

First United Methodist Church of Saginaw  
Contemplative Ash Wednesday Service  
February 22, 2023 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 lyrics are: "Our dark - ness is nev - er dark - ness in your sight: the deep - est night is clear as the day light. Our". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like "fine".

## 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

♪ Please support your church family, and use this time to give thanks to God for all with which you have been blessed. Use the QR code to the right or give online here: <https://www.firstumcsaginaw.org/give/>



Offertory:

"Pure Heart

by Catherine Rollin

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 "Lord Jesus Christ"

from Worship and Song (#3137) ©1998 Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, GIA Publications; by Jacques Berthier

Lord Je - sus Christ, your light shines with - in us.

Let not my doubts nor my dark-ness speak to me. Lord Je - sus Christ, your

light shines with-in us. Let my heart al-ways wel - come your love.

### Scripture: Psalm 51

<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 sin, and cleanse me of my guilt. <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 that which 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 I was conceived. <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 my crushed bones rejoice. <sup>9</sup> Hide your face from my guilt, and blot out all my sin. <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, nor strip me of your Holy Spirit. <sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit. <sup>13</sup> Then transgressors will learn your ways, and sinners will return to you. <sup>14</sup> Deliver me from bloodshed, 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 an obedient spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

## Video Introduction of the Lenten Theme: Gibbs' Rules (NCIS – CBS) Rule #51: Sometimes... You're Wrong

Meditation: "Sometimes We're Wrong"

*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)

Hum-ble thy-self in the sight of the

Part 1 (melody)

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 "God to Enfold You"

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



God to en - fold you; Christ to up - hold you;



Spir - it to keep you in hea - ven's sight.



So may God grace you, heal and em - brace you.



lead you thru dark - ness in - to the light.

## 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 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of Each Month at 7:00pm  
Join us for Traditional Worship on Sunday mornings at 10:00am  
Check out our Website: [www.firstumcsaginaw.org](http://www.firstumcsaginaw.org)

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