

# *Straight from the "Hart"*

Special Installment: Ash Wednesday

February 14, 2024



## **Making a Fresh Start (1): Turn, Turn, Turn**

Welcome to Hartland UMC's "Straight from the "Hart"". We are glad you are here and participating in worship through this service script. We are taking a break from the "Enemies of Abundant Living" Series for the season of Lent Series, "Making a Fresh Start". The "Enemies of Abundant Living" will resume after Easter.

### **Call to Lent**

Sound the alarm. Everyone tremble! The Day of the Lord is upon us! Proclaim a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. Gather the people from the greatest leaders to the youngest infants. Call people from their life celebrations to weep before the altar. Plead with him to spare his people so that unbelievers will not mock them, saying "Where is their God?" Do not merely go through the motions of repentance, truly return to the Lord with all your heart -- with fasting, weeping and lamenting. He is merciful and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in grace. Who knows, he may yet spare us and bless us....

inspired from Joel 2:1,15-17,12-14

### **Opening Prayer**

Let's pray. Lord, we do pray for your grace and blessing to fall on your people, for your name's sake. You make everything that is, and you watch over it with care. You formed us from the dust of the ground and from the dust of death you will raise us up. By the same redemptive power that raised Jesus from the death of the cross, create in us clean hearts and new spirits, that we may repent of our sins and the sins of our nation and lead lives worthy of your calling through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Music** We heard the Lord ask his people and nation to return to him through his prophet Joel, who then goes on to say that if his people return to him, God will send the rains to make the nation productive, just as we heard Isaiah say it last Sunday – that when God sends his word, it will accomplish his purposes. Therefore, if we invest our lives in the seeds, the disciplines of Lent, it will produce what God wants within us. Let's stand if comfortable and sing our way into the season of Lent by singing the call to seek our Lord.

## **Seek the Lord** (tune of *Come Thou Fount*)

Words: Fred Pratt Green, 1986 (Is. 55:6-11)

© 1989 by Hope Publishing Co.

Music: Wyeth's Repository of Sacred Music, Part Second, 1813

1 Seek the Lord who now is present, pray to One who is at hand.  
Let the wicked cease from sinning, evildoers change their mind.  
On the sinful God has pity; those returning God forgives.  
This is what the Lord is saying to a world that disbelieves.

2 "Judge me not by human standards! As the vault of heaven soars  
high above the earth, so higher are my thoughts and ways than yours.  
See how rain and snow from heaven make earth blossom and bear fruit,  
giving you, before returning, seed for sowing, bread to eat:

3 "So My Word returns not fruitless; does not from its labors cease  
till it has achieved my purpose in a world of joy and peace."  
God is love! How close the prophet to that vital gospel word!  
In Isaiah's inspiration it is Jesus we have heard!

### **Responsive Reading**

(P – Pastor, C – Congregation)

P: Lent calls us to journey with Jesus to Jerusalem. Lent calls us to move to the end of ourselves so that new life can sprout.

**C: Lent leads to the new covenant.**

P: Lent calls us to take up our cross -- to take upon ourselves, as a community, the intention of true participation in the mystery of "God-with-us".

**C: Lent calls us to communal remorse for failure and sin, to accountability, and to preparation.**

P: Lent calls us to go with Christ to the cross, to face the darkness --

**C: and become a sign of new life and a new world.**

**Music** Becoming a sign of new life requires a commitment to the Lord -- just as Jesus was committed to his heavenly Father. Therefore, we look at Christ's commitment --= which led him to the cross -- and we discover what it may demand of us to create a new world. Let's sing *When I Survey*...

### **When I Survey the Wondrous Cross**

Words: Isaac Watts, 1707

Music: Anon. arr. by Edward Miller, 1790

1. When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died;  
my richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.
2. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast, save in the death of Christ, my God;  
all the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to his blood.
3. See, from his head, his hands, his feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down.  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown.
4. Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small;  
love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

## Bible Reading 1

And being reminded of the punishment of sin that Jesus took on himself for our sake, now the prophets inform us of what God may want of us...

Why should anyone complain about the punishment for his sins? Let the wicked person abandon his ways and forsake his way and the evil person his thoughts. Let us examine and test our ways and return to the Lord. Let us lift up our hearts and our hands to God in heaven and say: We have transgressed and rebelled. Seek the Lord while he is available, call on him while he is still nearby. Return to the Lord and he will have mercy. Return to God, for he will freely forgive.

[But take care! that your religious disciplines don't] lead to quarreling and fighting, to lashing out... [religious exercises] like this will not make your voice heard on high. Do you think the Lord wants you to give up eating and to hang your head humbly like a reed and spread sackcloth and ashes under yourself – is this what you call a [discipline], a day that pleases the Lord?

Here is what it really means to worship the Lord. Releasing those unjustly bound, Free those that are abused. Sharing your food with the hungry, taking the homeless poor into your house, clothing those in need, and fulfilling your duty to your relatives who need help. Remove the heavy yoke of oppression,



stop false accusation and slander, help those in trouble. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer, “Here I am.” Then your light will burst forth like the morning sun, and you will be quickly healed. Your godliness will precede you, and the Lord’s glory will follow you, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon.

Lamentations 3:39-42, Isaiah 55:6-7 blended (CJB),  
and from Isaiah 58:4b-10 (CJB. NLT)

## Prayer

Loving Lord, as we enter Lent 2024, we pray that you would draw us deep into the mysteries of self-denial, and ultimately into the deeper mysteries of grace. We are met with the challenge of handing over every bit of our lives that do not come from you. To rid ourselves of what clutters our lives, and all that distracts us from your love for us. We know there is power available when we deny ourselves because in the denial, we have created space in our lives for something else and something more. Your prophets have called us to change the way we worship—to make internal sacrifices not for the sake of sacrifice, or the appearance of sacrifice, but to seek justice, and love kindness, and walk humbly with you.

May this Lent move us forward another step toward giving up our way and giving ourselves to your way for us. Liberate our hearts from petty desires and lowly pursuits and grant us grace to see you as you are and to live in you, and you in us, craving what you crave. Lead and guide us as we walk with Jesus toward the cross, seeking what you taught us to seek in the prayer you taught us to pray:

## Lord’s Prayer

Portions of prayer were adapted from portions of a prayer written by Pastor Patrick Ryan, Kuhn Memorial Presbyterian Church in Barboursville, WV.

**Music Response** If we are going to answer the call and chase this high pursuit, we must constantly keep our hearts open to what new things God wants to do in and through us. Let’s sing in response Change My Heart, O God.

### Change My Heart, O God

Words and Music: Eddie Espinosa  
© 1982 Mercy / Vineyard Publishing

Change my heart, O God, make it ever true.  
Change my heart, O God, may I be like you.  
You are the Potter, I am the clay.  
Mold me and make me, this is what I pray.  
Change my heart, O God, make it ever true.  
Change my heart, O God, may I be like you.

## The 2024 Lenten Cross

Advent relives the expectation of Jesus' coming to the world. Out of an evergreen wreath the eternal God kindles a flame of **hope**, which leads to a sense of **peace**, which leads to an expectation of **joy** which leads to an outpouring of **love** which leads to the birth of **Christ** himself. As additional candles are lit each week it becomes brighter and brighter as the Light of the World comes nearer and nearer to the manger.

Lent relives Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem where the world attempts to extinguish the Light from the World. So in a less established tradition, we have weekly candles (sometimes placed in a thorny crown wreath, or sometimes the lights of Lent shape a cross), or as we have chosen the lights of Lent place on the cross. We begin with all the candles lit and week by week more candles are extinguished as we get closer and closer to the darkness of Good Friday and Christ's passion and death.

Like the Candles of Advent, their colors follow the colors of the season, primarily the purple of preparation and repentance, but also black for tonight's ashes of mourning and mortality. The 4th week's candle is pink, which like the pink of Advent, represents the half point of the season and temporarily lifts the mood and gives us a break from season's seriousness. We also have red, the alternate color of Palm/Passion Sunday, where the red carpet is rolled out -- but moreso the blood of Jesus that is being spilt during that final week.

Unlike Advent, the candles of Lent do not have universally established names (though in some places that is changing for Advent as well). This gives us the freedom to work with an annual theme and emphasis. This year's theme is "Making a Fresh (or Re-focused) Start" and each candle will represent a discipline that may help us begin or increase our commitment on our journey with Christ.

### The Ashen Candle: Return

Our Ashen Candle represents what we have already been hearing this night: To "Return". We can make a new start, or restart, or push further forward when we return to a deeper focus on God. Peter concludes a section of his letter by saying that at one time we were like sheep wandering astray, but now we have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of the Sheep (Jesus). (1 Peter 2:24-25) So we extinguish the Return candle,



recognizing just how challenging it is to keep the spiritual course and keep returning to our God. What does it mean to return?

Peter says Jesus bore our sins on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; and by his wounds we are healed. It means to abstain from sinful desires that wage war on our souls. It means to live so purely that enemies can't find anything bad with which to accuse us; and even if they falsely accuse you -- what people will see is your good deeds and have to give God glory. Live as free people, but don't use your freedom to as a cover over evil. Show respect, love the believers, honor God, respect authority. (1 Peter 2:11-17) Return daily to the faithful God who will lead us and guide us in in the way of his will.

**Prayer:** Lord, we are weak. We need your strength and power to help us to sense your presence and put all our trust in you. By the redemptive power of the cross, create in us clean hearts and put within us a new spirit, that we may repent of our sins and lead lives worthy of your calling, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Portion of prayer from a portion of "Ash Wednesday" by Laurence Hull Stookey, USA, 20<sup>th</sup> c.  
© 1989 The UM Publishing House # 353 in UM Hymnal

**Music Response** Fanny Crosby wrote that as God sweeps over the people, calling them to a re-energized, active faith, that she will not be left out of his call to a pure life. Let's sing in response...

### **Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior**

Words: Fanny J. Crosby, 1868

Music: William H. Doane, 1870

2. Let me at thy throne of mercy find a sweet relief,  
kneeling there in deep contrition; help my unbelief.

Refrain

Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry; while on others thou art calling,  
do not pass me by.

3. Trusting only in thy merit, would I seek thy face;  
heal my wounded, broken spirit, save me by thy grace.

Refrain

4. Thou the spring of all my comfort, more than life to me,  
whom have I on earth beside thee? Whom in heaven but thee?

Refrain

## Bible Reading 2

The goal of Lent is to grow more into these words of Jesus.

“I am the real vine, and my Father is the gardener. Every branch which is part of me but fails to bear fruit, he cuts off; and every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes, so that it may bear more fruit. Right now, because of the word which I have spoken to you, you are pruned. Stay united with me, as I will with you — for just as the branch can’t put forth fruit by itself apart from the vine, so you can’t bear fruit apart from me.

“I am the vine and you are the branches. Those who stay united with me, and I with them, are the ones who bear much fruit; because apart from me you can’t do a thing. Unless a person remains united with me, he is thrown away like a branch and dries up. Such branches are gathered and thrown into the fire, where they are burned up.

“If you remain united with me, and my words with you, then ask whatever you want, and it will happen for you. This is how my Father is glorified (honored) — in your bearing much fruit; this is how you will prove to be my *talmidim*. (followers, disciples).  
John 15:1-8, CJB (NLV)

**Music** And so with the promise of becoming more fruitful disciples, we move into the Lenten Season with resolve to becoming more closely entwined with our God. If comfortable, let’s stand before the sermon and sing

### Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days

Words: Claudia F. Hernaman, 1873

Music: USA folk melody; arr. by Annabel Morris Buchanan, 1938; harm. by Charles H. Webb

Music © 1938, renewed 1966 J Fischer and Bro. Co.

harm © 1989 J Fischer and Bro. Co.

- 1 Lord, who throughout these forty days, for us didst fast and pray,  
teach us with you to mourn our sins, and close by thee to stay.
- 2 As thou with Satan didst contend, and didst the vict'ry win,  
O give us strength in thee to fight, in thee to conquer sin.
- 3 As thou didst hunger bear and thirst, so teach us, gracious Lord,  
to die to self, and chiefly live by thy most holy word.
- 4 And through these days of penitence, and through thy passion-tide,  
yea, evermore, in life and death, Jesus, with us abide.
- 5 Abide with us that when this life of suffering is past,  
An Easter of unending joy we may attain at last!



## Sermon *Turn, Turn, Turn*

In imagery similar to Jesus' vine story, but with a different meaning, E Stanley Jones saw a vine that aspired to stretch across space to fasten itself to something higher -- a pine tree. Inch by inch it grew until it finally arrived. There was great rejoicing as it fastened its tentacles around a tree branch.

But the next day -- catastrophe. A storm had blown through in the night and there the vine lay, a pathetic thing with its face in the earth, still holding on to the broken branch of the tree. The tree had broken and let it down. But not really, for the vine had fastened itself upon a dead branch, and it was the dead branch that had broken. Had the vine reached the central trunk of that living tree, no storm could have torn it away.

Many start out with an aspiration for God, but then stop for some dead branch and fasten on to that. They stop at a form of religion that is empty of its spirit, or settles for ideas about God, or for a good resolution, or an institution, or a minister or friend or spouse and they pin their faith there. But none of these can, by themselves, hold us up in the storms of life.

We must go clear to the central trunk - to God himself. Don't stop short. In his book *Abundant Living*, Jones' offers 7 steps that will help us to climb to release and victory, all built around the word "turn".

**1) First, TURN OVER IN OUR MIND OUR LIFE**, its direction and spirit. We'll be tempted to defend our life patterns, to plead, excuse and *rationalize* our behaviors, but be relentlessly honest. Refuse to defend anything wrong. We will be tempted to confess the little unimportant things and leave the bigger, weightier things alone -- for they require a deeper transformation.

The Day of Ashes begins a season of self-examination and self-discipline; in imitation of Jesus, who exercised the self-control and discipline to obediently set his face toward a certain execution.

Dr. David Schnarch wrote: Self-development; [the growth to success in spirit and relationships] comes from self-confrontation, but not by denigrating ourselves and saying we are no good; for that paralyzes us so we cannot move forward. Self-confrontation needs to be done with a clear sense of ourselves and God's love and grace because then it can mobilize us to stand up, grow, and move forward. Fling away everything that would hinder us from getting to Christ, our inner and outer dishonesties, our resentments, our wrong relationships, our self-centered attitudes, our very selves — and run to God.



## **2) Secondly, TURN TO CHRIST AS THE GUIDING VOICE**

Some protest: "When we open ourself up to the spirits in meditation it can be dangerous because there is more than just one spirit, and we don't want to open ourselves up to the wrong voices. But the Bible reminds us that Jesus is the Shepherd and his sheep know his voice (we can learn to discern his real voice from imitations). Besides, we are mistaken if we think the only way we hear bad spirits is in quiet meditation. They are not always clamoring for our attention, and if we don't hear a shepherding voice guiding us over all these voices; we are already listening to those other spirits.

A little dog named Bang ran on to the football field. People called him from every direction; but there was no dominant voice, so he stood confused. When we listen to too many voices, calling us from and to all directions -- the voice of money, of evil, passions, of self-interest, of pride, we will become paralyzed in confusion. Listen to the voice of Christ calling above the din, as they hymnwriter Cecil Alexander wrote: *"Jesus calls us o'er the tumult of our life's, wild restless sea; Day by day his sweet voice soundeth, saying "Christian, Follow me!"* Turn all the voices over to his mastering will; and he will put them all in their proper place."

**3) Thirdly, HAVING COME TO CHRIST, TURN AND LOOK AT OUR LIFE THROUGH HIS EYES,** and break decisively with everything he cannot approve. Don't trifle. Don't be content with a conscience that will hide or rationalize sin - get rid of the sin. The sins will plead, will excuse, will procrastinate, but be relentless - bring them all out - not a thing must be left behind.

## **4) Forth, TURN OVER TO CHRIST OUR SELF AND ALL WE HAVE.**

If you fail here we will block the process. There must be an inward surrender. Not only a surrender of this or that - but of the essential you.

Someone said, "There are many battles fought on the great fields, but never was a harder one fought than that between myself and myself in the little room." [in the heart]. The initial battle is usually the hardest. Sometimes we give all we have, but we hold ourselves out of the mix. God doesn't just want our stuff. He wants us. And when we give it, unity, release, and joy will begin to find its place in our life.

## **5) Fifth, TURN TO CHRIST IN TRUST**

Someone once wrote to Turgenev 'It seems to me that to put our self into the second place is the whole significance or life.' Turgenev replied: "It seems to me to discover what one should 'put into the first place is the whole problem of life."

David Allen wrote in *Ready for Anything*: Best is better than good. Don't attempt to be thee best; attempt to do *your* best. To *be* the best is to struggle with-ego, with self-recrimination and with envy as heavy baggage. It is win-lose, and we always lose for we can always find someone who is better. But to do *your* best [as you give Christ the first place] is to make a creative dynamic that can be done by anyone at any time; and it is renewing and refreshing.... Instead of having to beat everyone, you can enlist them to work with you and you with them! And that kind of synergy is powerful.

In step 4 we gave ourselves to God, in this step we trust that God receives us and offers himself to us. Receive him. If we are always breathing in but never breathing out, what happens? Breathing stops. Always receiving from God but not giving to him does not work. Likewise, if you are always breathing out but never in, breathing also stops. Always giving to God but not receiving from him also doesn't work. Both steps are essential.

God offers himself. Take him, and in him you will find all you need - forgiveness, power, fellowship, motivation, and energy to contribute to others - life - real life!

**6) Sixth, TURN AND LOOK AT ALL OUR RELATIONSHIPS** and go into them with Christ. Christ is the basic relationship - all other relationships must fit into our relationship with him, and not the other way around. Consider our relationship with our church life, our home life, our work/school life, our societal class relations, our international relations -- these do not shape our relationship with Christ -- our relationship with Christ shapes our relationship with all of these other things and more. Does his wisdom and love and grace inform how we think and live in these areas? What might need to change?

**7) The final step is to TURN TO GOD EACH DAY.** This is where our Lenten theme "Making a fresh start" is applied. For even if we are sailing high and moving right along in our spiritual life -- there is still a fresh start to each day, a new adventure to tackle. Paul wrote "Be filled with the Spirit", but most English translations don't capture the tense -- it really means keep on being constantly filled with the Spirit. It is an ongoing verb.

Make time for God, let him guide you in all these relationships of our life and these other turns we must negotiate each day. We need **SPIRITUAL RESOURCES** to do this, and we get them by taking time, making time, creating time if we have to -- to be with God -- in prayer and Bible and study and service and music -- and

whatever forms draw you into a closer relationship with God and fellowship with him and getting instructions from him.

Jesus exercised three customary habits. He meditated on the Word of God, He made himself available to God in prayer and meditation, and he taught what he learned from the first two. He mediated on the Word of God, He made himself available to God in prayer and meditation (in other words, he listened) and then he taught what he learned.

Someone asked ES Jones how he maintained his spiritual life, and he said two things: First, certain hours of the day are not part of the day, they are for getting the resources for the day. If I let down those hours, the day lets down with them. I am better or worse as I pray better or worse. And second, I am always up against a task I cannot do - deliberately so. This throws me back to the resources of God. The results are that "I am just going to **MAKE MY LIFE A MIRACLE**. It means getting rid of obstacles and hindrances to putting Christ first in our life. To some that sounds limiting and restrictive to our lives. But David Allen reminds us that it is hard to stay on track without rails. Trains have a hard time going anywhere if they don't have rails leading the way. We do not feel constrained by limitations that work for us, like the rails of a railroad track. We're grateful for the lines down the middle of the road, they give us the freedom to get places fast with a minimum of stress and risk, because we know that (barring ice and snow, etc), cars will stay on the proper side of the road and we shouldn't have problems.

Effective forms don't take space, they create space. It is true that Lenten disciplines can be interpreted as a law or tradition or custom that chokes out the Spirit. That's why it has become a fairly common joke that people want to give up lent for Lent -- and ignore it altogether. But Lent doesn't need to be that way. We can just as easily allow the Day of Ashes and the Lenten season to be a form that creates space for the Spirit of God to flow in new and powerful ways in our life.

For Lent and the ashes are not only about recognizing the frailty of life and sinfulness of ourselves and our nation and the world, it is also about discovering and putting out of our lives those things that prevent us from excelling at what we want to become as God's people. Tonight's ashes remind us that in light of what Christ has done for us; it is not a sacrifice to give our very best to him. As we move through the order of ashes and communion; meditate about what God would like you to learn and live this Lenten season.

## **An Order of Ashes and Communion**

(congregation joins the pastor on the bold font of the readings)

### **Invitation**

Brothers and sisters in Christ – early Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord’s passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the church that before Easter there should be a 40-day season of spiritual preparation. It was a time when all are reminded of mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ and the need that we all must renew our faith. We invite you, therefore, to observe a holy Lent. By such disciplines such as self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting and self-denial, by reading and meditating on God’s holy word, and as a mark of our mortal nature and of God’s seal on our life –

**Music** - we prepare for this season that is set aside to focus on our spiritual journey  
Let’s begin by singing Come and Find the Quiet Center

### **Come and Find the Quiet Center**

Words: Shirley Erena Murray © 1992 Hope Publishing Co.

Music: attr. to BF White

1. Come and find the quiet center in the crowded life we lead,  
find the room for hope to enter, find the frame where we are freed:  
Clear the chaos and the clutter, clear our eyes, that we can see  
all the things that really matter, be at peace, and simply be.
2. Silence is a friend who claims us, cools the heat and slows the pace,  
God it is who speaks and names us, Knows our being, touches base,  
making space within our thinking, lifting shades to show the sun,  
raising courage when we're shrinking, finding scope for faith begun.

### **Responsive Confession**

Let us prepare our hearts by a time of confession – it begins responsively, join me on the yellow font.

God of Compassion, with our hearts breaking for you, we now turn toward you.

**Forgive our pride and our insecurities. Forgive our self-absorption and our self-destruction. Forgive our doubts and our self-reliance.**

Forgive our longing for attention and our lack of openness. Forgive each step we take away from you.

**Create in us clean hearts. Renew right spirits within us. Do not hide your presence or remove your Holy Spirit from us.**

## Confession

Let's continue our confessional prayer.

Holy God, we pray for your mercy. Day after day, week after week, Sunday after Sunday, we claim to seek after God, and often desire to do so. Yet we continue to serve our own interests, and in so doing, we sometimes blindly oppress our neighbors, both near and distant.

We confess that we use our religious rituals to make ourselves feel good about ourselves, to assure ourselves that we are Christians, to confidently claim that we are different from the rest of the world. But then Isaiah says we also use our rituals to lift our heads upward while at the same time we crush the people around us under our feet. But the rituals you desire are the ones that move us to work for justice, to lift up the downtrodden, feed the hungry and house the homeless.

We pray that in your mercy, O Lord, you will go before us, preparing our eyes and ears to contemplate our lives during this season of Lent, so that we may discover repent of our sins.

### Silent Confession with “the ashen cross”

[People apply the cross]. ... For the cross to transfer to your skin you will need to hold it in place with the damp cloth. While you are holding the cross in place, turn over your life in your minds and see if there is anything in which God might be directing and guiding you. Now Almighty God, grant that these crosses may be a sign to us of the fragility of life, the death of sin, the price of redemption, and the mark of your leadership in our life. May they remind us that it is only because of your gracious gift that we are granted eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



**Music** The instrument(s) will play through the song once while you meditate and hold the cross in place -- and then we will join her/them in singing Come Away With Me

### Come Away With Me

Words: Mary Nelson Keithahn Music: John D Norman  
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1. Come away with me to a quiet place, apart from the world with its frantic pace, to pray, reflect, and seek God's grace. Come away with me. Come away.
2. Come and pray with me on a gentle sea, on top of a hill in the Galilee,

in gardens like Gethsemane. Come away with me. Come away.

4. Come and say, in words whispered from your soul,  
the feelings and actions you can't control.

Your spirit needs to be made whole. Come away with me. Come away.

5. Come away with me to a quiet place, to God's loving arms waiting to embrace  
all those who come in hope of grace. Come away with me. Come away.

### **Assurance of Forgiveness**

And heavenly Father, as we seek and find the grace of Jesus and live as he calls us to live, the prophet declares our light will burst out like the rising sun, and as we serve your kingdom in your world and participate in your work of redemption, knowing that our rituals are leading us to create true positive change within us and through us, that we, and all, may experience your forgiveness. Amen.

— adapted from portions of prayer inspired by Psalm 58,  
was written by Isaac, a Mennonite pastor, [rustyparts.com](http://rustyparts.com)

### **The Great Thanksgiving**

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.

**And also with you.**

Praise the Lord who forgives all our sins.

**God's mercy endures forever.**

Our Creator, you have made all things. You brought all things into being and called them good. From the dust of the earth, you formed us into your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. From the dust of the earth, you will raise us up. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. When you gave him to save us from our sin, your Spirit led him into the wilderness, where he fasted forty days and forty nights to prepare for his ministry. When he suffered and died on a cross for our sin, you raised him to life, presented him alive to the apostles during forty days, and exalted him at your right hand. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin

and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit. Now, when we your people prepare for the yearly feast of Easter, you lead us to repentance for sin and the cleansing of our hearts, that during these forty days of Lent we may be gifted and graced to reaffirm the covenant you made with us through Christ.

By the redeeming power of the cross, create in us clean hearts, put within us a new spirit, restoring to us the joy of our salvation, and grant willing spirits to sustain us, that we may lead lives worthy of your calling, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving, as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

**Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and cup. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and forever. Amen.

### **The Bread and Cup**

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." [Take and eat]



When the supper was over he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." [Take and drink]

### **Communion Blessing**



Through the bread, cup and ashes, may the God of mercy fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Music** The cross was a tool of execution but has become a symbol of healing and life. Let's keep it before us as we move through this season. If comfortable let's stand and sing Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross

**Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross**

Text: Fanny J. Crosby, 1869

Music: William H. Doane, 1869

1. Jesus, keep me near the cross; there a precious fountain,  
free to all, a healing stream, flows from Calvary's mountain.

Refrain

In the cross, in the cross, be my glory ever,  
till my raptured soul shall find rest beyond the river.

3. Near the cross! O Lamb of God, bring its scenes before me;  
help me walk from day to day with its shadow o'er me.

Refrain

**Blessing** Our Lenten journey has begun! Let us keep our hearts open to follow God wherever he may lead you these next 40 days, and may the creative, redeeming sustaining presence of God be with you. Amen.