

Order of Worship

First Sunday of Lent
February 26, 2023

Call to worship (based on Matthew 4:1-11)

For forty days and forty nights

our Savior fasted in the wilderness..

Tempted to turn from God, tempted to turn to power and privilege

our Savior resisted.

Let us follow Jesus through the wilderness this Lent, examining our temptations, resisting them and returning to God.

Let us worship God.

Call to confession

We pause here to examine our lives, our temptations and the ways we have fallen short before our God. Let us confess our sins together.

Prayer of confession

Gracious God, as we wander through this wilderness with Jesus, examining all the worldly comforts we turn to during times of stress and struggle, we confess the neglect of our faith. We confess all that we place above you, making idols of money, earthly power, and even food. Empty us this Lent, Holy God. Guide us in our spiritual practices so we can leave this wilderness season more aware of your presence and the ways our faith can sustain us. Amen.

Assurance of pardon

Remember and receive these hopeful words from John 8:32, "If you continue in my word, you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." Receive God's truth. Receive God's grace. Accept the freedom God provides. Amen.

Prayer for illumination

God of grace, help us seek you and the message you intend for us today. Let us not be distracted by worldly pursuits or pleasures. Help us to focus our hearts and minds on you and your Word read and proclaimed today. Amen.



Scripture readings

Sermon

Affirmation of faith (From Colossians 1:15-20)

**Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn of all creation;
in him all things in heaven and on earth were created,
things visible and invisible.
All things have been created through him and for him.
He himself is before all things,
and in him all things hold together.
He is head of the body, the church;
he is the beginning,
the firstborn of the dead,
so that he might come to have first place in everything.
For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,
and through him God was pleased to reconcile all things,
whether on earth or in heaven,
by making peace through the blood of his cross. Amen.**

Call for the offering

God calls us to lives of grateful generosity. Let us praise the Giver of all good gifts through our offering today.

Prayer of dedication

God of grace, you provide for us in amazing ways. Accept these offerings as signs of our gratitude and bless them to further Christ's ministry and mission among the poor, the despairing and the destitute. Amen.

Prayers of the people and the Lord's Prayer

Eternal God, as we begin this Lenten journey with Jesus in the wilderness, our struggles and temptations become all too real. Emptying ourselves of that which teases and tempts us to turn from you and turn toward idols of comfort that don't satisfy and don't last, we pray for you to open us to your truth and guide us in Christ's path.

All too often, God, we choose the path that is known, the path that is comfortable. This Lent, let us pause to look around, discern where we are and how we got here. Is our position faithful? Do we need to redirect? What can we learn from where we have been? What new path might we need to forge to be more faithful in the future? What assumptions need to be let go? What truth do we need to steel ourselves to face? God, help us with our Lenten reckoning. We are in the wilderness, and we desperately need you as our guide.

All too often, God, we prioritize our comfort and our convenience over the struggles and suffering of others. Hear our desire to change, O God. Help us be deliberate in our actions and thoughtful in our choices. Help us ask ourselves the hard questions before we take action. Who will our actions impact? Who might we unintentionally harm? What voices have



we not heard from? Who have we not yet considered? God, help us with our Lenten reckoning. We are in the wilderness, and we desperately need you as our guide.

Finally, Holy God, in this moment of prayer we pause now to de-center ourselves and our needs to focus on the needs of others. Hear our prayers and pleas on behalf of your people.

We pray for those who are fleeing violence, those who are grieving death and deep loss, those who are sick and their caregivers; those seeking healing from trauma; the victims of sexual, emotional, and physical abuse; the victims of hate, of racism, xenophobia and transphobia. We pray for refugees and asylum seekers. We pray for world leaders seeking to resolve conflict through non-violence and diplomacy. We pray for the idols of money, power, and privilege to be brought down in favor of love and justice and equity. We pray for those fighting for life after a natural disaster.

In your mercy, O God, hear the prayers of your people. Help us walk with you during this Lenten season, so we can learn and grow in your embrace. Help us follow in the footsteps of our Savior, who calls on us to pray as he prayed, **“Our Father...”**.

Charge and benediction (from Book of Common Worship, Ash Wednesday Service)

Beloved people of God;
I invite you, in the name of Christ,
to observe a holy Lent
by self-examination and penitence,
by prayer and fasting,
by works of love,
and by meditating on Gods' word.

May the grace, hope, peace and love of God our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer be with us all, now and forever. Amen.

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Liturgy written by Teri McDowell Ott
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