

ORDER OF WORSHIP FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

February 17th 11am & 6pm

Prelude

Invitation

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 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, as the Body of Christ here in this place, 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 gather now before our God.

Hymn: Bless the Lord (UMCA Hymn - 1min)

Opening Prayer

We have gathered in our living spaces, loving God,
to mark the season of Lent,
to begin that journey to the cross.

We have gathered here to repent of our sins
privately and among those in our household.

Guide us throughout these forty days
as we journey deeper into Your embrace,
and as we journey to the cross,

let us put to death those things
that separate us from each other and from you.

May we know Your presence is always with us,
the power of Your transformative love is within us,
and may we know Your grace surrounds us
and is beyond us.

In the name of Jesus,
our companion on this journey of faith, we pray. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Blow the horn in Zion;
 give a shout on my holy mountain!
Let all the people of the land tremble,
 for the day of the Lord is coming.
It is near—
 a day of darkness and no light,
 a day of clouds and thick darkness!
Like blackness spread out upon the mountains,
 a great and powerful army comes,
 unlike any that has ever come before them,
 or will come after them in centuries ahead.
Yet even now, says the Lord,
 return to me with all your hearts,
 with fasting, with weeping, and with sorrow;
tear your hearts
 and not your clothing.
Return to the Lord your God,
 for he is merciful and compassionate,
 very patient, full of faithful love,
 and ready to forgive.
Who knows whether he will have a change of heart
 and leave a blessing behind him,
 a grain offering and a drink offering
 for the Lord your God?
Blow the horn in Zion;
 demand a fast;
 request a special assembly.

Gather the people;
prepare a holy meeting;
assemble the elders;
gather the children,
even nursing infants.

Let the groom leave his room
and the bride her chamber.

Between the porch and the altar
let the priests, the Lord's ministers, weep.

Let them say, "Have mercy, Lord, on your people,
and don't make your inheritance a disgrace,
an example of failure among the nations.

Why should they say among the peoples,
'Where is their God?'"

Hymn: Change My Heart, O God (UMCA Hymn - 1min 19s)

Scripture Reading: Mt 6:1-6, 16-21

"Be careful that you don't practice your religion in front of people to draw their attention. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

"Whenever you give to the poor, don't blow your trumpet as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets so that they may get praise from people. I assure you, that's the only reward they'll get.

But when you give to the poor, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that you may give to the poor in secret. Your Father who sees what you do in secret will reward you.

"When you pray, don't be like hypocrites. They love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners so that people will see them. I assure you, that's the only reward they'll get. But when you pray, go to your room, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is present in that secret place. Your Father who sees what you do in secret will reward you.

"And when you fast, don't put on a sad face like the hypocrites. They distort their faces so people will know they are fasting. I assure you that they have their reward. When you fast, brush your hair and wash your face. Then you won't look like you are fasting to people, but only to your Father who is present in that secret place. Your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“Stop collecting treasures for your own benefit on earth, where moth and rust eat them and where thieves break in and steal them. Instead, collect treasures for yourselves in heaven, where moth and rust don’t eat them and where thieves don’t break in and steal them. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Message: Chaos or Community

Song: Beautiful Things (Brian S.)

Instructions about Zoom Gathering

Postlude

Zoom Portion

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88476391490>

Welcome/Instructions

Prayer (Rachael)

O God, maker of everything and judge of all that you have made, from the dust of the earth you have formed us and from the dust of death you would raise us up. By the redemptive power of the cross, create in us clean hearts and put within us a new spirit, that we may repent of our sins and lead lives worthy of your calling; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Reading from Psalm 51 (Rachael)

Create a clean heart for me, God; put a new, faithful spirit deep inside me!
Please don't throw me out of your presence; please don't take your holy spirit away from me.
Return the joy of your salvation to me and sustain me with a willing spirit.

Confession for Ash Wednesday (Laura) *Rachael share screen

Leader: In the dark of night God calls to us;
beckoning us on,
seeking us out,
calling us to peace,
to quietness,
to wholeness.

**All: The world is dark around us,
filled with coldness, terror and restlessness.**

Leader: It is a darkness of our creation:
greed, hatred, envy: brokenness.

**All: Take us and heal us of every evil.
Bring us back into the comfort and closeness
of your embrace, O God.**

Leader: Your cleansing love, O God,
purifies our darkness restoring it to us:
warm, comforting, restful: complete.

**All: In the dark of our night we hear God call,
offering love and strength and forgiveness.**

Leader: With God the darkness brings comfort not fear,
love not hatred,
righteousness not punishment.

Walk in the darkness of your life as in the light,
for both the dark and the light belong to God,
as do you.

All: Amen.

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Ashes (Laura)

Because we are in a season of being attentive to the care for our neighbors, the imposition of ashes looks different this year. Some of you picked up or received stickers of an ash cross, but if you would like to participate in this you can draw a cross with a pencil or marker. I want you to put the sticker or cross drawing somewhere in your home as a reminder to draw near to God through prayer, meditation, and the reading of Scripture. And my prayer for each one of you is that this Lenten journey will be filled with the reminder of God's grace and love in your life.

Communion

RACHAEL:

Today we come together to recall the magnificent common memories we have of our Christ. We remember his servant leadership and the unconditional love he had for humankind.

Here and now, we give thanks for the steadfast love of God that we see reflected in Jesus the Christ. We are grateful for one another and for all the saints who have come to the table throughout history and to those who will gather here after we have returned to dust. In a spirit of active thanksgiving, we commit ourselves as servants to God's children, finding new ways of bringing justice, righteousness and love to the shadows on this earth.

May the Spirit come upon these elements. May the Spirit fill our hearts with love, kindness and acceptance. May the Spirit empower us as we walk through these 40 days in the wilderness, as we face the sadness of the crucifixion and as we wait for Christ's resurrection.

Laura: As Jesus continued on his journey, he could see that his time was drawing nearer. Our Christ knew that his love and leadership would take him to the cross. And as the final night was upon him, he drew close to his friends. To embrace the love he had with them, he shared one last table.

Jesus embraced the bread in his weathered hands, broke it, gave it to his friends asking them to remember him.

Jesus clasped the cup containing the fruit of the vine, gave thanks one last time and asked them to remember him.

The bread of life. The cup of the new covenant. Both given to us. Both we partake in together as we remember our servant-leader Jesus the Christ.

All: Even as we come to the table tonight remembering our frailty, we also give God our thanks for this meal. We give our gratitude that we have come together as one Body of Christ. In these next 40 days and as we walk the road to the crucifixion, continue to keep us awake to the ways we can bring Jesus the Christ's servant-leadership to our world. Amen.

Blessing (Rachael)

So let the ashes come
as beginning
and not as end;
the first sign
but not the final.

Let them rest upon you
as invocation and invitation,
and let them take you
the way that ashes know
to go.

May they mark you
with the memory of fire
and of the life
that came before the burning:
the life that rises and returns
and finds its way again.

See what shimmers
amid their darkness,
what endures
within their dust.
See how they draw us
toward the mystery
that will consume
but not destroy,
that will blossom
from the blazing,
that will scorch us
with its joy.

Go in love. Amen.