

**A Service of the Word
for
Ash Wednesday
February 18, 2026
The United Church of Santa Fe
A United Church of Christ**

For Reflection as Lent Begins

Last week, Virginia Episcopal Theological Seminary awarded the Dean's Cross for Servant Leadership to comedian Stephen Colbert and his wife Evelyn McGee-Colbert. In an informal conversation that followed the formal presentation, Colbert—a lifelong Catholic—talked about J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, and how Tolkien's Catholic faith shaped Colbert's own life. The discussion then turned toward belief, humility, and hope—and a shared conviction that healing the world doesn't start with power, but with the quiet courage of "the Hobbits."

"I am here on earth," Colbert said, "to know God, love God, serve God—and trust that we might be happy with each other in this world and with Him in the next."

WE GATHER OURSELVES FOR THE JOURNEY

Gathering in Silence

*(As you enter into this time of prayer, please turn off cell phones and watch alarms,
so that you and your neighbor may draw closer to God in this time of stillness and silence.)*

Gathering with Music

Prelude and Fugue in G Minor

J.S. Bach

The Call to Lent from the Prophet Joel

Blow the trumpet in Zion;
sound the alarm on my holy mountain!
Yet even now, says the Lord,
return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping; rend your hearts
and not your clothing.

Let us return to the Lord, our God,
for God is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,
and relents from punishing.
Blow the trumpet in Zion;
sanctify a fast;
call a solemn assembly;
gather the people and return to your God.

Words of Welcome and Breathing in God's Gifts

Musical Call to Worship

Kyrie Eleison (3x) Greek Hymn/Ukrainian Orthodox Chant
Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison.

The Call to Worship

Be still, and know that God is.
God was, also, in the beginning.
And when all human striving has ceased, God will still be.
From everlasting to everlasting, God is God and alone is worthy to be worshiped.
Let us sing to God who was, who is, and who will always be.

Hymn

All Things of Dust to Dust Return
(back cover)

Kingsfold/arr. R. Vaughan Williams

WE PREPARE

The Call to Confession

The Choral Call (7:00 pm) *Lord, For Thy Tender Mercy's Sake* Richard Farrant (1525–1580)

A Prayer of Confession from an Ancient Christian Tradition (unison)

**Almighty and most merciful God,
we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep.
We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts.
We have offended against thy holy laws.
We have left undone those things which we ought to have done,
and we have done those things which we ought not to have done.**

**But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us.
Spare thou those, O God, who confess their faults.
Restore thou those who are penitent,
according to thy promises declared unto all people in Christ Jesus our Lord.
And grant, O most merciful God, for Christ's sake,
that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life,
to the glory of thy holy name. Amen.**

A Time of Silent Prayer

The Assurance of Grace

The Letter to the Hebrews 12:1-2

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hymn

From Depths of Need I Cry to You

Morning Song

1. From depths of need I cry to You; Your grace to me im - part
 2. If You should choose to count my sins Or weigh my wor - thi - ness,
 3. But You are gra - cious, God of truth, Be - yond my far - thest thought.

And hear be - neath the words I lack My search - ing, hun - g'ring heart.
 How could I dare to plead my case Be - fore Your right - eous - ness?
 You seek me out with pa - tient love Be - fore I've turned and sought.

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WE ENGAGE

A Psalm of Transformation

Psalm 51:1-12 (cond.)

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
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 judgement . . .

You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be brighter than snow. . .
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Sermon

A Clean Heart, a New Start

Silent Reflection

(During this silent reflection, we invite you to write down the things that keep you from God's new life.)

Musical Response

Nearer, My God, To Thee

Bethany/arr. Heather Sorenson

WE RESPOND

Offering Ourselves in Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Gracious God, you who are present in the morning, day, and evening, we thank you for this time of prayer— for silence in the midst of noise, for music in the midst of clamor, for your peace in our lives. Forgive us for the times we have not waited for that peace, trusting instead our own desires and ambitions. Forgive us for the harm we have done and the good we have left undone toward your people and your creation, be it as individuals, communities, or nations.

(A time of silent prayer)

Open us to your healing presence, O Lord. Remind us always there is more grace in you than sin in us, more wholeness in you than brokenness in us, more life in you than death in us. May that grace, healing, and life renew our souls this night.

Give us the courage to be open to the gift of your new life. Give us the wisdom and the will to use that gift to offer our lives for the sake of our brothers and sisters and this world that you love.

We pray in the name of the One whose journey we begin and who taught us to pray to you with boldness, courage, and trust saying:

(Please use a version of the Lord's Prayer familiar to you.)

Turning Back to Ashes that which Keeps Us from the Wholeness of Life

(You are invited to take your paper to the fireplace at the back of the sanctuary and, if you choose, come forward to receive the marking with ashes. You may also remain seated in silent prayer.)

Musical Reflection

Prayer for after the imposition of ashes (unison)

Gracious God, you created us from the dust of the earth and breathed into us the breath of life. As we journey deeper into this season of Lent, create in us clean and strong hearts, O Lord, that we might fulfill our commitment to live our lives in ways that give life to others and to all creation. Help us, Lord, in this season and all seasons to love this world as you so love. Amen.

WE COMMIT OUR LIVES

*Hymn 202 *O God, How We Have Wandered* (1 & 3) Passion Chorale

*Benediction
(The service ends in silence, with no postlude. You are invited to leave as the Spirit moves you.)

Sharing leadership are Rev. Talitha Arnold; Liturgists Bob Ansheles (noon), Jack Smucker and Leo Joyce Brown (7:00 pm); Michelle Schumann, Music Director/Pianist; the Sanctuary Choir led by André Garcia-Nuthmann. The 7:00 service is livestreamed by Media Coordinator Elijah Marquez.

WEDNESDAY MID-DAY LENT COMMUNION SERVICE

12:15 – 12:45, starting Feb. 25

Through Lent, United offers a midday Communion service (12:15- 12:45). In this time of grave uncertainty and conflict in our nation and around the world, set aside time to gather with others for prayer and God's word of hope and faith.



Worshippers in the Orthodox Cathedral of St. Michael in Kyiv

March, 2022

All Things of Dust to Dust Return
Kingsfold/arr. Ralph Vaughn Williams

1. All things of dust to dust re - turn On earth and in the sky.
2. Lord, mark with dust and ash my brow So I may com - pre - hend
3. Lord, mark up - on my brow this sign: A stark and bar - ren cross

The hot - test, bright - est suns that burn In time grow dim and die.
That ev - 'ry mo - ment here and now Links me to that same end
Re - mind - ing me that though di - vine You know my pain and loss,

The fish that leap, the birds that soar, The new - born young that play,
I share with all that breathe and burn, That flare and fade and tire
And at the touch of dust and ash A - wake my heart to view

The leaves that fill the for - est floor Re - vert to dust and clay.
Yet by their wan - ing light dis - cern Your own un - dy - ing fire.
How death it - self is but a flash That dies a - way in You.

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FOR REFLECTION AT THE BEGINNING OF LENT, 2026

Why should Christians pray for peace in Ukraine (or any place else)

First of all, peace is something that Jesus desires. One of the most common phrases in all his public ministry is "Peace be with you." In fact, it is the first thing that the Risen Christ says to the disciples after the Resurrection. Notice he does not say, "Believe that nothing is impossible with God" or "The Father has raised me from the dead" or even "I have conquered death," all of which are true, but something simpler: "Peace be with you." Christ desired peace for the disciples and desires peace for us. Christ also desires unity. "That they all may be one," he prays elsewhere in the Gospels. And so peace and unity are at the heart of the Christian message. We should beg God to help us effect this peace, especially in war-torn places like Ukraine. . . .

And I do believe God hears our prayers and responds, though sometimes the response is not through a sudden turnabout of events but by turning our own hearts: softening them, awakening in us a sense of compassion or even a righteous anger over injustice. So I think God both acts and also moves us to act.

"Praying for Peace in Ukraine (even when it feels useless)"

Father James Martin, SJ (Jesuit priest and writer) in *America Magazine*, March 2022