



### **Spiritual thought for the day!**

*“Lent is a time of self reflection and for action.  
Lent is not a time to merely “give up something”.  
It is a season to DO something. For others. And for God.  
It is a time to focus our hearts”*

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The United Church of Canada acknowledges that its buildings and ministries, from coast to coast, are on the traditional territories of Indigenous people.



*The Heart in the Heart of Huntsville!*



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**Welcome to Trinity**  
**The Heart in the Heart of Huntsville**  
**Ash Wednesday Service**  
**February 18, 2026 – 7 pm**

*“Loving Hearts ... Open Minds ... Serving Hands”*

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*“We curate our lives for others  
while quietly hiding from ourselves.”*

**WE GATHER AS THE WHOLE PEOPLE OF GOD**

**Prelude:** Kyung-A Lee

**Greeting**

One: May God’s peace be with you in the wilderness of this world.

All: **And also with you.**

Welcome! Welcome everybody! Welcome to Trinity United Church both here and in our online spaces at home.

Tonight, we begin our forty-day trek to the cross...

**Moment of Meditation**

**Call to Worship and Prayer of Approach**

One: God of mercy, we come with honest hearts.

All: **We are tired of pretending. We long to be real before you.**

One: As we begin our Lenten journey, help us lay down our masks and receive your grace.

All: **Prepare us for the ashes, a sign of who we are and whose we are.**

One: We are grateful for this community of belonging where we are reminded of your presence with us, around us, and within us.

All: **Meet us here and make us new. Amen.**

**Opening Hymn:** “Come to My Heart” (VU 661)

**Opening Prayer**

All: **We come tonight to be in community and to share spiritual union with one another and with God. Sensing the vulnerability and darkness of the Lenten season, we shiver at our frailty and seek the strength of love. When we come wearing masks to hide our pain forgive us for not being honest in our humanity. We recognize our actions mean nothing if our hearts are in the wrong place. Lenten God, shape us through prayer, through generosity and through quiet faithfulness. We are both dust and stardust and we are yours. Let us return to God in our thoughts and in our actions this Lenten season. Amen.**

**Choir Anthem:** “Ask of Me”

**WE LISTEN FOR GOD’S WORD**

**Prayer of Illumination**

One: Creator of the Universe, as we turn to the Scriptures may the words written on these pages become for us a word from you, written on our hearts. Amen.

Our Scripture Reader tonight is Kim Fairhall.

**New Testament Reading:** Matthew 6: 1-6 and 16-21

*(Prayer, giving and fasting are not ends in themselves. Spiritual practices are meant to help bring us closer to God and to the Divine. They are not ways to attract God’s attention or favour or*

*to manipulate God to bless us or to give us what we want. Instead, they enable us to see ourselves more clearly and to strengthen us to become our best selves.)*

Reader: This is the Gospel of Christ.

**All: Thanks be to God. Amen.**

### **Brief Meditation: “Come Out From Hiding”**

*Tonight reminds us that God meets us not in the polished self but in the honest vulnerable person beneath it... just as we are.*

**Hymn: “Just as I Am” (VU 508)**

### **The Blessing and Marking with the Ashes**

One: Now, during the first steps of our Lenten journey to Jerusalem, we remember the life and work of the One we follow, Jesus of Nazareth. We remember the dance of life expressed in his every word and action. We remember his invitation for us to learn the steps. Today we hear his call afresh. We want to do better and to be better. The ashes used today are the burnt palm branches used at last year’s Palm Sunday service.

### **Invitation to come Forward**

One: I invite you now to come forward to receive the ashen cross. The ashes have been mixed with oil as a sign of God’s healing grace.

We do not come to be seen.

We come to be honest.

You are now invited to come forward to receive this blessing. Hear these words: *“You are Stardust and God loves you just the way you are.” We are all works in progress.*

**Hymn: “Jesus, Remember Me” (VU148)**

*(Repeat until everybody has come forward to receive the cross of ashes.)*

**All: “Jesus, remember me,  
when you come into your kingdom.  
Jesus, remember me,  
when you come into your kingdom.”**

### **Congregational Prayer following the Anointing of the Ashes**

**All: Lenten God, smudged this night with the ashes, grant that they may be a reminder of the fragility of our lives and our need for God in them. May they also remind us that we no longer have to pretend. We can leave our masks at the foot of the cross. Help us to unwrap the spiritual veneer from our lives and step into our real honest-to-goodness selves. In the name of the One who loves us dearly. Amen.**

### **Closing Hymn: “In the Bulb There Is a Flower” (VU 703)**

#### **Benediction**

One: It is God who made us.

**All: We go out in the love of God.**

One: It is Christ who called us.

**All: We go out following Jesus.**

One: It is the Spirit that empowers us.

**All: We go out with hearts afire.**

One: May you see the face of Christ in all you meet.

**All: And may all you meet, see the face of Christ in you.**

### **Musical Postlude**