



AVON VALLEY
CHURCHES

LOVING • CONNECTING • SERVING

A Holy Communion Service for Ash Wednesday
17th February 2021 at 10am

Rev Kate Wilson



Welcome to our Service of Holy Communion

We gather in the brightness of the morning,
To be with the God who brightens the shadows of our lives.
We gather in the quiet of this place, and in our homes,
to be with Jesus, knowing that nothing past, present or future separates us.
We gather to be marked as disciples, and to be fed for the journey through Lent.
We are also here to be sealed by the Spirit as God's own.

A prayer for the morning

You wait this morning patient God, for us to come back:
to stop going away from you; to cease shaping you in our image,
You wait for us this morning, companion of our hearts, for us to follow once more:
leaving the shuttered corners of our lives;
refusing to go from one failed promise to another; coming out of the panic rooms
we have built in our souls, so you can take us by the hand
to lead us to resurrection life.

AMEN

A Reading from Scripture

2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10

A Reading from the Letter of Paul to the Corinthians

²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

⁶ As God's co-workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For he says, "In the time of my favour I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you."

I tell you, now is the time of God's favour, now is the day of salvation.

We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the

left; ⁸ through glory and dishonour, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

Glory to you O Lord

Matthew 6:1-6

⁶ “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

² “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

¹⁶ “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

¹⁹ “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

This is the Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you, O Christ

A Time of reflection

A Time of Prayer

You wait in the scattered ashes of our lives,
Spirit of silence, for us to find you:
in the broken bread
which strengthens us to serve;
in the cup of grace
which fills our emptiness; in our sisters and brothers
who are willing to hold us up
when we falter, so you can embrace us with joy and hope in every moment.
As you wait, and as we seek
to return to you in these moments,
we pray as we are taught ...

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.**

Amen.

An Invitation to the Lenten life:

Not for the first time, yet fresh once more,
we accompany Jesus to Jerusalem.
Because of his experience in the wilderness,
we discover how we might have the strength
to turn our back on evil, so we can choose good.

By his example of fasting and prayer
in the midst of serving and caring for others,
we can learn that rhythm of faithful living
which allows us to work for justice and hope,
as we draw strength from the timeless acts
of silence, feasting on the word and prayer.
As we remember our baptism into faith,
as we gather at the feast of grace,
as we are marked as Christ's own,
we prepare ourselves to come to God,
on this holy day.

Call to reconciliation:

On this day, we begin our journey to Easter.
Before we can take the first step,
we must admit how we have not been faithful to our God.
Let us pray
We have trouble telling the truth, God of broken hearts,
yet we must admit on this day how we have trouble being your people.
We may not trample the poor, but we sometimes walk right past them.
We don't receive bribes, but we are more privileged than many around us.
We trust more in ourselves than in you,
and spend far too much time thinking of ourselves,
rather than holding out a hand to others.
Where can we go for forgiveness but to you, God of the ashes?
When we are greedy, you promise to be gracious.
When we have trouble confronting injustice, you stand at our side.
When we struggle to seek good, you point us to Jesus, our Saviour,
who shows us how to turn our back on evil to follow him.

Amen

A moment of silence

God refuses to stand far off, but comes close to us – to hear our prayers,
to touch our hearts with forgiveness, and to walk with us during this holy season
and beyond.
We have no need to go anyplace else but into the comforting and restoring heart
of the One who loves us.

Thanks be to God, we are forgiven.

Amen

The Sprinkling of the ashes:

Just yesterday, it seems, the palms were fresh and green, held tight in hands as we re-enacted Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. But then they dried, shrivelled, became almost too fragile to touch, until we burned them into the ashes for today

Yet, by the grace of our God, with the Spirit resting upon them, they are mixed with oil and sprinkled on our forehead or the palm of our hand, the dust of life resting upon us as a sign that by sharing the gifts of peace, reconciliation, justice and generosity, we will live into the people we long to become.

God of all moments, touch us with the ashes of repentance.

Mark us with your forgiveness and grace. AMEN

You are invited to join the Lords Table

May the God of the ashes be with you.

And also with you.

On this morning, let us offer our hearts to God.

We open them so we may be filled with the gifts of Lenten discipleship.

Let us lift glad thanksgiving to our God.

We offer praise to the One who gives us the strength for this journey.

There at the edge of the emptiness of chaos you spoke, God of all graciousness, brightening the shadows with lights in the sky, pouring the waters into rivers and seas,

planting seeds to feed all creatures.

From the dust of creation, you shaped your children,

offering us all the goodness and beauty

which overflowed from your heart,

but we trampled through your hopes,

as we turned from your heart to chase after evil's false promises.

But no matter where we went, or how far we sought to flee from you,

you continued to meet us in all those places,

constantly inviting us to return to you

and be filled with your steadfast love.

Therefore, in the silence in this place and in our homes

we join with our sisters and brothers
to offer you songs of thanksgiving:
Holy, holy, holy are you, God who is at our side.
We join all creation in singing your praises.
Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is the One who makes us right
Hosanna in the highest!
Your constant love is the seal of your holiness,
and Jesus is the One who comes
so we will never be separated from you.
He endured every hardship we experience,
so we receive the hope you offer to us;
he experienced the hunger of loneliness,
so we might become members of your family;
he was willing to set aside his life,
so death would have no power
to keep us apart from you, but
your resurrection power would give us
the same life he received from you.
As we take our tentative first steps towards Jerusalem,
as we are marked as his companions,
we remember that mystery known as faith:
Christ died, not withholding his heart.
Christ was raised, so that he might become our advocate.
Christ will come, to draw us to your side.
Here at this Table of life and longing,
pour out your Spirit on us,
and on the gifts offered to us.
May the bread which is broken
strengthen us so nothing can separate us
from those who struggle with life,
from those who mourn a death,
from those who have no power or voice.
May the cup which overflows with grace
nourish us so we pick up those who have been trampled by misery,
those who are trapped by injustice,

those who are pushed aside by the privileged.
And when neither death nor life
can keep us apart from you,
as you gather us around your Table
with our sisters and brothers,
we will sing your glory and praise forever and ever,
God in Community, Holy and One.

We may share in the bread and the wine

Amen

Sending:

Smudged this day with the ashes of penitence,
We will go out to share God's forgiveness
with those we have hurt, with those who are forgotten.

Fed this day by the Host of the Feast of grace,
We will go out to bring healing to the broken,
to offer grace to those trampled by the powerful.

Called this night to journey through suffering to new life,
We will go out to stand with those experiencing injustice,
to share the Spirit's peace and reconciliation with the world.

Blessing

May the blessing of light be on you - light without and light within.

May the blessed sunlight shine on you like a great peat fire, so that stranger and friend may come and warm himself at it.

And may light shine out of the two eyes of you, like a candle set in the window of a house, bidding the wanderer come in out of the storm.