

**Lenten Message from  
Dakotas Conference Bishop Kiesey  
From Ashes to Life  
Lent, 2011**

***“Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain!***

***Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,  
for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near –  
a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick  
darkness!***

***Truly the day of the Lord is great; terrible indeed – who  
can endure it?***

***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, and abounding in steadfast love.”***

**Joel 2:1-2a, 11c-13**

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We are about to begin our Lenten journey. With the placing of ashes, we begin a journey that will take us through: betrayals as well as hosannas; misunderstandings as well as the sharing of bread and wine; trials, crucifixion and death. Ashes are a difficult image for us. They are stark reminders of destruction, death, and tears. Ashes to ashes ... dust to dust. For us, as for the ancient Israelites, they are a sign of mourning – a sign of repentance.

The prophet Joel spoke to a people in the midst of great suffering. He called upon the people to put on sackcloth and ashes – to mourn – to

look into their hearts and lives, and come before God in a spirit of repentance.

And so it is that we begin this Holy season of Lent – with ashes.

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Over the next six weeks, we will be asked to walk with Christ as he makes his way to Jerusalem and the fate that awaits him there. We will journey with him as he experiences the final days of his life. And through that journey we will be asked to put on our own sackcloth and ashes, and to look within our own hearts and lives.

We, too, will be asked to repent – to turn around our lives and turn back toward God. In the words of Ann Weems from her book, *Kneeling in Jerusalem* (p. 20):

*Lent is a time to take the time  
to let the power of our faith story take hold of us,  
a time to intensify  
our living unto Christ,  
a time to place our feet in the streets of Jerusalem  
or to walk along the sea and listen to his word,  
a time to touch his robe  
and feel the healing surge through us.  
Lent is a time to allow a fresh new taste of God!*

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Please pray with me:

**Almighty God, may we walk with Christ throughout these Holy days of Lent. May this time deepen and challenge our faith. May we open our souls to the transforming power of Christ. And may we believe that out of these ashes will come new hope, new birth, and new life.**

**So that when our Lenten journey has ended we can truly rejoice at the opened tomb and proclaim to all the world the message of Easter ... “He is not dead! He is risen!”  
Amen and amen.**

