East Liberty Presbyterian Church

116 South Highland Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15206 412.441.3800 www.ELPC.church

As a diverse community of believers, we strive to follow God – the Creator who calls us, Jesus who teaches us, and the Spirit who empowers us. We show God's unconditional love by providing a refuge for spiritual growth, ardently pursuing justice, and extending Christ's radical hospitality to all. (Strategic Vision mission statement, 2011)

Ash Wednesday

February 18, 2026 • 7 pm Sanctuary Worship

Prelude — Dr. Edward Alan Moore, *organ*

"Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ, BWV 639" — Johann Sebastian Bach

I call to Thee, Lord Jesus Christ.

"Audi, benigne conditor" — Gerald Near

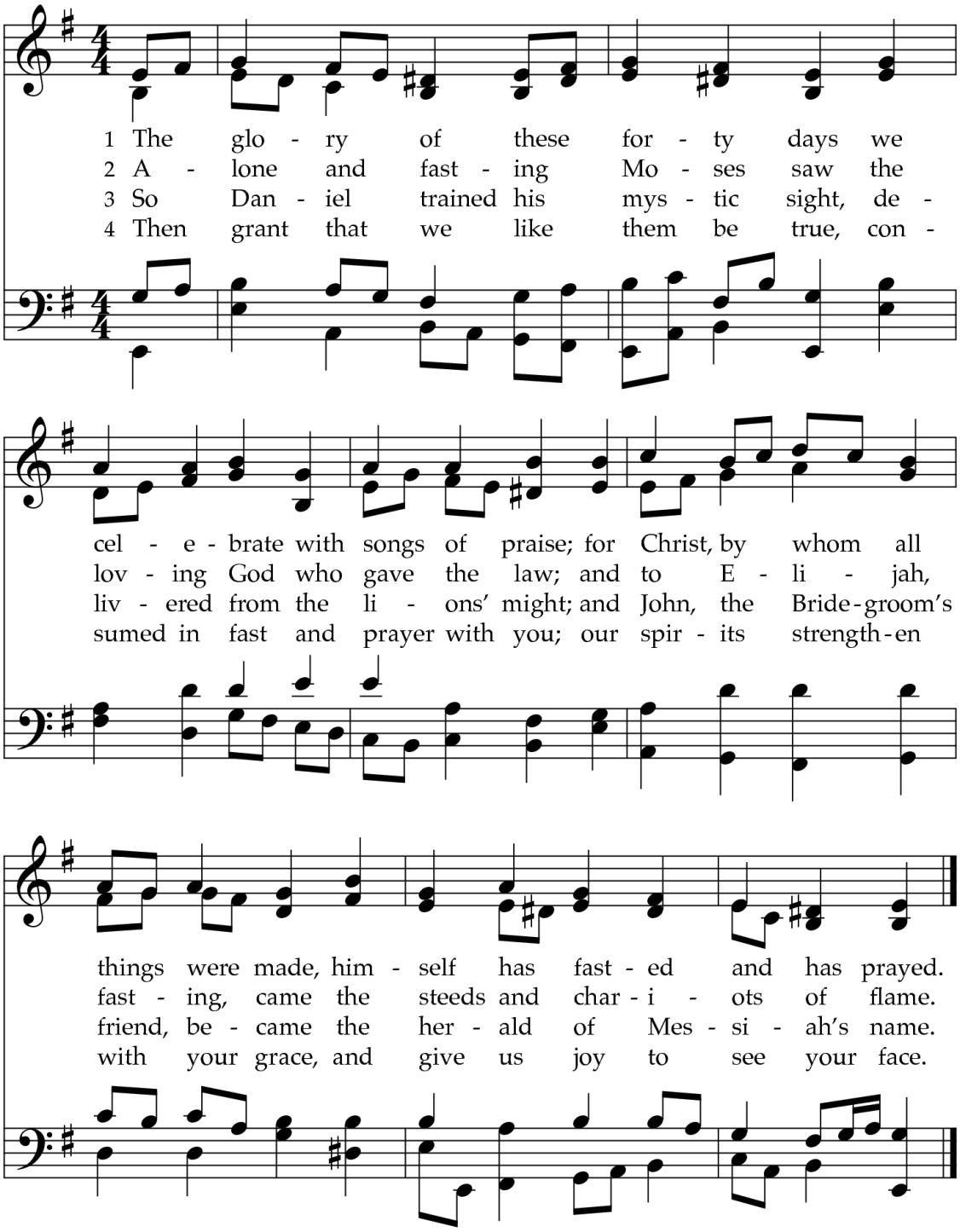
O Kind Creator, bow thine ear to mark the cry, to know the tear
Before thy throne of mercy spent, in this thy holy fast of Lent.

Welcome — Rev. Dr. Michael Diaz

Call to Worship — Rev. BJ Woodworth

Leader: In seasons of darkness and light,
People: God meets us as we are.
Leader: When the world feels heavy and our hearts grow tired,
People: God does not turn away.
Leader: God's mercy always gathers us together.
People: The Spirit makes room for each of us.
Leader: This is the good news: Even as we fast,
People: God is preparing a feast.
Leader: Draw near, just as you are,
People: Let us worship the One who invites us with open arms.

*** PROCESSIONAL HYMN #165** "The Glory of These Forty Days" ERHALT UNS, HERR



TEXT: Gregory the Great, 6th cent.; trans. Maurice F. Bell, 1906, alt. ERHALT UNS, HERR
MUSIC: Klug's *Geistliche Lieder,* 1543; harm. Johann Sebastian Bach, 1725 LM

PARTICIPANTS IN TODAY'S SERVICE

Preaching:	**Rev. Dr. Michael Diaz,** *Pastor*
Liturgists:	**Rev. Sarah Robbins,** *Covenant Pastor for Connection and Care*
	Rev. BJ Woodworth, *Covenant Pastor for Spiritual Life and Taizé Ministries*
	Carol Mullen
Musicians:	**Dr. Edward Alan Moore,** *Director of Music and Arts*
	Cantors: **Chancel Choir Section Leaders**
Beadle:	**Jason Van Ness**
Crucifer:	**Jan Herzer**
Sound:	**Wayne Gaines**

CALL TO CONFESSION Rev. Sarah Robbins

Leader: Family of faith, if someone declines our invitations again and again, in our human ways, we tend to stop inviting them. We get the hint. We assume they'd rather be elsewhere. With God, however, things are different. No matter how many times we overlook or ignore God's outstretched hand, God will never stop reaching for us. So with that good news in mind, let us go to God in prayer.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION *(in unison)* Rev. Robbins

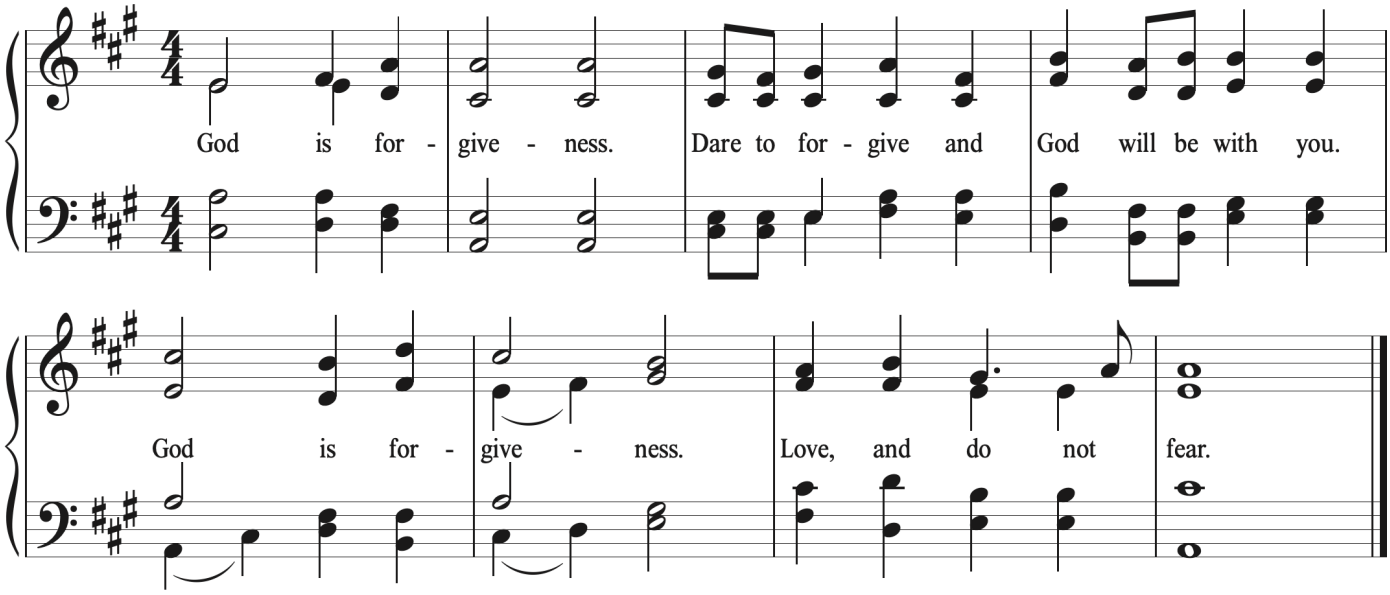
Gracious God, you invite all of us to your feast: the faithful and the doubting, the restless and the hopeless, the addicted and the lonely, the lost and the confused. You invite us all, but we fail to do the same. When given the opportunity, we are guilty of casting judgment on our neighbors. We draw lines, assume the worst, create cliques, and accept exclusion. Forgive our harmful ways. This Lent, show us how to love others the way you love us.

WORDS OF AFFIRMATION Rev. Robbins

Leader: Friends, no matter how many times we mess up or lose our way, no matter how many times we decline God's invitation, God's outstretched arms never tire.

People: In Christ, we are forgiven and loved, again and again. Amen.

SUNG RESPONSE HYMN *(sing 3 times)* "God Is Forgiveness"



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FIRST READING A reading from "Little Pieces of Light" by Joyce Rupp Carol Mullen

Darkness exists as a natural part of life, but I fought this reality for years. It always seemed like a powerful intruder into my light-filled life. I had this notion that if I thought or did the right things, then my life would always unfold the way I wished; I could avoid anguishing, bleak times. Consequently, when the dark moments showed up, I felt something must be terribly wrong with me. It has taken a long time for me to acknowledge darkness as an essential element for personal growth. No matter how many "right things" I do, darkness will still come unannounced and uninvited because it is an essential part of personal growth and spiritual transformation. Without some darkness, I cannot become fully the person I am meant to be. As I look back on my own painful episodes, I now see how much I learned from the very situations I wanted to toss out immediately. I also recognize how, in darkness, the light remains, perhaps totally hidden like the sun behind a heavy layer of clouds, but shining nonetheless.

Leader: May God bless the truth in these words.

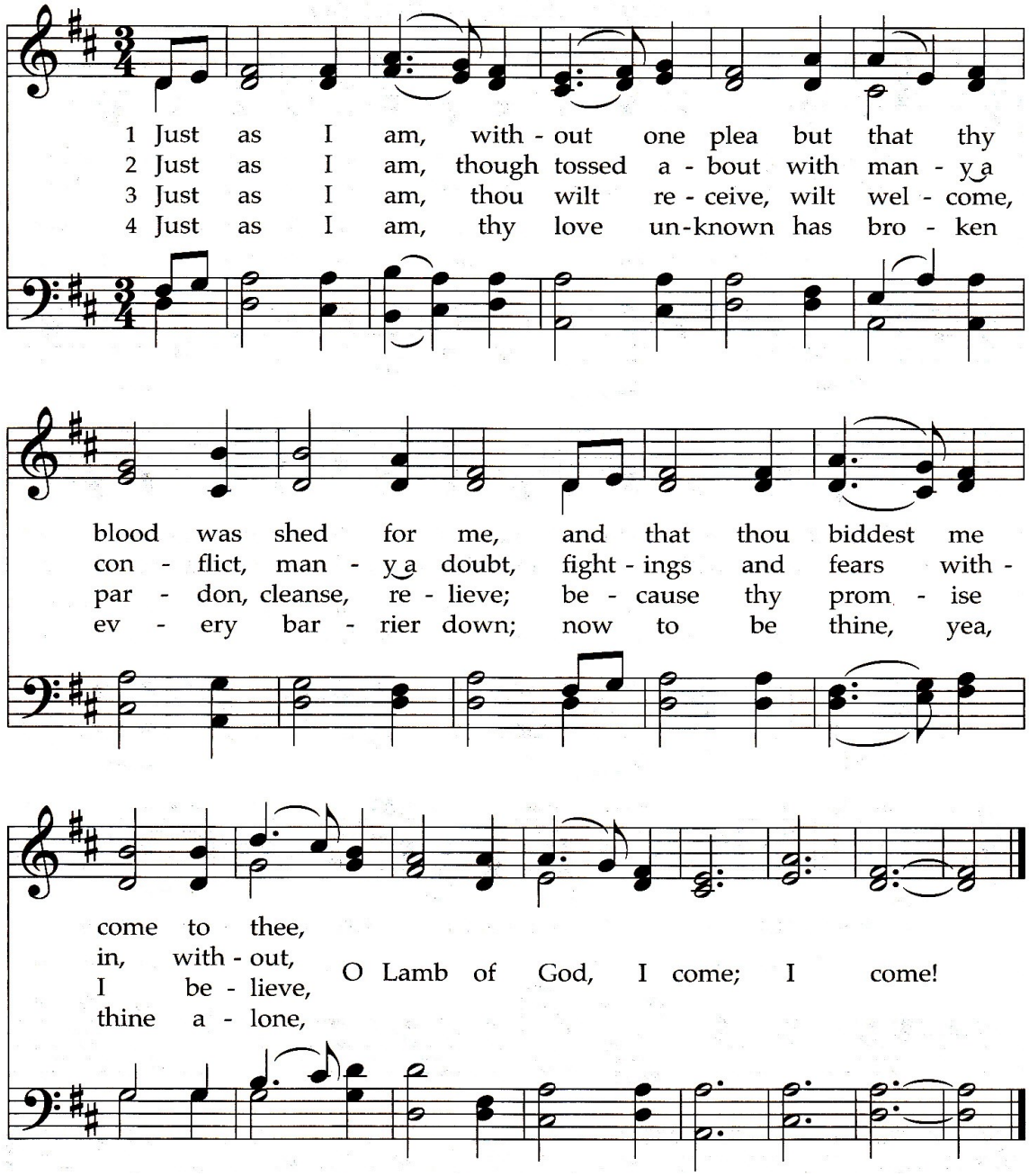
People: Amen.

GOSPEL READING Luke 14:15-24 *(adapted from the Inclusive Translation)* Rev. Woodworth

One of the guests said to Jesus, "Happy are those who eat bread in the kin-dom of God!" Jesus responded, "A landowner was giving a large dinner and sent out many invitations. At dinnertime, the landowner instructed an aide to say to those invited, 'Come to the feast, everything is ready.' But they began to excuse themselves, each and every one. The first one said to the aide, 'I've just bought some land, and I need to go out and inspect it. Please send my regrets.' Another said, 'I've just bought five yoke of oxen, and I need to go out and test them. Please excuse me.' A third said, 'I've just gotten married, so of course I can't come.' "The aide returned and reported all this to the landowner. The landowner became angry and said to the aide, 'Go into town, into the streets and alleys, and bring in those who are poor, those living with disabilities, and all whose bodies or lives have been marginalized.' After doing so, the aide reported, 'Your orders have been carried out, and there's still room.' The landowner then said to the aide, 'Go out and scour the side roads and the back roads and make them come in. I want my house to be full! But I tell you, not one of those I had initially invited will taste a bite of my dinner.' "

Leader: This is the word of God for the people of God.
People: Thanks be to God.

HYMN #442 *(vs. 1, 2)* "Just as I Am, without One Plea" WOODWORTH



Text: Charlotte Elliott, 1834, alt.
Music: William Batchelder Bradbury, 1849; harm. *The Hymnbook, 1955 Music Harm.*
© 1955, ren. 1983 John Ribble (admin. Westminster John Knox Press)
CCLI #689547
WOODWORTH
LM

REFLECTION "To Fast or to Feast?" Rev. Dr. Diaz

MOMENT OF SILENCE

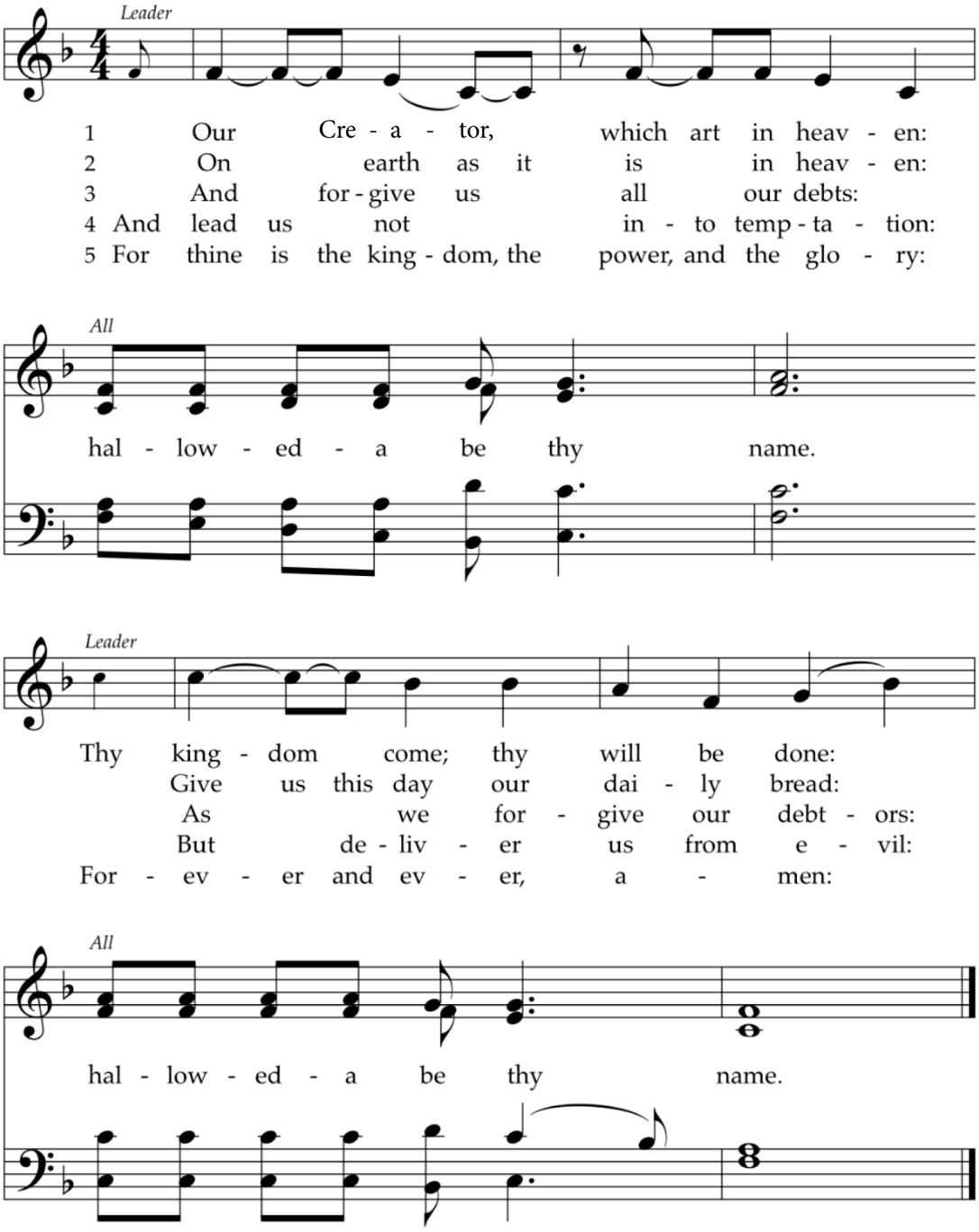
HYMN #442 *(printed on prior page; vs. 3, 4)* WOODWORTH

"Just as I Am, without One Plea"

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION Rev. Robbins

LORD'S PRAYER (IN SONG) HYMN #464 WEST INDIAN

"Our Creator, Which Art in Heaven"



TEXT: Trad. liturgical text WEST INDIAN
MUSIC: West Indian folk melody; transcr. Olive Pattison, 1945; harm. *The Presbyterian Hymnal*, 1989 Irregular
Music Transcr. © 1945 Boosey & Co., Ltd.
Music Harm. © 1990 Westminster John Knox Press CCLI #689547

SHARING GOD'S PEACE Rev. Robbins

Leader: La paz de Cristo esté con ustedes. The peace of Christ be with you.

People: Y también contigo. And also with you.

OFFERING INVITATION Rev. Robbins

Please remember to write your name on your offering envelope.
You can also scan this QR code to give online or visit www.ELPC.church/donate.

INVITATION TO OBSERVE A HOLY LENT Rev. Woodworth

PRAYER OVER THE ASHES *(in unison)* Rev. Woodworth

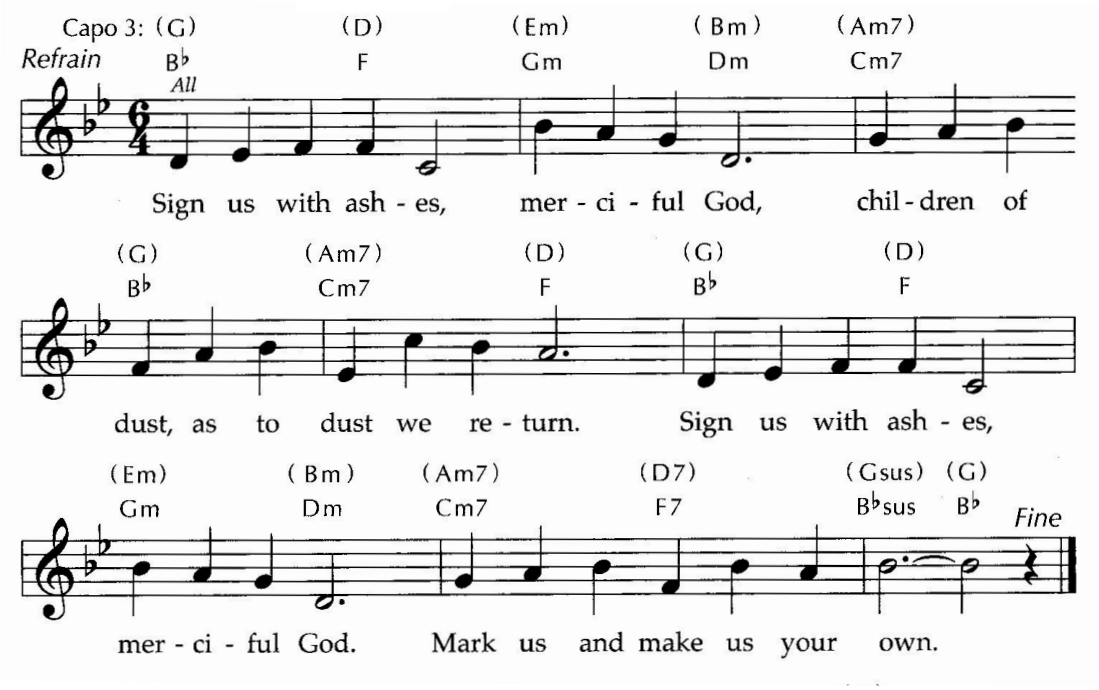
Gracious God, you formed us from the dust of the earth and breathe your life into us still. May these ashes remind us of our vulnerability and of your mercy that never lets us go. As we fast from what diminishes life, turn us toward the feast of your love. Meet us in the shadows, and lead us into the light of your abundant grace, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

IMPOSITION OF THE ASHES

At this time, you are invited to come forward for the imposition of ashes.

*** HYMN DURING THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES #433** PHOENIX

"Sign Us with Ashes"



Text: Mary Louise Bringle, 2003 PHOENIX
Music: William P. Rowan, 2003 LM with refrain
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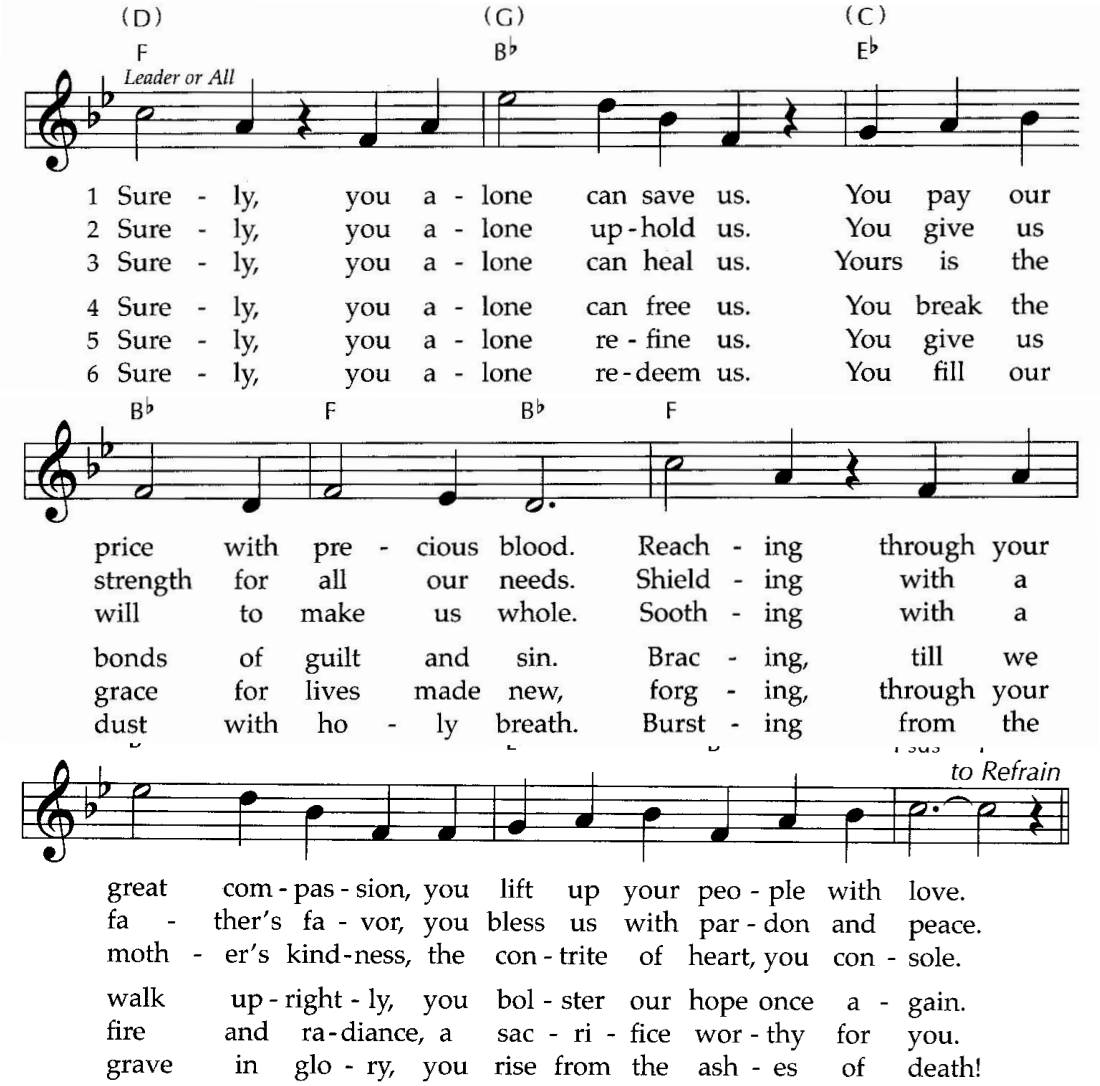
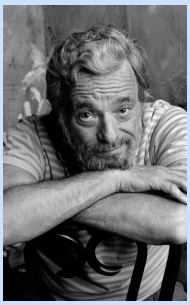


Praying with Art for Families & Tweens — Wednesdays

On Wednesday evenings in Lent, from 5-7 pm, families and tweens are invited share dinner, make art, and explore different ways of praying this Lent. Activities will follow the themes in our Lenten worship and devotional series *Tell Me Something Good.* Families of any age are welcome to come and tweens in 3rd-6th grade can join with or without a parent. More details are on the church's online calendar. RSVP to Sara (SaraH@coh.net).

Cathedral Concert — March 1



The *Cathedral Concerts* series at ELPC continues on Sunday, March 1 at 3 pm with a performance by ELPC soloists and choir with music of Stephen Sondheim. The concert is free and open to all. A freewill offering will be received. For more details, visit tiny.cc/cathedral-concerts.

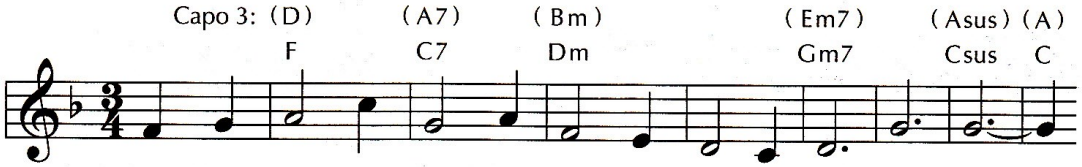
Lenten Conversations:
Tell Me Something Good — Feb 25 through April 1

Feeling overwhelmed in life? Join Pastor Michael on Wednesday evenings from Feb 25 to April 1 in the Good Samaritan Room as we slow down and listen for a different kind of news. Each week from 5:30-7 pm, we'll gather for honest, hope-filled conversations rooted in Sunday's sermon and our series *Tell Me Something Good: Grounding Ourselves in the Good News This Lent.* Together we'll explore Jesus' life through the scriptures and ask deeper questions about the text, the sermon, and what it means for us today. Whether you're curious, weary, skeptical, or hopeful, there's room for you. Our goal is not to give each other easy answers but to speak from our own perspective and experiences. A light dinner will be served at 6:30 pm. Please register online at:

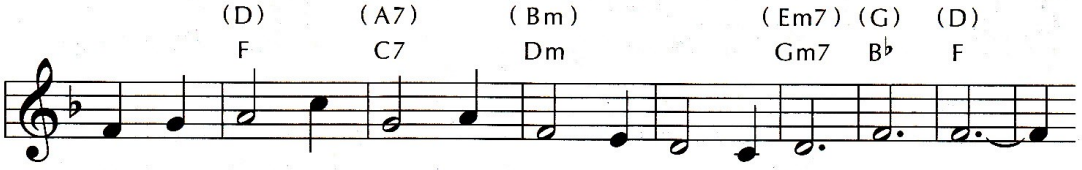
https://tinyurl.com/LentenConversations

PRAYERS FOR A HOLY LENT Rev. Woodworth

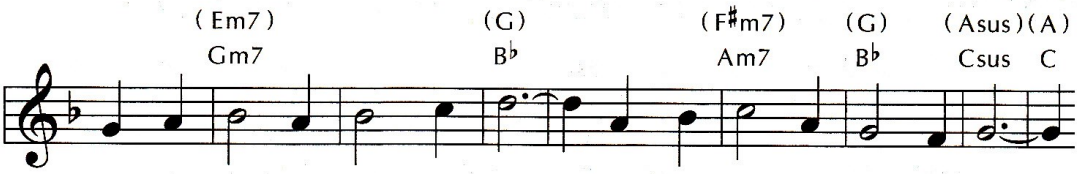
*** CLOSING HYMN #726** "Will You Come and Follow Me" KELVINGROVE



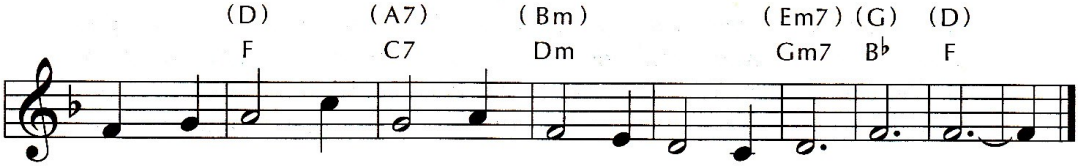
1 "Will you come and fol - low me if I but call your name?
2 "Will you leave your-self be-hind if I but call your name?
3 "Will you let the blind - ed see if I but call your name?
4 "Will you love the 'you' you hide if I but call your name?
5 Lord, your sum-mons ech - oes true when you but call my name.



Will you go where you don't know and nev - er be the same?
Will you care for cruel and kind and nev - er be the same?
Will you set the pris-oners free and nev - er be the same?
Will you quell the fear in - side and nev - er be the same?
Let me turn and fol - low you and nev - er be the same.



Will you let my love be shown; will you let my name be known;
Will you risk the hos - tile stare should your life at-tract or scare?
Will you kiss the lep - er clean, and do such as this un-seen,
Will you use the faith you've found to re-shape the world a - round,
In your com-pa - ny I'll go where your love and foot-steps show.



will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?"
Will you let me an - swer prayer in you and you in me?"
and ad - mit to what I mean in you and you in me?"
through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?"
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

TEXT: John L. Bell and Graham Maule, 1987
MUSIC: Scottish melody; arr. John L. Bell, 1987
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KELVINGROVE
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*** BENEDICTION** Rev. Dr. Diaz