

First United Methodist Church of Saginaw
Contemplative Ash Wednesday Service
March 2, 2022 7:00pm

----- **The beginning of the service will be denoted by the ringing of a bell.* -----

Song: "Sunday's Palms are Wednesday's Ashes" – *The Faith We Sing #2138*
Tune: Beach Spring

Sunday's Palms are Wednesday's ashes as another Lent begins
Thus we kneel before our Maker in contrition for our sins.
We have marred baptismal pledges, in rebellion gone astray;
Now returning, seek forgiveness; grant us pardon, God, this day.

We have failed to love our neighbors, their offenses to forgive
Have not listened to their troubles, nor have cared just how they live
We are jealous, proud, impatient, loving over-much our things;
May the yielding of our failings be our Lenten offerings.

We are hasty to judge others, blind to proof of human need;
And our lack of understanding demonstrates our inner greed.
We have wasted earth's resources; want and suffering we've ignored;
Come and cleanse us, then restore us; make new hearts within us, Lord

An Invitation to the Observance of Lenten Discipline:

Brothers and sisters in Christ: The early Christians observed with great devotion
the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection,

And it became the custom of the Church that before the Easter celebration
there should be a forty-day season of spiritual preparation.

During this season, converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism.

It was also a time when persons who had committed serious sins
and had separated themselves from the community of faith
were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness,
and restored to full participation in the life of the Church.

In this way, the whole congregation was reminded of the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed
in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the need we all have to renew our faith.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of Christ and of the Church, to observe a holy Lent:
by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial;
and by reading and meditating on God's Holy Word.

To make a right beginning of repentance, and as a mark of our mortal nature,
we come before our Creator and Redeemer with humble spirits. Let us worship God.

Song: "Our Darkness"

from Songs & Prayers from Taizé (#14)

©1991 Ateliers et Presses de Taizé

The image shows a musical score for the song "Our Darkness". It consists of two systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The first system contains the lyrics: "Our dark - ness is nev - er dark - ness in your sight: the / La té - nè - bre n'est point té - nè - bre de - vant toi: la". The second system contains the lyrics: "deep - est night is clear as the day light. Our / nuit com - me le jour est lu - miè - re. La té -". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like "fine".

Scripture: Psalm 51:1-4, 9-12, 15-17 (ICEL Translation)

¹Have mercy, tender God; forget that I defied you. ²Wash away my sin, and cleanse me from my guilt. ³I know my evil well. It stares me in the face. ⁴Evil done to you alone before your very eyes... ⁹Shut your eyes to my sin, make my guilt disappear.. ¹⁰Creator, reshape my heart and steady my spirit. ¹¹Do not cast me aside, stripped of your Holy Spirit. ¹²Save me! Restore my joy, support me, strengthen my will... ¹⁵Lord, give me words and I will shout your praise. ¹⁶For you have no delight in sacrifice; the gift doesn't please you. ¹⁷So I offer my shattered spirit; a changed heart you welcome.

Unison Prayer of Confession (spoken together)

Gracious God, this is a hard time. The focus of Lent is on the pain and suffering of Jesus and our own need to admit our guilt. We confess that we would rather skip this time and go straight to Resurrection. We would rather ignore the suffering—in you and in the world—and avoid the hard work of true self-examination. Forgive us for wanting this to be bright and painless and easy, when we know that Jesus did not take the easy way, but chose the path of the Cross. Work in us and in this season, so that we use this time to humbly seek a clean heart and a renewed spirit in the name Jesus Christ. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Hear the Good News: Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. That proves God's love for us. In the name of Christ, we have all been forgiven. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Offering our Tithes and Gifts

Tonight's offering is being devoted entirely to Mission. It will go to the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) for the humanitarian effort now being organized for Ukraine. You may donate to UMCOR's effort for Ukraine anytime by designating your intent on the memo line of your check or on the envelope in which you place your cash gift.

Offertory: "Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley"

arr. Hugh Livingston Jr.

Prayer of Dedication (in unison): Loving God, use these gifts, and we ourselves, to bring life, light, and love that redeems your world, through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Silence (2 minutes)

Act of Worship: Burning Away our Sin

You are invited to continue in a time of silent prayer and meditation. During this time, use the scrap of paper enclosed to write down something about yourself that you'd like to overcome, such as a sin or area of brokenness that keeps you from reaching your full potential. This is confidential. No one will see it but you and God. After the time of silence, you'll be invited to come forward during the singing to burn your scrap of paper as a symbolic gesture of release, forgiveness, and/or healing.

Song "Take, O Take Me As I Am"

from Worship and Song (#3119) ©1995 The Iona Community/GIA Pub. w/m by John L.Bell

The image shows a musical score for the song "Take, O Take Me As I Am". It consists of two systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: "Take, O take me as I am; sum-mon out what I shall be; set your seal up-on my heart and live in me." The first system covers the first two lines of lyrics, and the second system covers the last two lines. The piano accompaniment features a steady bass line and chords that support the vocal melody.

Scripture: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

"Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. ² "So whenever you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your gift may be given in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁵ "And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you... ¹⁶ "And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven... ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Meditation for Ash Wednesday

Rev. Amy Terhune

Choral Anthem: "The Love He Gave"

Jay Althouse

A Reading: "Ash Wednesday" by Steve Garnaas-Holmes

We are dust and breathing—
sadly, more attached
to the dust than the breathing.
We are the mark of sorrow.
Not a body but particles:
ashes of grief, borne on wind,
ash of 9/11, of towns burned,
dust of Mosul, of Kyiv,
of a million dead,
of ten million enslaved.
Time's faint dust settles on us,
till we ourselves become
a faint layer in the earth.
Living among death and its dealers,
we stand at the edge of our own grave.

Our dust cries silently
not merely of our evil
but most deeply of our sorrow,
our need to be saved,
to be revived, to regain our breath.
And so, Forgiving One,
you both stain and anoint us,
mark us and heal us:
We bear your agony on our foreheads;
And you bear our sorrow.
You who breathe us into life—
Spirit that blows where you will—
Gather tenderly our grieving dust
up from the earth
and breathe into us once again
that we may become a living being.

The Imposition of Ashes

Come forward as you feel led to receive the ashes placed on your forehead or your hand. As you come, the pastor will say, "The old has died, and the new has come." You may respond with silence or "amen".

Song: "Humble Thyself"

from The Faith We Sing (#2131) ©1978 Maranatha! Music, w/m by Bob Hudson

Part 2 (descant)

Part 1 (melody)

Hum-ble thy-self in the sight of the

Hum-ble thy-self in the sight of the Lord.

Lord. Hum-ble thy-self in the sight of the Lord,

Hum-ble thy-self in the sight of the Lord, and

and God shall lift you up,

God shall lift you up, high-er and high - er, and

and God shall lift you up.

God shall lift you up.

Silence (8 minutes)

Closing Song "With You, O Lord"

from "Taizé: Songs For Prayer" (#31) ©1998 Ateliers et Presses de Taizé

With you, O Lord, is life in all its full - ness, and
in your light we shall see true light. With you, O Lord, is
life in all its full-ness, and in your light we shall see true light.

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It consists of three systems of music. Each system has a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on a bass clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

Unison Closing Prayer from Ruth C. Duck in "Touch Holiness":

Creating God, still Center of the world you have made, we come to you in this season of turning and returning. We don't know how to seek you with our whole hearts, but we know you are our source and our destiny. In the midst of life, we return to you, we turn toward you. We thank you that you receive even the broken heart, the troubled conscience, the conflicted spirit. Having sought you in secret, may we go forth to honor you in public, through Jesus Christ, our homeward path to you. Amen.

**The closing of the service will be denoted by the ringing of a bell.*

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Join us for Taizé on the 1st Wednesday of Each Month at 7:00pm
Join us for Traditional Worship on Sunday mornings at 10:00am

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