

A photograph of a beach at sunset. The foreground is filled with dark, smooth rocks and numerous pieces of sea glass in various colors like clear, green, red, and blue. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow and long shadows. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue. The background shows a rocky coastline under a clear sky.

Shattered

Ash Wednesday  
February 17, 2021



# Ascension Lutheran Church

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*All are welcome!*



## Introduction

Ash Wednesday, as the beginning of Lent, developed in the 5th - 6th centuries, and was mandated in the 11th century. Although Protestants did not maintain this ritual for the most part, it has come back during the 20th century liturgical movement as an important time for reflection in which we reclaimed this symbol and ritual of our spiritual ancestors. It plays an important role in helping us make meaning in the brokenness of our lives. This year, indeed, we are aware of the fragility of life. Even though we cannot share ashes in the ways we have become accustomed, let us engage in a ritual that draws us close to the elements of creation—

earth fire air water

# Welcome to Worship

## Announcements

In lieu of the traditional Imposition of Ashes you are invited to gather the Ashes to Go that were given earlier or simply a small amount of oil for making the sign of the cross.

P Ash Wednesday is a time of naming brokenness. As we enter the season of Lent, we commit to enter also into a season of healing and recovery that requires the naming of what has been shattered as a first step. We take “the yoke” of responsibility as disciples of Jesus to be the Body of Christ—a body of those who need healing and offer healing in the world. The promise of Jesus is that he is with us in our weariness and burdens.

♪ **Vessels, holy and whole** ♪  
**Broken, needing the One**  
**Open, body and soul**  
**Healer, come.**

P We will be living with stories of Jesus’ healing in the Gospel of Matthew in this Lent season. We will see how Jesus encouraged people to open up about their lives as part of the healing process—no matter how broken. Ash Wednesday developed as a doorway to speaking the truth of our lives, a time to lay the brokenness of life before God.

♪ **Vessels, holy and whole** ♪  
**Broken, needing the One**  
**Open, body and soul**  
**Healer, come.**

## Prayer of Confession

P Let's face it, we have lived a year of Lent.

As we look back in this moment,  
it feels like a year of shattered dreams and shattered peace.

Yet in the midst of it all we have seen love shine through at times. So in  
the beauty of this brokenness we pray:

Merciful God, We are discouraged.

Even though so much feels out of our control,  
we also see the ways our own faults and failures  
to love each other fully, to care for the least,  
to honor your creation, to stand for what is right and good,  
have contributed to the shattering.

And so we come to you in pieces.

Fragments, broken shells of our past selves.  
As we walk along the shores of Uncertainty and Pain,  
we ask that you meet us here.

Help us, Healer.

Show us our strength.

Forgive our inertia.

Move us to move

one step at a time toward greater care.

In this silence, we sense and acknowledge our yearning for wholeness.

*Silence is kept for reflection*

♪ **Vessels, holy and whole** ♪  
**Broken, needing the One**  
**Open, body and soul**  
**Healer, come.**

P Throughout the season of Lent, we will be contemplating the symbol of broken glass—sea (or beach) glass to be specific. An unknown author has said this about the glass fragments that are collected on various shores:

*“Ordinary pieces of tableware or beer or soda bottles are flung into the ocean. Years pass, or decades, and then one day, there it is upon the shore: a small shard from one of those long ago discarded objects. Shifting currents have rounded its edges; abrasion has polished its surface; exposure to the sun has altered its hue. And so, when we happen upon it, here amidst the shells and seaweed, we can’t help but laugh with joy at what seems a miracle: this ordinary fragment of silica that time and adversity have transformed into something beautiful.”*

Time and adversity... making something beautiful out of that which, once seen as ordinary and broken, is now considered a transformed and precious piece. This is the journey we undertake.

Jesus attended to those considered ordinary, broken, even those deemed unworthy. No matter what, Jesus *is* the lover of our souls.

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

Glory to God.

**All Amen.**



## Opening Song

### Make Us Holy, Make Us Whole

In your love, make us whole.  
May we rest in your compassion.  
Calm the lost, weary soul  
in the warmth of your love.  
May your peace fill our hearts.  
May we know the love of Jesus.  
By your grace, you console.  
Make us holy, make us whole.

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## Peace

*P* The peace of Christ is with you.

**All** And also with you.

## A Contemporary Word

Our life is full of brokenness—

broken relationships, broken promises, broken expectations.

How can we live with that brokenness without becoming bitter and resentful  
except by returning again and again to God's faithful presence in our lives.

— **Henri Nouwen**

## An Ancient Word

*P* The Holy Gospel according to St. Mathew, the 8th chapter.

**All** **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

*Matthew 11: 28-30*

*P* The Gospel of our Lord.

**All** **Praise to you, O Christ.**

## Sermon

*Pr. Debra Jimenez*

## Prayers for the Broken

*L* Lover of our souls,

You who weeps, bleeds, cries, waits... for us and because of us,  
we come before you to make our petitions known.

Hear our cries for healing of body, mind, and spirit.

We know that already you are at work among us,

showing us the way to recovery from the toxicities and grief of our time.

We pray for those who are shattered by the violence of circumstances,  
tumbled by the forces of life, and washed up on shores, distant from all  
that feels whole.

And unite us Lord, in the prayer you first taught us:

**All Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.**

## **Make Us Holy, Make Us Whole**

In your love, make us whole.  
May we rest in your compassion.  
Calm the lost, weary soul  
in the warmth of your love.  
May your peace fill our hearts.  
May we know the love of Jesus.  
By your grace, you console.  
Make us holy, make us whole.

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## Ritual Action

L Normally, we would all gather to receive the “imposition of ashes” reminding each of us that we are dust and to dust we shall return.

But in this extraordinary time of separation, in this shattering of our gathering, let us remember that God created every element of our world:

**earth fire air water.**

Let it remind us that we are a part of creation, in all its beauty and its brokenness.

### **EARTH**

The sand upon which our symbol of beach glass washes is the origin of glass.

And sand is the erosion of mountains and rocks over millions of years.

With this sand we witness the brokenness of the earth itself.

All things become broken. All things transform.

And every form we take is holy, whole, and beautiful.

L Let us pray:

Holy Creator God... as we feel this elemental part of who we are, we remember that we ourselves were made from the dust of the earth. To experience brokenness is the way of creation, it is not something to be ashamed of... it is the order of things. Transform us, O God. Help us recover the beauty of who we are and see the goodness in transformation.

### **FIRE**

Glass can only be created when the sand is met with the heat of fire. No wonder the scriptures and poets throughout the ages have spoken of a “refining fire.” The heat of fire is always destructive, but with intention and care, what transpires from the destruction of fire can be a new form with purposes that are good, useful, and beautiful. I invite you to light a candle. Gaze upon the colors of the flame as we pray:

L Holy Refining Fire of the Spirit... as we feel this elemental part of who we are, we remember that you invite us to fuel the flames of passionate love for you and for each other. Do not allow the flame of our spirits to lie dormant. Offer us your light and life. Transform us, O God. Help us recover the beauty of who we are and see the goodness in transformation.

## AIR

The scriptures depict the creation of human beings as having Holy Breath blown to animate our being. Glass vessels gained a new technique around the time of Jesus. In the first century BCE, glass blowing was invented, offering a way for molten glass to be shaped by blowing through a tube, creating an air bubble, a glass vessel, ready for practical or artistic purposes. Breath is part of the creation of our Holy Vessels. Breath is with us in our very first cry and will be the final song as we exit this realm. I invite you to close your eyes, and become aware of your breath as we pray:

L Holy Giver of Breath and Life... as we feel this elemental part of who we are, we remember that this ongoing, life-giving, usually-automatic, moment-to-moment function can be an act of gratitude for our very origins. And this is the core of our relationship with the creation—sharing and existing within this atmosphere. Just as our breath offers us opportunity to let go of that which we do not need in order to take in the fresh air we need, transform us, O God. Help us recover the beauty of who we are and see the goodness in transformation.

## WATER

As the water meets the sand and earth at the shoreline, we also are invited to a journey of meeting the Living Water that Christ offers us.

In baptism this precious, humble, ordinary element  
combined with the powerful and loving word of God,  
*the very creator of all that is*  
names and, more importantly, claims each one of us as His own.

Water is used to refresh, cleanse, nourish and heal our bodies.

L Healing Presence... as we feel this elemental part of who we are, we remember you created us, shaped us from dust in the palm of your hand. Some day we will return to dust,  
return to the palm of your hand once again, held and loved forever.

We lament in this moment the grittiness of life,  
the need for healing,  
the difficult and necessary process of transformation.

*Using oil or ashes mixed with oil  
make the sign of the cross on your hand or forehead while saying,*

*“Remember you are dust, and to dust you will return.”*

Mark us as your own, remold us again and again as your people.  
Let the recognition of our own need break us open yet again  
for the sake of others, for the sake of the world.  
All all the people say,

**All Amen.**

Sending Song

### God of the Poor

Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair:  
Lord, in the suffering this is our prayer.  
Bread for the children, justice, joy, peace;  
Sunrise to sunset your kingdom increase.

#### *Refrain*

God of the poor, friend of the weak,  
Give us compassion, we pray;  
Melt our cold hearts, let tears fall like rain.  
Come, change our love from a spark to a flame.

## Blessing

*P* Now go with confidence that, though shattered, we are held.  
Begin the journey of recovering your depth of love for all  
and your joy of living in this world.

May the words of Jesus ring in your ears:  
“I will give you rest.”

And may the Spirit hover, move, and deliver  
salve to your soul ✝ and a spring in your step.

**All Amen.**

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Holy Vessels

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