

*grace church
joondalup*



**DIOCESE OF PERTH
ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA
First Sunday in Lent
21 February 2010**

My dear Friends

I am in a particularly buoyant mood! In terms of people and the mixture of adults and children, we have just had our best Ash Wednesday ever. The numbers of people who bother to start the Lent journey together around the Lord's Table is an important indicator of growing Christian maturity in any parish. In the past, we have had some terribly weak Ash Wednesday congregations, and I know of other parishes where this is still the case. Indeed, in many places priests don't even bother encouraging people to take Ash Wednesday seriously, so disheartened are they by poor responses. All too often the Mardi Gras atmosphere of Shrove Tuesday (sometimes called Fat Tuesday) with its pancakes eclipses the stark realities of the First Day of Lent, as we blithely sell ourselves and each other and Christ himself short. Yes, Ash Wednesday is demanding. With impertinent directness, the liturgy insists that we face up to ourselves – not as we would like to be, but as we really are. Ashes are dead things that speak bluntly of death, of the mortality we share, the fact that like every other living thing will die one day, and there is absolutely nothing we can do to avoid it. We are not good at looking death in the face, yet until we do so we can never really live. Believe it or not, living well is what Lent is ultimately about. 'Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return. Repent, and believe the gospel.' In other words, stop deluding yourselves! Stop trusting your own strength. Trust God alone, God who breathes into you the breath of life. Store up for yourselves treasure in heaven – heaven which begins here and continues beyond the grave.

*With my love
David*