



Earth Care *Lenten Devotional*

2026

Presbyterians for Earth Care and
Red Presbiteriana para el Cuidado de la Creación

Ash Wednesday

February 18, 2026

Joel 2:1-2; 12-17; Isaiah 58:1-12

Say it aloud: *Ash Wednesday*. Repeat: *Ash Wednesday*.

And again: *Ash Wednesday*.

Like other observances in the ancient Christian calendar of holy days, Ash Wednesday hitches itself seasonally to celestial configurations. This positioning and timing of holy days naturally invokes our macrocosmic and ecological sensibilities

What are ashes but created matter transposed from one temporal state to another by fire - an evocative natural phenomenon itself? Composing elemental, life-defining carbon, ashes neither annihilate nor annul their antecedent carbonate forms; rather, ashes represent their infinite essence.

Traditionally produced for ecclesiastical use by incinerating Advent/Christmastide evergreens or palms from a previous year's Palm Sunday, ashes imposed on a wrist or brow mark our fundamental essence, too. They connect our creatureliness to creation: Earth to earth; ashes to ashes; dust to dust. As others have witnessed, we are stardust.

Our essential connection to creation - demonstrated similarly by the Eucharistic elements of grain and grape - expands across creation's widest horizon to incorporate the totality of universal, human experience: sin and righteousness; stagnation and transformation; loss and gain; darkness and light; death and life. Paradoxically, truth emerges from ashes.

While smearing ashen ointment against bare skin sensitizes us to God's transformative power, the ritual connects us viscerally to our earthy mortality, too - a humble awakening, for sure! Such awareness overwhelms. Found wanting, existentially naked before God, only penitence alone enables us to proceed. Consequently, our soul-saving next move is to "rend our hearts, not our garments" hopeful in glory's (*Doxa*) eternal return.

As a portal to a genuine Lenten observance (*Lenten* = "lengthen"), Ash Wednesday opens us to another, successive portal ahead: Easter's promised, new life exaltation. From Easter's life-confession a fresh course opens toward wholesomeness and more authentic peace. Restored in the joys of our place and being we discover ourselves at home anew amidst the sacred cosmos-home.

The Rev. Bruce A. Chapman, D. Min., HR
Presbytery of Charlotte, North Carolina

First Sunday in Lent

February 22, 2026

Matthew 4:1-11

As I write, I have just returned from the Call for Clergy in Minneapolis to witness and resist their extrajudicial authoritarian occupation by Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Instead of facing our demons in a desert, religious leaders from across the nation faced them on the prairie, wrapped up in ski pants and foot warmers, thermal underwear and stoles safety-pinned to parkas. With negative thirty-four degree wind chill temperatures, Mother Earth herself screamed, “If you really want ICE, I will give you some ICE!!”

Jesus in our midst, among the least of these members of his family — strangers unwelcomed by our federal government but companioned by all who see in them the face of Christ — faced down those demons with us, in a story of reverse temptation:

Mutual Aid societies proving the miracle of loaves and fishes for families left behind after the abduction of their loved ones, including the delivery of breast milk to a three month old left unattended after ICE broke down her door without a judicial warrant and kidnapped her mother.

Movement chaplains, including a colleague from seminary, rushing to the scenes where Renee Good and Alex Pretti were murdered, offering prayer and comfort while being pummeled by pepper spray and sound cannon.

And civic leaders refusing to cave to external demands that would protect them from judicial probes at the expense of their citizens.

Over and over again, with every reason to give up, these Beloved of God, baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus, show up for one another and for God in this crisis. This same level of urgency, demon-confronting, and long haul commitment can be ours for earth care. Let us begin!

Prayer: Holy One who overcomes horror with inspiration, grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the facing of this hour.

Rev. Gusti Linnea Newquist, Pastor
Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church, West Virginia

Second Sunday in Lent

March 1, 2026

John 3:1-7

It seems that as the days change and seasons slide into one another, that our own lives can have trouble keeping up. We want to live the best lives possible, but often find that even those that we rely on for clear meanings and interpretations have to admit to a cloudiness of vision.

In today's scripture, John 3: 1-17, given for meditation and reflection, we find an important and learned man, Nicodemus, facing those same needs for clarification. He is well respected and possibly doesn't want his reputation damaged in any way by coming to ask Jesus for guidance. Therefore, he comes under the cloak of darkness. Nicodemus comes to truly ask Jesus who He is. Jesus' response is not of this world and creates even more confusion, as it does with us, "to see the kingdom of God you must be born again."

Wait a minute! In Jesus' time, as well as our own, that can't happen. Anyone who has given birth or been with someone in labor knows a child, especially a person fully grown, can't return to the womb. Therefore, Jesus can't be speaking about the physical realm we live in, but one of a spiritual nature. Jesus has spoken to us earthly things and we don't believe. Now He asks us to believe of a spiritual life.

With the ending of this scripture, one of the most relatable pieces is hand to us: John 3:16 – "For God so love that world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have Eternal life.

Use what you have learned of what is expected in our physical world and translate that into setting a living example in the spiritual life.

Prayer: Good and Gracious God, walk alongside us and untangle our minds and hearts so that the things that we don't seem to understand make sense. Help us to show your love and work within our communities. Let us be the light that you have lit during this season.

Barbara Hassall
Elder, The Sanctuary Church, Fort Lauderdale, FL
Tropical Florida Presbytery

3rd Sunday in Lent

March 8, 2026

Psalm 95

“In God’s hands are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to God. The sea is the Lord’s, for the Lord made it, and God’s hands formed the dry land.” Psalm 95:4-5

In the chaos of rising food costs, healthcare costs, rent and inflation, I sometimes feel overwhelmed about expenses and worry about neighbors facing food insecurity. Maybe you do too.

I feel like caring for creation is getting lost in the chaos. Some of that is climate chaos. Wild weather.

Inflation, wild weather, and uncertainty are causing suffering.

Restoring creation includes making changes that can sometimes be uncomfortable. Reducing our purchases reduces plastic packaging and carbon footprint attached to shipping items around the world. Adjusting our thermostats to reduce energy consumption requires a sweater or a T-shirt but also reduces our carbon footprints.

Eating close to home can reduce our impact on the earth. That can involve growing some of our food – planting vegetable gardens and fruit-producing or nut-producing trees. We can each do this at home. As congregations, we can plant community gardens and edible orchards on church properties – increasing water conservation and reducing water bills. Through food pantries, we can share harvests with neighbors facing food insecurity.

If we practice sustainable agriculture methods, we can further reduce our impact on the planet through reduced use of chemicals and soil conservation.

Jesus owned no home and few possessions. His messages are clear on materialism: a life focused on possessions is a poor life. Jesus walked gently on the earth, offering God’s love.

Prayer: Creator God, I pray for those whose forests, mountains, seas, beaches, dry lands, and habitats have been destroyed by our material desires. Help me make choices based on creation care values.

Scharmel Roussel
Arkansas Interfaith Power and Light

Fourth Sunday in Lent

March 15, 2026

John 9

I was 5 when I got glasses. I was astonished that the leaves on the tree were no longer a blur. In SW Pennsylvania, I also recall hearing that Lake Erie was dead, the sulfur creeks all over, the artificial hills of coal mining we called slate dumps.

The natural world is in a state of constant tension between order and disorder, of blessing and bane. We are not the center of the universe. From our vantage point, it is decidedly imperfect and diseases from birth or later continue to threaten us.

Sometimes, the most unlikely things can be instruments of healing. Opaque mud seems an odd medicine for a salve of sight. Maybe it is a dim reminder that Gen 2 has us emerge from the soil as earthlings, groundlings.

Sacramental elements open a path into a new realm beyond. The physical can be a gateway to the new. After Jesus makes a mud paste for his eyes Jesus tells him to wash in the pool of Siloam (sent out) to complete his transformation. In an arid area, it served as a water source for ancient Jerusalem, built by King Hezekiah to secure water during the Assyrian siege. The large, first-century pool was uncovered in 2004 during sewer line work.

Our world view enables us to see and to obscure social life. After the healing conflict erupts into formal hearing. After the healing conflict erupts into formal hearing of accusation, For too long we have used creation as a battlefield of opposing views. For over 100 years, we have lived with tension between using and conserving/preserving. We have made so much progress in the environment. We should celebrate them as impetus for our being sent out as caregivers for a needy planet.

Clear our vision, O Creator God.

David Crowley

St. Andrews Presbyterian Church

Albuquerque, NM

Fifth Sunday in Lent

March 22, 2026

John 11:1-45

Anytime you lose a dear friend, a mate, a pet , a home or even a cherished memento, there is an emotion that can overtake you. Even if the outcome is for a good reason and opens you to change, there is a feeling that you must deal with. This feeling is different for every person, but the underlying effect can happen in different ways and at different times. As you express your grief, those around you may wonder at how you show your concern.

It may be shown through a stoicism, almost a sense of shock, that keeps you going about your “normal” routine as if nothing happened. It could be shown by abnormal energy, such as excessive cleaning and organizing to keep your mind busy. You could break down in tears or draw completely within yourself, wanting to be alone. Whatever your way of dealing with this grief, it is yours and yours alone.

In today’s passage from John 11: 1-45, we see how Jesus, his companions and friends displayed different reactions to hearing the news that their good friend Lazarus was sick and might be dying.

His disciples questioned why they waited to go to his side. Upon arriving in Bethany, Jesus found that Lazarus had passed. The sister, Martha, met Jesus with almost a sense of contempt for the delay...knowing full well that Lazarus would be saved if only Jesus had arrived sooner. The other sister, Mary, usually quiet and non-confrontational, approached Jesus in tears. Jesus wept. Each dealt with the event differently and in their own way.

As we move through the emotions of Lent, remember to be compassionate and loving to those who express things differently.

PRAYER:

Good, gracious and loving God, keep us safe as we transverse the events of the world during this time. Give us a steady and balanced way to call your people into the “battle” that surrounds the actions of today. Let us act in love and peace remembering that in all things, LOVE WINS!

Barbara Hassall

Elder, The Sanctuary Church

Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Tropical Florida Presbytery

Palm Sunday

March 29, 2026

Matthew 21:1-11

This is a day of resounding joy. It *is* a “triumphal day” presaged in the Psalms (e.g.118): This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.... The Lord is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.” The people shout “Save us” a translation of the Hebrew for “*Hosanna*.”

Matthew writes “This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet(s):”Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey.” So, a huge crowd spreads cloaks and branches from trees on the road, going before him shouting “*Hosanna* to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.”

This day’s texts prove our need to remember this blessing throughout the events that lead to Easter. We see Judas’s perfidy; we hear the crowd, once so applauding, shouting “Let him be crucified,” while Pilate frees a criminal and condemns Jesus to death.

When we read of Jesus’s institution of “The Lord’s Supper” at the Passover meal, we learn of God’s intention to offer us the forgiveness we so sorely need: “Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” Truly we shout “*Hosanna!*” knowing in faith that God continues to save us.

Prayer: We all belong to the crowds both blessing and condemning Jesus’s love. Let us rejoice in our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer’s endless mercy.

Nancy Corson Carter
The Church of Reconciliation
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Maundy Thursday

April 2, 2026

John 13: 1-7, 31b - 35

Our choir has a wonderful anthem for Maundy Thursday about Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. Many of us do not practice foot washing for Maundy Thursday, but it is a powerful ritual. Jesus sets an example of service and humility.

Hear my call and live it true, do for them what I do for you, go wash their feet

Be a servant humble and meek and wash their feet (Pepper Choplin Wash their Feet)

The word humility comes from the word *humus* - of the earth. The earthiness of Jesus' teachings is important, he talks about the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, images of the beauty of the earth. Imagines that can ground us, especially as we live through such devastating news of our country and the world. We seem to have lost connection to the earth, and the things that ground us. Yet our call which is to create a world of peace and justice, care for the vulnerable, hope for the hopeless, seems daunting.

Jesus gives us clear direction - that we love one another. That love does not just extend to the human family, but to the whole of creation. It requires us to take a hard look at what we are doing to perpetuate the lack of care to the vulnerable, to the people and the creatures that have no voice. How are we serving if we support corporations that use our dollars to promote hatred and violence?

Often, we are not aware of our complicity in greed, violence and hatred. That is why it Jesus performs this act of a servant, it astonishes the disciples, because he is their leader, yet he is trying to open their minds to what leadership truly is. Jesus is always mind blowing.

After washing their feet, Jesus shares bread with his friends, in equality around the table so that all are recognized, fed and have enough. Walter Brueggemann reminds us that in our system there is "intentional inequality that happens daily" nationally and internationally, "as food becomes a weapon for the rich nations against the poorer nations. Food becomes an instrument of manipulation and extortion." (*Materiality As Resistance* p. 26) Our system rewards the rich and keeps the poor poor. May Jesus' example of servanthood open our eyes to see our complicity in the system and to work for change.

Prayer: How long, oh Lord, must others suffer because a few have more than enough? Help us to find strength in living close to the earth, to see clearly what is ours to do and to follow your example of being a servant, humble and meek.

Rev. Dr. Naomi C Kelly, co-pastor of Nicolls Memorial Presbyterian Church and Weaving Home (1001 New Worshipping Community), Old Forge, New York

Good Friday

April 3, 2026

Psalm 22

Psalm 22:1a is the last phrase Jesus speaks in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. It's powerful and anguished call to God resonates through the generations. When Jesus cries these words from the cross, the feeling of loneliness permeates and radiates outward. For Christ to cry out in anguish that God has forgotten him is devastating.

And yet this ancient lament hymn continues beyond this moment of forsakenness and turns to the natural world to make a broader point: the psalmist singing has been left alone in the wilds of the world AND God comes back to protect them. Verses 19 – 21a ask God to come near to the psalmist and in 21b, God is there. And for the rest of this psalm, there's a joy at God's presence with them. Just as after the horrible moments on the cross – the moments of despair, disbelief, and heartbreak – comes silence followed by rejoicing.

Our natural world reflects this: God gave us seasons and every year we get the chance to see this renewal happen right before us. Easter is on the earlier side in 2026, yet for many of us, daffodils may be starting to bloom, sunlight permeates more of our days. We must go through winter and the harshness it brings to come back to the life blossoming time of spring. We can't skip winter, just as Christ can't skip the Passion.

We can trust in God's provision that new life bursts forth each year and that God wants to co-create with us in taking care of this great gift of life in our natural world.

Amazing Love, you travel the highs and lows with us. You show us the path forward, even and especially when things seem helpless. May we follow you, now and always. Amen.

Rev. Katherine Scott-Kirschner,
Ocean Heights Presbyterian Church in Egg Harbor Township, NJ

Holy Saturday

April 4, 2026

Job 14:7; Lamentations 3:22-23; John 19:38-42

Trusting the Ground

Job knew what we forget: trees understand resurrection better than we do. "There is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again," he writes, marveling that what seems dead can surge back to life. But mortals? We lie down and rise no more. We are, Job laments, more fragile than the forest.

On Holy Saturday, even God lies down in the earth. Joseph and Nicodemus wrap Jesus in linen with myrrh and aloes, laying him in a garden tomb as evening falls. The stone seals shut. The body rests in darkness, returned to the ground from which all life comes.

This is the day when heaven trusts the soil.

The writer of Lamentations sits in similar darkness—afflicted, besieged, enclosed in stone. Yet even in desolation, a turn comes: "The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; God's mercies are new every morning." The faithfulness that renews creation each dawn is the same faithfulness keeping vigil in the tomb.

Holy Saturday asks us to wait with the earth—to trust that the ground holds more than death, that the cycles creation has always known are woven into God's own life now. The tree cut down. The seed that must fall into the ground and die. The body given back to soil. The waiting.

We are an anxious species, quick to extract and exploit, reluctant to rest or trust. But today the Lord of all creation lies silent in the ground, teaching us what trees have always known: sometimes faithfulness looks like stillness. Sometimes hope means trusting the dark.

God of Holy Saturday, teach us to wait with the earth. In the silence of the tomb, help us trust that your love is buried deep enough to rise. Amen.

Rev. Tony Larson

Pastor, Trinity Presbyterian Church of Surfside Beach, SC

Co-Moderator of the 226th and 227th General Assemblies of the PC(USA)

Easter Day

April 5, 2026

John 20:1-20

In John's telling of the Easter story, Mary Magdalene arrived at the tomb where they had laid Jesus' body to perform burial rituals. But the tomb was empty!

Mary Magdalene, overwhelmed with sadness, asked the angels: "Where have they taken my Lord?" Then she saw someone (the Risen Lord) that she mistook for the gardener and asked him the same question. When Jesus called her by her name, she immediately recognized him!

While the power of the Easter story must, of course, be the central focus of this passage, let's examine it through an earth care lens for just a moment. I'm struck by Mary's first impression of the Risen Lord was as a "gardener." This calls to mind the first instruction that God gave the first human in Gen. 2:15, that Adam "must till and keep {the garden of Eden}." So, how would a dedicated "Jesus gardener" till and keep the Creation? How might we?

When we seek to beautify our homes and churches we are easily seduced by plants and practices that emphasize beauty and ease of care with a whopping dose of chemicals! But I see Jesus the gardener of our planet as a being focused on the health and vitality of the entire ecosystem, not just one person's yard. In that worldview, my imaginary Jesus the gardener would focus on planting and encouraging the cultivation of native plants, which support populations of native insects, birds, predators, and ultimately the entire human family!

Prayer: Gracious and holy God, open our eyes that we might see the beauties of the world you created and help us commit to "tilling and keeping" that world. Amen.

David R. Kepley
Ruling Elder
Providence Presbyterian Church
Fairfax, VA



Presbyterians for Earth Care (PEC) invites individuals and congregations to participate in the growing earth care movement within the PC(USA) and beyond.

PEC is a national eco-justice network that cares for God's creation by connecting, equipping, and inspiring Presbyterians to make creation care a central concern of the church.

Presbyterians for Earth Care (then Presbyterians for Restoring Creation) was founded in 1995 as a national, grassroots organization to support people of faith working towards "environmental wholeness with social justice." PEC helps the church to fulfill its current environmental policies, to create new policies and practices, and to energize and educate church members about eco-justice, the well-being of all humankind on a thriving earth.

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