

## **Devotion, Week of Ash Wednesday, 2023**

### **Rev. Jeanne Simpson**

Sunday we celebrated the Transfiguration of the Lord, which marks the last Sunday prior to the beginning of Lent, which begins with Ash Wednesday. The season of Lent has been likened to a spiritual journey. As such, Ash Wednesday is the beginning of the journey, the first step. In a sense, we are marked for the journey by the ashes placed on our foreheads. They are signs of our humanity and our finiteness, and of our sin or brokenness.

As we begin this journey together with ashes, think about what God promised Abraham after he was willing to sacrifice Isaac. God sent a ram as the sacrifice instead and said to Abraham, “Because you have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on seashore.” Both sand and stars are made of the basic elements of earth—silicon, oxygen, hydrogen and carbon, which is produced inside stars during the fusion process. Carbon of course is found in all living things, and in the ashes we place on our foreheads in Lent. This small ritual as we begin Lent links us to the creation itself, to the earth and the stars overhead that Abraham and Sarah looked up at and connects us to God’s covenant with his people through history, God’s promise of abundant blessing and future well-being and life.

*Jeanne*