

The First Presbyterian Church of New Canaan

Ash Wednesday – The First Day of Lent

February 18, 2026

12:00 pm

Grace and peace to you, and welcome!

Please prayerfully allow the silent, sacred space of where you are, and the quiet stirrings of the Holy Spirit to prepare your heart and mind for worship.

*PLEASE STAND IN BODY AND/OR SPIRIT.

THE GATHERING

Prelude: Lord God, open wide Thy Heaven, BWV 617 (from *Orgelbüchlein*) Johann Sebastian Bach

***Call to Worship** The Rev. Mary Marple Thies

Leader: Blow the trumpet in Zion; call a solemn assembly; gather the people.

All: **We gather—young and old, male and female, joyful and sorrow-filled.**

Leader: This is a day of repentance, a time to return to God with all our hearts.

All: **We come to God, repenting of all those things, which we have done that we should not have done and those things we have left undone which we should have done.**

Leader: Let us seek God's forgiveness.

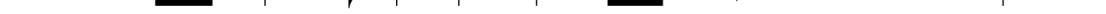
All: **We come to God who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

***Hymn No. 416:** O Come unto the Lord Korea

Refrain



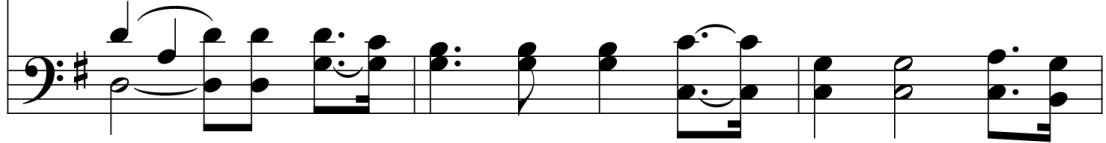
O come un-to the Lord; O come back to the Lord.



1 No mat - ter how heav - y and how great your sins may
2 Our Sav - ior is wait - ing your re - turn both night and
3 No mat - ter how bur-dened and how beat - en you may



be, there are no sins that Christ our Sav - ior can - not
day. Je-sus anx - ious - ly a - waits you, with
be, the Lord will com - fort you great - ly with



bear, can - not ac - cept. The great depth of Je - sus'
 door kept o - pen wide, as one who waits through-
 hands that touch and heal. Come un - to Christ, who

lov - ing heart is far deep - er than the seas.
 out the night for a lost child to come back home.
 loves you so. Please come home; please come back home.

Welcome and Announcements

The Rev. Scott Herr

Prayer of Illumination

Holy and merciful God, place our lives in front of your word that we may be formed as your people. Amen.

THE WORD

First Lesson – Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

The Rev. Scott Herr

¹Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near—²a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness spread upon the mountains a great and powerful army comes; their like has never been from of old, nor will be again after them in ages to come. ¹²Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; ¹³rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. ¹⁴Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain-offering and a drink-offering for the LORD, your God? ¹⁵Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; ¹⁶gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her canopy. ¹⁷Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep. Let them say, ‘Spare your people, O LORD, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, “Where is their God?”’

1 There's a wide - ness in God's mer - cy, like the wide - ness
 2 For the love of God is broad - er than the mea - sures

of the sea. There's a kind - ness in God's jus - tice,
 of the mind. And the heart of the E - ter - nal

which is more than lib - er - ty. There is no place where earth's
 is most won - der - ful - ly kind. If our love were but more

sor - rows are more felt than up in heaven. There is no place
 faith - ful, we would glad - ly trust God's Word, and our lives re -

where earth's fail - ings have such kind - ly judg - ment given.
 flect thanks-giv - ing for the good - ness of our Lord.

Responsive Reading – Psalm 51:1-17

Cindy Graziano

Leader: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving-kindness;
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

All: **Wash me through and through from my wickedness
and cleanse me from my sin.**

Leader: For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.

All: **Against you only have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,**

Leader: And so that you are justified when you speak
and upright in your judgment.

All: **Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth,
a sinner from my mother's womb..**

Leader: For behold, you look for truth deep within me,
and will make me understand wisdom secretly.

All: **Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure;
wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.**

Leader: Make me hear joy and gladness;
that the body you have broken may rejoice.

All: **Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.**

Leader: Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.

All: **Cast me not away from your presence,
and do not take your holy Spirit from me.**

Leader: Give me the joy of your saving help again,
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

All: **I shall teach your ways to the wicked,
and sinners shall return to you.**

Leader: Deliver me from death, O God,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness,
O God of my salvation.

All: **O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will proclaim your praise.**

Leader: Had you desired it, I would have offered sacrifice;
But you take no delight in burnt offerings.

All: **The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**

Solo:

Psalm XXIII

Paul Creston

Nikolas Brannan - tenor

Second Lesson – Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Cindy Graziano

¹'Beware of practising your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. ²'So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others.

Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ³But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁵And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ⁶But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ¹⁶And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ¹⁹Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Meditation

Dust to Dust

The Rev. Mary Marple Thies

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

*Affirmation of Faith – Hymn No. 436: God of Compassion, in Mercy Befriend Us

O Quanta Qualia

1. God of compassion, in mercy befriend us,
 2. Though we are lost, you have sought us and found us,
 3. How shall we stray, with your hand to direct us,
 giv - er of grace for our needs all - a - vail - ing.
 stilled our rude hearts with your word of con - sol - ing.
 you who the stars in their cours - es are guid - ing?
 Wis - dom and strength for each day ev - er send us,
 Wrap now your peace, like a man - tle, a - round us,
 What shall we fear, with your power to pro - tect us,

*Litany of Penitence

The Rev. Scott Herr

Leader: Eternal God, maker of heaven and earth,

All: **have mercy on us.**

Leader: Incarnate Word, redeemer of the world,

All: **have mercy on us.**

Leader: Abiding Spirit, giver of light and life,

All: **have mercy on us.**

Leader: For turning away from your presence,
for disobeying your word and commandments,

All: **forgive us, O God.**

Leader: For trusting in our own strength instead of yours,
for betraying your trust and the trust of others,

All: **forgive us, O God.**

Leader: For resisting your grace and refusing your blessings,
for holding back from proclaiming our faith in you,

All: **forgive us, O God.**

Leader: For damaging this earth and exploiting its creatures,
for neglecting and wasting the gifts you have given us,

All: **forgive us, O God.**

Leader: For failing to forgive as we have been forgiven.

for judging others and bearing grudges,

All: **forgive us, O God.**

Leader: For skimping on our commitments and relationships,
for failing in hospitality,

All: **forgive us, O God.**

Leader: For tolerating oppression, injustice, and wrong,
for keeping silent when we should have spoken up,

All: **forgive us, O God.**

Leader: For turning away when others have offered us love,
for closing our hearts when others have needed compassion,

All: **forgive us, O God.**

(a moment of silence for further reflection and repentance...)

Leader: For all we have done unkindly, unjustly and dishonestly,
for our careless speech and hurtful words,
All: **forgive us, O God. Restore us and let your anger depart from us. In your mercy hear us.**
Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Invitation to the observance of a Holy Lent

The Rev. Mary Marple Thies

We enter this season before Easter with the sign of ashes. The ashes placed on our foreheads remind us of our mortality and convey the uncertainty and frailty of our lives. May these ashes also remind us to spend the days of Lent in search of ways to examine our lives, to serve others in love, and to ground ourselves in the words of Scripture.

Prayer over the ashes:

The Rev. Mary Marple Thies

Almighty God, You created us out of the dust of the earth. May these ashes be for us a sign of our mortality and penitence, a reminder that only by your gracious gifts are we given everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

(Worshipers are invited to come forward to receive the ashes, which will be imposed with these words from Genesis 3:19: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.")

Prayers of the People

The Rev. Scott Herr

The Lord's Prayer (unison)

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

SENDING

***Closing Hymn No. 688:**

Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart

Morecambe

1 Spir - it of God, de - scend up - on my heart;
2 I ask no dream, no proph - et ec - sta - sies,
3 Hast thou not bid us love thee, God and King;
4 Teach me to feel that thou art al - ways nigh.
5 Teach me to love thee as thine an - gels love,

wean it from earth; through all its pulses move;
 no sud - den rend - ing of the veil of clay,
 all, all thine own, soul, heart, and strength, and mind?
 Teach me the strug - gles of the soul to bear,
 one ho - ly pas - sion fill - ing all my frame;

 stoop to my weak - ness, might - y as thou art,
 no an - gel vis - i - tant, no o - pening skies;
 I see thy cross; there teach my heart to cling.
 to check the ris - ing doubt, the reb - el sigh.
 the bap - tism of the heaven - de - scand - ed Dove,

 and make me love thee as I ought to love.
 but take the dim - ness of my soul a - way.
 O let me seek thee, and O let me find!
 Teach me the pa - tience of un - an - swered prayer.
 my heart an al - tar, and thy love the flame.

***Benediction**

The Rev. Mary Marple Thies

***Postlude:**

See the Lord of Life and Light, BWV 620 (from *Orgelbüchlein*) Johann Sebastian Bach

LENT AT FPC

The Lenten season is here!

We are marking the beginning of Lent with an Ash Wednesday Worship Service today as we enter this season of preparation for Easter. This year, our theme is *Finding the Way...* Each Sunday, in addition to the lectionary texts, we will be using a kind of spiritual “compass” to help you discover the way of Jesus along your life’s faith pilgrimage. On each of the five weeks leading up to Holy Week, we will reflect on one of the five questions:

- 1) “Does it give life, or take life away?”
- 2) “Does it expand your world, or shrink it?”
- 3) “Does it lead you more deeply into mystery and paradox, or black and white reality?”
- 4) “Does it set you free to give yourself away to something bigger than yourself, or enslave you to the fear of ‘not enough?’” and finally,
- 5) “Does it bring joy, or despair?”

The purpose of Lent, after all, is to lead us into new life! And hopefully along with the biblical lessons, these questions will help us find our way to the new life God intends for us and all people.

You are also welcome to pick up Lenten devotionals, One Hour of Sharing coin fish banks for your children to help save, and brown bags/grocery items for food pantry donations. We will also be setting up the Labyrinth in the Sanctuary for you to experience prayer using the Labyrinth.



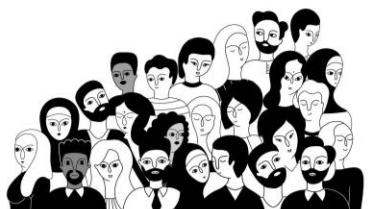
Action and Contemplation for Lent... The Sanctuary will be open for members starting Wednesday, February 18 (Mon-Fri from 9:00am-5:00pm) who want to spend time for prayer and meditation, using the Labyrinth or if you simply want to enjoy some quiet time sitting in the Sanctuary, you are welcome. This is a great opportunity to bring your food donations for the New Canaan Food Pantry, to pray for ourselves and our larger community. We believe prayer and service go together. **Instructions for the Labyrinth are posted or you can reach out to Scott or the church office for guidelines.** The Labyrinth is designed to lead one into private meditation via following the intricate path that takes us to the center. It's not a maze, but a purposeful passage that may be entered into with gentle song, prayer, or quiet meditation. We ask that you remove your street shoes, so please wear socks or bring your slippers from home.

Lenten devotional booklets are here – for individuals or families! Please take a copy or share one with a friend.

40-Day “Love Builds Up” Family Challenge

For each of the six weeks of Lent, spend some time at the beginning of the week (Sunday night, maybe?) reading the Bible passage together. Talk as a family about that week’s topic, using the conversation prompts included in this devotional if that helps. Commit to taking on an action or practice from that week, then just watch as the Realm of God fills, strengthens, and beautifies your house and the world!

**40-DAY
“LOVE BUILDS UP”
FAMILY CHALLENGE**



LENT AT FPC (Cont'd)

Wendell Berry and the Sabbath Poetry of Lent

The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing.
(Isaiah 14:7)

The word “Lent” comes from an old English word for “lengthen,” and refers to the lengthening days of spring. Anticipating Easter, the church prepares with forty days of fasting and reflection, the better to celebrate the great feast when it comes. The word “sabbath” comes from an old Hebrew word for “to stop,” and refers to pausing secondary activities (like work) to clear space for the primary ones (like relationships, delight, study, freedom, beauty, restoration – and resurrection). The poet Wendell Berry calls “the idea of sabbath...as rich and demanding an idea as any I know” – and over the decades, Berry has devoted many Sundays to writing “sabbath poems” that explore the depths of this rich, demanding idea. In this Lenten devotional, biblical texts walk hand-in-hand with Berry’s sabbath vision of the natural world, and together they suggest simple, accessible practices you can try yourself, with your family or friends, or with your congregation.



During the season of Lent (February 18 – March 29), our congregation collects a special offering for **One Great Hour of Sharing.** Around the world, millions of people lack access to sustainable food sources, clean water, sanitation, education, and opportunity. The work done in support of the causes supported by One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) — disaster, hunger, poverty, climate change, and immigration/migration and refugees — serves individuals and communities in need. This work provides people with safety, sustenance, and hope. This Offering helps to improve the lives of people in these challenging situations.

To donate online, use the QR code located in the bulletin insert, in the below photo OR the envelope included in your bulletin or they are also available at the Usher's table throughout the season of Lent.





**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
NEW CANAAN**



Come Join Us! Holy Week Services

**Ash Wednesday
Service**

February 18, 12:00pm

Palm Sunday Service

March 29, 10:00am

**Maundy Thursday
Service**

April 2, 7:00pm

**Good Friday Community
Service @ Lutheran Church**

April 3, 6:00pm

**Easter Sunday
Sunrise Service**

April 5, 7:00am

**Easter Sunday
Breakfast**

April 5, 8:00am

Easter Sunday Service

April 5, 10:00am

**Easter Egg
Hunt**

April 5, 11:30am

All Are Welcome!

178 Oenoake Ridge, New Canaan, CT
www.fpcncc.org 203-966-0002 ext. 1



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
NEW CANAAN**

ANNUAL LENTEN FOOD DRIVE

Share the Spirit of Giving during Lent
Live Our Mission!

Bring your donated items to Church
throughout Lent starting on
ASH WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18TH –
PALM SUNDAY, MARCH 29TH

New Canaan Food Pantry suggested items needed:

- Non-Refrigerated Milk (Parmalat, Horizon, etc.)
- Pancake Mix (Complete)
- Cereal & Oatmeal (Small Tub or Box)
- Baking Items: Baking Mix, Oil, Flour, Olive Oil
- Crackers, Peanut Butter, Jelly, Taco Kits, and Hamburger Helper
- Canned Goods: Vegetables, Fruit, Pasta Sauce, Soup, Tuna, Chicken, Stew
- Ground Coffee (Regular & Decaf) & Tea
- Household: Toilet Paper, Paper Towels, Dish Soap, All-Purpose Cleaners
- Personal Care: Shampoo/Conditioner, Deodorant, Body Wash, Mouth Wash, Razors, Shaving Cream

Monetary donations always accepted and can be mailed to
Human Services at: 77 Main St, New Canaan CT 06840.
Please make checks payable to the "New Canaan Food Pantry".

 Grab a bag with list of items from back of Church.
Bags donated by Walter Stewart's.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH of NEW CANAAN

CALENDAR – FEBRUARY thru APRIL

Thursday, Feb 26, 7:00pm	Open Mic Night
Saturday, Mar 7, 9:00-11:00am	Service Project: Feed My Starving Children (FMSC) Food Packing Event
Saturday, Mar 7, 2:00-6:00pm	New Covenant Center (Prep and Serve Meals)
Sunday, Mar 8, 11:30am	New Member Orientation Class
Sunday, Mar 8, 4:00pm	Charis Chamber Voices Concert
Sunday, Mar 22, 10:00am	New Member Reception
Thursday, Mar 26, 7:00pm	Open Mic Night
Sunday, Mar 29, 10:00am	Palm Sunday Service
Thursday, Apr 2, 7:00pm	Maundy Thursday Service (Communion)
Friday, Apr 3	Good Friday Community Service (@ Lutheran Church – time TBD)
Saturday, Apr 4, 2:00-6:00pm	New Covenant Center (Prep and Serve Meals)
Sunday, Apr 5	Easter Sunday 7:00am Sunrise Service (followed by breakfast) 10:00am Sunday Service (followed by Easter Egg Hunt)

THOSE PARTICIPATING IN TODAY'S SERVICE:

Solo: Nikolas Brannan – tenor

Lay Reader: Cindy Graziano

Greeter & Usher: Jan Lucie

MINISTERS

The Entire Congregation

OUR PASTORS

The Reverend Dr. R. Scott Herr, Senior Pastor • The Reverend Mary Marple Thies, Parish Associate

OUR STAFF

Terence J. Flanagan, Director of Music and Fine Arts • Jim Riehl, Business Administrator

Leah Saulsberry, Sunday School Director • Wendy Starr, Office Manager

Emily Johnson, Communications Assistant • Kate and Matt Ziance, Operations Managers

Terence D. Flanagan, Sunday Audio Technician

SIGN UP to Read, Usher or Greet <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30e0b4aaaad2aa31-sunday>

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