



**6:30PM | February 18, 2026**  
**ASH WEDNESDAY: The Way Back**

*You are invited to join the pastor, on the right side of the altar, for a time of prayer before we begin worship this morning.*

**PRELUDE**

This Is My Father's World  
by: Sheppard/Vandall

Judi Wilkinson

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Let us know that you worshipped with us today: [www.westernhillsep.org/attendance/](http://www.westernhillsep.org/attendance/)  
See our full list of announcements here: [www.westernhillsep.org/happening-now/](http://www.westernhillsep.org/happening-now/)

**PREPARING TOGETHER**

**PRAYER FOR THE PATH**

**OPENING HYMN**

Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah

No.127

**WE PROCLAIM**

**FIRST READING** Psalm 51:10-15 (NRSVUE)

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

**HYMN**

O Lord Listen to Your Children Praying

## **SECOND READING** Joel 2:12-29 (NRSVUE)

Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from punishment. Who 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? Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her canopy. Between 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?'" Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old ones shall dream dreams, and your ones shall see visions. On all, bound and free, in those days I will pour out my spirit.

## **SERMON**

### **ANTHEM**

O Master Let Me Walk With Thee

Chancel Choir

arrg. by: Dale Wood

## **A RITUAL FOR GETTING OUT OF OUR OWN WAY**

As we prepare to receive ashes in the centuries-old Christian tradition for the beginning of Lent, let us offer to God our most honest selves, inviting a point from which to make a new start this night. After the prayer and some music, we will take time to be in some stillness, resting beside the Road of Life in order to discern whether our paths are leading us *toward the fullness* of life, or away from it.

**Dear God,**

**This night help me feel as though  
I am kneeling with the saints of all ages,  
who discovered that it is only through  
honest confession of sin to you  
that one can become more than a sinner.**

**My eyes see beyond my innocence,  
so I know that yours do.  
Your mercy encourages.  
Your forgiveness cleanses.  
Your love saves.**

**May these forty days until Easter  
be a season in which**

I keep my promises to you,  
through Christ our Savior.  
Amen.

**HYMN**                                    O Lord Listen to Your Children Praying

**SILENCE**

**HYMN**                                    O Lord Listen to Your Children Praying

**NARRATIVE**

**IMPOSITION OF ASHES**

**WE GO FORTH**

**CLOSING HYMN**                                    O Jesus, I have Promised                                    No.396

**BENEDICTION**

Our blessing, or "benediction," for this season is a call and response form.

Your response is:

"We will follow on The Way."

**"We will follow on The Way."**

The Creator God filled you with breath,  
inviting you to this journey called Life.

**We will follow on The Way.**

Jesus, our Guide, showed us what it means  
to make a new way with Love.

**We will follow on The Way.**

The Spirit gives us strength to move forward  
with Courage and Compassion for all we meet.

**We will follow on The Way.**

May it be so. Amen.

"Buen Camino!"

**POSTLUDE**