

Dear Church Family,

*To provide for those who mourn in Zion- to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.—*

Isaiah 61:3 NRSV

The oil of mourning, the ashes of grief—God promises to deliver us from these. What a blessing it is to serve a God who turns the sorrow of grief into a time of praise!

Today is Ash Wednesday, which marks the beginning of the Lenten season. On Ash Wednesday, we recall the biblical custom of covering ourselves in ashes. By doing this, we mark ourselves in two ways: as those who are in mourning for our crucified Christ, and as those who are filled with a heart of sorrow for their sins.

While our Advent celebrations are filled with joy as we remember the birth of our King, Lent is when we focus on the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Traditionally, many believers choose to participate in some sort of fasting during this time—people have been known to fast from various foodstuffs as well as television and Internet usage. Others decide to study the Bible more closely or experience a time of solitude. Perhaps you will commit to attending services from now until the glory of Easter or dedicating a larger portion of your day to a time of prayer.

Whatever your personal preference, Lent can be the time when you decide to let go of old habits and develop a more joyful, Christ-filled way of living. I would like to invite you and your family to join me as we prepare for a time of tremendous spiritual growth and renewal.

Blessings in Christ,

*Pastor Devin Sanderson*