

Welcome to Church of the Painted Hills

United Church of Christ

Ash Wednesday

February 18, 2026

Prelude Were You There? (Traditional Spiritual, arr. Joel Raney) Dr. Kyungsun Choi

Call to Worship

Rev. Carlos Sosa

One: Come, all who seek God's presence. Come, all who long for renewal.

All: We come, acknowledging our need for grace.

One: This is a day to remember our humanity, our brokenness, and our dependence on God.

All: We turn our hearts to God, seeking mercy and restoration.

One: Let us worship with humility and expectation.

All: We open our hearts to God's transforming love.

Call to Confession

Rev. Carlos Sosa

My friends, we are dust, and to dust, we shall return. But God is merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. Let us confess in silence our sins before God.

(Moment of silent confession)

Prayer of Confession

Rev. Carlos Sosa

One: My dear friends, let us confess with honest hearts and pray for God's mercy.

All: Holy and merciful God, we confess that we have turned away from you in thought, word, and deed. We have not loved you with our whole heart, nor have we loved our neighbors as ourselves. In your mercy, forgive what we have been, help us amend what we are, and guide us toward what we shall be. Through Christ, we pray. Amen.

Words of Forgiveness

Rev. Carlos Sosa

One: On this sacred Ash Wednesday, let us remember that our God is a God of boundless mercy and forgiveness. As we embark on this holy season of Lent, let us open our hearts to receive His abundant grace. Just as the ashes upon our foreheads symbolize our mortality, they also remind us of God's willingness to forgive our sins.

All: Just as the ashes upon our foreheads symbolize our mortality, they also remind us of God's willingness to forgive our sins.

One: May we, in turn, learn to forgive ourselves and one another, releasing the burdens of remorse and resentment that weigh us down. Let the ashes of our past mistakes be transformed into fertile ground for new beginnings, as we embrace the promise of redemption and renewal. In God's mercy, we find the strength to journey towards a brighter and holier future.

All: In God's mercy, we find the strength to journey towards a brighter and holier future.

Scripture Reading Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 (NIV)
Joel 2:1-2

Rev. Carlos Sosa

An Army of Locusts

2 Blow the trumpet in Zion;
 sound the alarm on my holy hill.

Let all who live in the land tremble,
 for the day of the Lord is coming.
It is close at hand—

² a day of darkness and gloom,
 a day of clouds and blackness.

Like dawn spreading across the mountains
 a large and mighty army comes,
such as never was in ancient times
 nor ever will be in ages to come.

Joel 2:12-17

Rend Your Heart

¹²“Even now,” declares the Lord,
 “return to me with all your heart,
 with fasting and weeping and mourning.”

¹³Rend your heart
 and not your garments.
Return to the Lord your God,
 for he is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and abounding in love,
 and he relents from sending calamity.

¹⁴Who knows? He may turn and relent
 and leave behind a blessing—
grain offerings and drink offerings
 for the Lord your God.

¹⁵Blow the trumpet in Zion,
 declare a holy fast,
 call a sacred assembly.

¹⁶Gather the people,
 consecrate the assembly;
bring together the elders,
 gather the children,
 those nursing at the breast.

Let the bridegroom leave his room
 and the bride her chamber.

¹⁷Let the priests, who minister before the Lord,
weep between the portico and the altar.
Let them say, "Spare your people, Lord.
Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn,
a byword among the nations.
Why should they say among the peoples,
'Where is their God?'"

Prayer for Illumination

Rev. Carlos Sosa

Lord, in this moment of worship, shine your light upon us. Illuminate our hearts and minds with your truth and wisdom. Guide us in your ways, that we may walk in the path of righteousness. Amen

Message

Rev. Carlos Sosa

Music He Giveth More Grace/ No One Ever Cared for Me like Jesus
(Hubert Mitchell, arr. Mark Hayes)

Dr. Kyungsun Choi

Marking with Ashes

Rev. Carlos Sosa

Affirmation of Faith

Rev. Carlos Sosa

So, you have come in the struggles of your lives to acknowledge Jesus—his life, his death, and his love.

While you wear the symbol of mortality on your foreheads, know in your hearts that this is not the end.

"Ashes to ashes and dust to dust" may remind us of our fleeting existence,

but the heart of the matter is the Alleluia—faith in the God within you and the fire of Christ's love in your life and work.

Go in peace and hope and gather your true purpose around you.

You will sing Alleluia once again! Amen.

Benediction

Rev. Carlos Sosa

May the love and peace of our Lord be with you as you go forth from this gathering. May His grace fill your hearts and His light guide your path. You may go in peace, Amen.

Postlude He Hideth My Soul (William J Kirkpatrick, arr. Mark Hayes)

Dr. Kyungsun Choi