for each of the four systems of lyrics. The melody is simple and folk-like, with a steady rhythm. The lyrics are printed below the treble staff of each system.

1 There's a wide - ness in God's mer - cy, like the wide - ness
2 For the love of God is broad - er than the mea - sures

of the sea. There's a kind - ness in God's jus - tice,
of the mind. And the heart of the E - ter - nal

which is more than lib - er - ty. There is no place where earth's
is most won - der - ful - ly kind. If our love were but more

sor - rows are more felt than up in heaven. There is no place
faith - ful, we would glad - ly trust God's Word, and our lives re -

where earth's fail - ings have such kind - ly judg - ment given.
flect thanks - giv - ing for the good - ness of our Lord.

These stanzas, excerpted from quite a few more, offer a reminder that the model for our dealings with others should be God's generosity rather than limited human tolerance. The text is effectively set to a broad and sturdy Dutch folk melody, probably from the 17th century.

Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure;
wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.
Make me hear of joy and gladness,
that the body you have broken may rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities. (Refrain)

Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me,
Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
Give me the joy of your saving help again,
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit. (Refrain)

Deliver me from death, O God,
and my tongue shall sing of your goodness,
O Lord, open my lips
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise. (Refrain)

For in sacrifice, you take no delight,
burnt offerings from me you would refuse,
The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit;
a humble, contrite heart you will not spurn. (Refrain)

SECOND LESSON: *Matthew 5:1-12, 6:5-15*

This is the Word of the Lord!
Thanks be to God!

SERMON

The Secret of the Lord's Prayer

Rev. John E. Morgan

INVITATION TO THE OBSERVATION OF THE LENTEN DISCIPLINE (responsive)

Leader: Beloved in Christ, at the time of the Christian Passover we celebrate our deliverance from sin and death through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Lent is the season of preparation for this great celebration, the means by which we renew our life in the Paschal mystery. We begin our Lenten journey by acknowledging our need for repentance, for in penitence, we name those things which damage us and others for what they really are, and we open ourselves to the One whose love knows no boundaries and whose mercy is demonstrated to us in the life of Jesus Christ. By taking an honest look at our lives and repenting of our foolishness; by praying quietly but with full hearts; by letting go of those things that harm us and by taking on works of love for others; by reading and feasting on God's Word, we observe a holy Lent, and prepare ourselves for the passion of Holy Week and the joy of Easter. Let us prepare ourselves to come to our God.

Before Christ, let us confess our sin, how it is with our life, and our lives together:

Leader: Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, you are one who guards and guides our way.

All: Have mercy upon us.

Leader: To follow you is to trust you in paradox; that from a broken, aching heart,

All: rises a healing and hopeful heart.

Leader: that out of weakness and vulnerability,

All: grows the quickening of Christ's Love.

Leader: that in darkness and despair,

All: the radiance of Christ's Light shines.

Leader: Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, we fail to follow you; we turn away.

All: Forgive us, we pray.

Leader: As certain as the morning sun that rises, you are here, Lord.

All: Forgive us, we pray.

KYRIE (responsive)

Leader: Lord, have mercy.

People: Christ, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

LITANY OF PENITENCE (responsive)

Leader: This day. This Evening.

All: There was evening, then morning, the first day. And it was good. Very good.

Leader: This day. This Evening. Ashes to Ashes. Dust to Dust.

All: We are grounded in the Source of All Being. This day. This Evening.

(Litany continues on the next page.)

Leader: For needing evidence for every holy matter, and wanting none for our indifference to all injustice,

All: Forgive and accept our repentance.

Leader: For failure to speak and praise your name alone and that we do not make a defense for the hope that is within us,

All: Forgive and accept our repentance.

Leader: Restore us, O God.

All: Favorably hear us, for your mercy and forgiveness are great.

THE LORD'S PRAYER (congregation and choir)

A. H. Malotte (1895–1964)

Our Father, which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
in earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts
as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever. Amen.

INVITATION TO ASHES

Leader: We will continue our journey to Easter with the sign of ashes. Tonight, you will be marked with ash and in the sign of a cross. You will hear the words from Scripture, "From dust you came. To dust you shall return. Be at peace." This ancient sign and ritual speaks of the frailty and uncertainty of human life, the truth of our impermanence and the need for Christ's love and light.

The sign with which we are marked reveals our desire to live repentant lives, individually and as the gathered beloved community, and our hope in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In the name of Christ, we are invited to observe a holy Lent by self-examination and self-emptying love with practices of prayer and fasting; with works of loving kindness and mercy; and by meditating on God's good Word, ancient and new.

PRAYER OVER THE ASHES

Leader: From dust we came, to dust we shall return; and even yet, we sing “Alleluia” at the grave because death is not the end, only a sign of an impending resurrection. May these ashes tonight be for us a sign of our mortality, a desire for repentance, and a reminder that only by your gracious gift are we given everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

ANTHEM

Just As I Am

arr. Howard Helvey

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou biddest me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
Now to be thine, yea, thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

CLOSING PRAYER (unison)

Into your loving and merciful ways, Source of Being, we commend our lives. Accomplish in us, Holy One, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, the work of your saving grace. By the passion of our Savior, Jesus Christ, bring us with all your saints to the joy of Christ's resurrection. Amen.

THE SENDING

***HYMN 649**

Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound
stanza 1-4

AMAZING GRACE

***BLESSING AND CHARGE**

As we leave this place marked with a sign of the cross, might we remember that our call as disciples in this season is to live a repentant life and to seek the good for the whole of creation.

Life is short and we do not have long to make the way with those whom we love. Be swift to love. Make haste to be kind. And may the love of One God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Mother of us all, be with us, now and forever. Amen and amen.

Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound
stanza 5

AMAZING GRACE



When we've been there ten thou - sand years, bright shin - ing_ as the sun,____



we've no__ less days to sing__ God's praise than when we'd first be gun.____

The service of worship concludes after the Blessing and Charge response.

This evening's Ash Wednesday Liturgy was adapted from The Presbyterian Outlook liturgy written by Anne Apple.

649 Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound

1 A - maz - ing grace, how sweet the sound, that
 2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and
 3 Through man - y dan - gers, toils, and snares, I
 4 The Lord has prom - ised good to me; his
 5 When we've been there ten thou - sand years, bright

saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but
 grace my fears re - lieved. How pre - cious did that
 have al - ready come. 'Tis grace has brought me
 word my hope se - cures. He will my shield and
 shin - ing as the sun, we've no less days to

now am found, was blind, but now I see.
 grace ap - pear the hour I first be - lieved!
 safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.
 por - tion be as long as life en - dures.
 sing God's praise than when we'd first be - gun.

CHOCTAW

*Shilombish holitopa ma!
 Ishminti pulla cha
 hatak ilbusha pia ha
 is pi yukpalashke.*

CREEK

*Po ya fek cha he thlat ah tet
 ah non ah cha pa kas
 cha fee kee o funnan la kus
 um e ha ta la yus.*

NAVAHO

*Nizhónígo joo bá diits' a'
 yisdáshítinigítí,
 lah yóóiyá, k'ad
 shéndhoosdzin,
 doo eesh'íyí da ít'ée.*

As was his custom, the author wrote this hymn to accompany his sermon on 1 Chronicles 17:16–17, preached on January 1, 1773; he called it “Faith’s Review and Expectation.” Much of its current popularity comes from this now-familiar tune, an association that began in 1835.

✧ THOSE SERVING OUR LORD THIS EVENING ✧

PASTORS

John E. Morgan, Pastor
Pam Hrcir, Associate Pastor

MUSIC MINISTRY

Chris Bechtler, Director of Music
Norman Elton, Organist
WPC Chancel Choir

✧ NOTES ABOUT TODAY'S MUSIC ✧

This evening's prelude is a setting of a hymn written by Martin Luther in 1538. Luther wrote the text, paraphrasing the Lord's Prayer. The title translates simply, "Our Father in Heaven". He paired it with an existing secular tune. Our prelude is an adaptation of that tune by Friedrich Wilhelm Zachau (1663-1712), a German musician and composer.

✧ UPCOMING WORSHIP INFORMATION ✧

- The season of Lent begins March 5, 2025, with our Ash Wednesday service at 7pm in our sanctuary. Our Wednesday Lenten worship services will continue at Noon in Stevenson Hall on March 12, 26 and April 9 and at 7pm in our sanctuary on March 19 and April 2. You may order box lunches for the noon services in Stevenson Hall or bring your lunch.

Holy Week begins with our regular 9:30 and 11am service on Palm Sunday, continuing with the Maundy Thursday communion service at 7pm, Good Friday Family Service at 5pm and Tenebrae service at 7pm.

Easter services are at 8, 9:30, and 11am in our sanctuary.

Our Sunday School classes will not be held on Easter Sunday.

Our Church Office will be closed on Easter Monday and will reopen on the following Tuesday.

If you would like to learn more about Williamsburg Presbyterian Church visit our website located at mywpc.org.

- Join us for worship on the **1st Sunday in Lent, March 9, 2025, 9:30am and 11am** in the sanctuary. The Celebration of the Lord's Supper will be served at all services. The 11am service is broadcast on FM93.5 The Burg and AM740.
- Our services Wednesday afternoon and Sunday morning are a wonderful way to prepare our hearts and minds for the Passion and Resurrection of Easter Week. Worship services at WPC are open to all and we encourage you to invite your family and friends to join us.