

# *A Service Centered in the Vocare Spiritual Practice*



## *Ash Wednesday 2025*

*"The LORD is near to the broken-hearted,  
and saves the crushed in spirit."  
Psalm 34:15*

*Vocare* is the Latin word meaning "to call." The *Vocare* spiritual practice invites regular reflection upon values, openness, call, attentiveness, regrets, and experiences of God's presence. As baptized children of God, we have been claimed by God, named by God, and called to be a part of bearing God's creative and redeeming Word to all the world. This liturgy invites worshipers into reflection and contemplation to deepen their understanding of God's call upon their life and work, their labor and their leisure, their being and their doing, so that they might more intentionally live life on purpose and engage in ministry on purpose for the common good.

**Welcome** (*VOCARE*: “to call”)

**Call to Worship**

***Breathe in the Goodness of God***

***Insert***

Christ is with you.  
**And also with you.**

We come together at the eve of the day, trusting that God is near to the broken-hearted and brings shalom to those whose spirits are crushed. We carry with us all the seasons of our lives – lives marked by joy and sorrow, peace and conflict, ease and distress, brokenness and beloved-ness.

**Meet us here, Oh Christ. Strengthen us, renew us, nourish us in your call for our lives, and bring us shalom.**

We come to reflect on our values and consider how they inform our actions and decisions.  
**May we be mindful of what we truly value in life and how our values are reflected in our choices.**

We come to be open to the ways in which God is calling us, and how we can respond with faith and courage.  
**May we be open to the movements of the Spirit and ready to follow where God leads.**

We come to be aware of the many and varied voices that call to us each day, listening especially for those voices that are life giving and life-sustaining.  
**May we be discerning in the voices that form and shape us, heeding those that build up and turning away from those that tear down.**

We come to practice attentiveness, focusing our minds on God’s presence in our lives, and seeking divine guidance and wisdom.  
**May we be attentive to the holy and receptive to the wisdom and guidance of God.**

We come to name any regrets we may have, seeking forgiveness and renewal as we move forward.  
**May we find healing and renewed purpose as we seek and receive God’s forgiveness.**

We come to be mindful of experiences of God’s presence in new and profound ways.  
**May we be receptive to the ways in which the divine is revealed to us, and may we be transformed by these encounters.**

We come to worship together, opening ourselves fully to the love and presence of God.  
**Amen.**

**Call to Worship**

**Values (Scripture)**

As we prepare to hear the Word of God, we reflect on our values. Our values are what we hold dear and what we prioritize in life. They inform our actions and decisions, and shape who we are and who we are becoming.

*“Singing Bowl”    silence for reflection*

*“Singing Bowl”*

We now turn our hearts and minds to the reading of the Word, asking God to speak to us through the Holy Scriptures.

***Reading: Psalm 51 – Broken & Still Beloved***

- <sup>1</sup> Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy,  
blot out my transgressions.
- <sup>2</sup> Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin.
- <sup>3</sup> For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.
- <sup>4</sup> Against you, you alone, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you are justified in your sentence  
and blameless when you pass judgment.
- <sup>5</sup> Indeed, I was born guilty,  
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
- <sup>6</sup> You desire truth in the inward being;  
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
- <sup>7</sup> Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- <sup>8</sup> Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
- <sup>9</sup> Hide your face from my sins,  
and blot out all my iniquities.
- <sup>10</sup> Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.
- <sup>11</sup> Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
- <sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing spirit.
- <sup>13</sup> Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
and sinners will return to you.
- <sup>14</sup> Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,  
O God of my salvation,  
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.
- <sup>15</sup> O Lord, open my lips,  
and my mouth will declare your praise.
- <sup>16</sup> For you have no delight in sacrifice;  
if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.
- <sup>17</sup> The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
- <sup>18</sup> Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;  
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem;
- <sup>19</sup> then you will delight in right sacrifices,  
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;  
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

L: Word of God. Word of Life.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

## Openness (Centering)

As the seasons rise and fall in our lives and in the life of the whole world, we open our hearts to God's leading, and ask God to help us be receptive and responsive to God's calling in our lives. We sing together:

**Centering Song**

***Song of the Seasons***

**Insert**

**Call (Message)** : What feels broken in your life today? What is God's response to your brokenness?

*Devotional Reflection*

*Mini-monologue*

*Silence for reflection*

Through the sharing of the Word, you have called us, O God.

**Lead us by your Spirit to live out this call.**

**Centering Song**

***O Lord, Hear My Prayer***

***ELW#751***

**Attentiveness (Prayer)**

Ever watchful Lord,

Your steadfast love never ceases, and your mercies are new every morning. As we gather this evening under your watchful presence, we pray for the grace to be more attentive to your presence in our lives.

For the church universal, that our leaders and members may be attuned to the whispers of your Spirit, we pray:

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For the world and its leaders, that they may be attentive to the needs of the marginalized and act with justice and compassion, we pray:

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For our community, that we may notice those in need and respond with kindness and empathy, we pray:

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For ourselves, that we may be fully present in each moment, aware of your persistent love and guidance, we pray:

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For those who are suffering, that they may feel your comforting presence and know they are not alone, we pray:

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

*Other petitions may be added*

Lord, grant us the grace to be attentive to your voice amidst the noise of the world. Help us to be present, to notice, and to respond to your call in our lives. Amen.

**Imposition of Ashes:** "Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return"

Lent is a time for us to return to our Creator who formed us from the dust of the earth. Our lives are finite, so we want to spend every precious moment in tune with God, living whole, abundant lives—the kind of lives we were created to lead. And so in recognition of our origins in the earth, in acknowledgment of our finite days, we come to receive ashes and remember: dust we are, and to dust we shall return.

**Hymn**      *(sing during imposition of ashes)*      *I Want Jesus To Walk With Me*      ELW #325

### **Regrets (Confession)**

Gracious God,

We gather before you, acknowledging our human frailty and our need for your grace. We bring our full selves to you – in all our brokenness and beloved-ness, seeking your shalom. In this moment of confession, we bring our regrets, the actions we wish we could undo, the words we wish we could unsay.

We confess that we have not always lived in accordance with your will. We have chosen our own way over yours, and we have caused harm to ourselves and others. **We carry the weight of these regrets, Lord.**

We confess the times we have closed our hearts to your love, the times we have turned away from our neighbor in need, the times we have neglected the care of your creation. **For these, and all our regrets, known and unknown, we seek your forgiveness.**

In your great mercy, Lord, forgive us. Heal the wounds of our past mistakes and free us from the burden of regret. Grant us the courage to seek reconciliation, and the wisdom to learn from our past. **Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

In the mercy of Almighty God, Father +Son, and Holy Spirit, Beloved Ones, your sins are forgiven in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

### **Experience God's Presence**

#### **Holy Communion**

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, creator of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth and fruit from the vine. In the cool of the evening, you walked with Adam and Eve in the garden, and in the fullness of time, you revealed yourself in the person of Jesus.

L: On the night he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: **All: "Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."**

L: Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to all to drink, saying: **All: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me."**

L: With thanksgiving, we proclaim the mystery of faith: All: **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

As we partake of this holy meal, may we experience anew your presence among us. Strengthen us, O God, for service in your world, and make us one in Christ, through the power of your Spirit. Amen.

Praying now in whatever language or translation is the language of your heart:

*The Lord's Prayer*

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever.  
Amen.**

Taste and See that the Lord is good.

*Communion is served – You Are invited to bring your offering forward as you come up for communion and place it in the offering plate.*

**Weaving Prayer**

When you arrived at worship this evening, you were invited to pick up a piece of cloth. Each piece represents a prayer. Take a few moments now to reflect on this evening's service. With a piece of cloth, offer your prayers to God by writing a word or phrase, or leave your cloth blank, trusting that God who is near to the broken-hearted hears our prayers whether they are written, spoken, or offered as sighs too deep for words. When your prayer-cloth is finished, bring them to the basket at the foot of the baptismal font. Your prayers will be added to the prayer icon after worship.

**Benediction**

As God's Beloved Ones, covered by God's promise of shalom, we practice *VOCARE* (*Vo-car-e*) as we prepare to end this day and look toward tomorrow.

**We acknowledge our values, and seek to live in accordance with them, following the example of Christ.**

We strive to be open to the new ideas and opportunities for growth that the Holy Spirit may bring.

**Grant us the grace to be receptive to your guidance and to step boldly into the unknown.**

We listen for the call of our deepest selves and respond with courage and faith, trusting in God.

**Help us to discern your voice amidst the noise of the world, and to be your faithful disciples.**

We cultivate attentiveness to the present moment, where we encounter the divine in our daily lives.

**May we find you in unexpected places and moments, and be mindful of your presence around us.**

We face our regrets with compassion, seeking the insight they offer and the grace of forgiveness.

**Give us the strength to learn from our mistakes and to reconcile with those we have wronged.**

And we give thanks for the ways we have experienced God's presence in our lives today and every day.

**For your constant love and provision, we give you thanks and praise. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.**

**Sending Song**

***God's Love has been Given to Me***

***Insert***

*the greeting of peace may be shared by all*

This liturgy was adapted from an "Evening VOCARE Worship" written by Eric E. Parrish, Music Director, First Lutheran Church, Worthington, MN in consultation with Rev. Dr. Charlene Rachuy Cox, Director of Programming, Engagement, and Innovation for Congregational Thriving, through the Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community at St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN.

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