



WORSHIP AT NOON & 7:30 P.M.
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
 UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

February 14, 2018

Ash Wednesday



LENT

The central event of the Christian faith is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That unitive event of cross and resurrection is the core of the apostolic preaching; it is also the central celebration of the church's liturgy. It is set forth in Holy Communion and in the daily prayer of morning and evening. It is the focus of the church year: Lent prepares for it, and the great Fifty Days are a celebration of it. More specifically, Lent is the preparation for the celebration of the mystery of redemption; Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, the Easter Vigil and the Fifty Days are the proclamation and celebration of it. It is one event, seen from two sides: cross and resurrection, each incomplete without the other.

The spirit of Ash Wednesday is most solemn, close to that of the Jewish Day of Atonement. The Ash Wednesday liturgy marks the beginning of a penitential discipline that climaxes in the absolution and peace of the Maundy Thursday liturgy. The mood is penitence and reflection on the quality of our faith and life; its goal is participation in the Lenten discipline, which by its focus on the mystery of redemption, should strengthen us by bringing us anew to the gift of our Baptism. Penitential acts should be related to restoration and to spiritual and moral growth, as the derivation of the word "Lent" suggests. "Lent" is from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning "springtime" and so is to be understood as the holy springtime of the soul, a time for preparation, planting and growth.

Ash Wednesday includes an extended confession of sins, the absolution of which is deferred until Maundy Thursday. Ashes are an extraordinarily rich symbol rooted in ancient customs and practices. Ashes, in a Jewish and Christian context, suggest judgment and God's condemnation of sin, frailty, our total dependence upon God for life; humiliation; and repentance. We are reminded forcefully of the words of the committal in the burial service, "...earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." For one day those words will be said over us. Moreover, ashes suggest cleansing and renewal. They were once used as a cleansing agent in the absence of soap, and on Ash Wednesday the ashes have sometimes been understood as a penitential substitute for water as a sign of Baptism, a primary emphasis of Lent. Water both stifles and refreshes, drowns and makes alive; so the ashes also tell of both death and renewal. A further example of death and renewal shown by ashes is the ancient custom of burning the fields in the spring to destroy the old and to prepare for the new.

—from *Manual on the Liturgy – Lutheran Book of Worship*, Phillip H. Pfatteicher

WELCOME TO FIRST CHURCH!

If you are visiting today and looking for a church home, welcome! *For more than 165 years our Covenant has been: We covenant with the Lord Jesus Christ and one another, and bind ourselves in the presence of God to live together in all God's ways as revealed to us by the Holy Spirit and holy scripture. The church acknowledges that all members have the right of individual interpretation of the principles of the Christian faith and respects them in their honest convictions. In accordance with the teaching of our Lord, the church recognizes two sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion.*

Please silence all electronic devices.

Assistive listening devices and large-print bulletins with hymns of the day are available at the Sanctuary doors. Deacons wearing green nametags can assist you.

Cards requesting prayer are in the pew racks and placed in the offering plate.

(*) Indicates the congregation should stand as they are able.

YOUR OFFERING TODAY benefits one of the vital missions of First Church: **The Good Samaritan Fund** offers emergency assistance to those who come to our door. Please be as generous as you can. Place your contribution in the offering plates located at the entrances to the Sanctuary. Thank you for your generosity.

Enter to worship-depart to serve. Please use this time for quiet preparation for worship.

PRELUDE Ah! Holy Jesus Helmut Walcha

Please stand.

* ENTER TO WORSHIP The Rev. Dr. Timothy C. Ahrens

Leader: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving-kindness; in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

People: Wash me through and through from my wickedness and cleanse me from my sin.

L: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

P: Cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

L: Give me the joy of your saving help again and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

P: I shall teach your ways to the wicked, and sinners shall return to you.

L: Deliver me from death, O God, and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness, O God of my salvation.

P: Open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

—Psalm 51

* HYMN 77 Forty days and forty nights *Aus der Tiefe rufe ich*

* INVOCATION The Rev. Emily Krause Corzine

L: God be with you.

P: And also with you.

L: Let us pray.

P: Almighty and merciful God, you hate nothing that you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent; create in us new and contrite hearts, so that when we turn to you and confess our sins we may receive your full and perfect forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

* KYRIE ELEISON HYMN 574 arr. David Johnson

THE HEBREW SCRIPTURE Joel 2: 1–2, 12–17 (O.T., p. 846) Rev. Corzine
 L: The Word of God for the people of God.

P: Thanks be to God.

ANTHEM (7:30) Turn thy face from my sins Arthur Sullivan

Turn thy face from my sins, and put out all my misdeeds.

Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.

—Psalm 51:9–11

THE EPISTLE 2 Corinthians 5:20—6:10 (N.T., p. 181) Rev. Corzine

L: The Word of God for the people of God.

P: Thanks be to God.

* GOSPEL HYMN 349 Let all who pray the prayer Christ taught
Cheshire

GOSPEL READING Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21 (N.T., p. 5) Rev. Ahrens

L: The Word of God for the people of God.

P: Thanks be to God.

MEDITATION "Out of the Ashes: The Journey to Forgiveness" Rev. Ahrens
 (Part one of the eight-part Lenten sermon series, *Forgiveness*)

A time of reflection follows.

ANTHEM (7:30) Deep River Spiritual, arr. Gerre Hancock

INVITATION TO KEEP A HOLY LENT Rev. Corzine

Leader ...that we are given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

People Amen.

A period of silence is observed for reflection.

CONFESSION OF SIN

L: Let us pray.

P: Most holy and merciful God: We confess to you and to one another, and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth, that we have sinned by our own fault in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

L: We have not loved you with all our heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven.

P: Have mercy on us, O God.

L: We have been deaf to your call to serve as Christ served us. We have not been true to the mind of Christ. We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

P: Have mercy on us, O God.

L: We confess to you, O God, all our past unfaithfulness; the pride, hypocrisy, and impatience in our lives,

P: We confess to you, O God.

L: Our self-indulgent appetites and ways and our exploitation of other people,

P: We confess to you, O God.

L: Our anger at our own frustration and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves,

P: We confess to you, O God.

L: Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts and our dishonesty in our daily life and work,

P: We confess to you, O God.

L: Our negligence in prayer and worship and our failure to commend the faith that is in us,

P: We confess to you, O God.

L: Accept our repentance, O God, for the wrongs we have done. For our neglect of human need and suffering and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,

P: Accept our repentance, O God.

L: For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and for our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us,

P: Accept our repentance, O God.

L: For our waste and pollution of your creation and our lack of concern for those who come after us,

P: Accept our repentance, O God.

L: Restore us, O God, and let your anger depart from us.

P: Favorably hear us, O God, for your mercy is great. Amen.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Those who wish may come forward to receive the mark of the cross on the forehead or palm of the hand. If you do not wish to receive the ashes, remain in your seat and pray. When the ashes are imposed, the minister will say "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

During the imposition of ashes, a setting of Psalm 51 is sung:

At Noon, a cantor sings Plainsong; at 7:30, the Choir sings Peter Hallock's Psalm 51 from the Ionian Psalter.

After all who wish to receive ashes have received them, the prayers of confession are concluded with these words.

Rev. Ahrens/Rev. Corzine

L: Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation,

P: that we may show forth your glory.

L: By the cross and passion of our Savior,

P: bring us with all your saints to the joy of Christ's resurrection.

All: Amen.

L: Almighty God does not desire the death of sinners, but rather that they may turn from their wickedness and live. Therefore we implore God to grant us true repentance and the Holy Spirit that those things which we do this day may be pleasing to God, that the rest of our lives may be lived faithfully, and that at the last we may come to God's eternal joy; through Jesus the Christ.

All: Thanks be to God!

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

L: God of heaven and earth, the greatness of your love is beyond words to describe. By the power of your Spirit, liberate us from all self-centeredness, that we may be free to love others as Christ loves us. Gracious God,

P: Hear our prayer.

L: Make of us pilgrims throughout these forty days. Lead us through discipline to discipleship, through fasting to feasting, through privation to freedom. Free us from our own struggles, so that we may more fully serve one another. Gracious God,

P: Hear our prayer.

L: Help us to be obedient and joyful, humble and caring, merciful and loving. Anchor us in your life-giving word and make us radiant for you - fitting ambassadors of your message of reconciliation. Gracious God,

P: Hear our prayer.

In the space after each petition, you are invited to offer aloud, or in the silence of your heart, the names of your loved ones.

L: Help us to remember those who are sick in mind, body, or spirit, and in need of your healing power...
those who grieve...
those faithful departed who now live with you in a greater light...
those who are oppressed or imprisoned or live in constant fear...
those who are homeless, hungry, or without dignity...
those in authority, that they may do justice, love mercy,
and walk in the ways of truth...
those members of our armed forces who face constant danger
to safeguard the peace of others...
those who are lonely, failing, and infirmed...
those who do not yet know your unconditional love...

L: As we work together with Christ, help us not to accept your grace in vain, but to remember that now is the day of salvation, and to call upon you and serve you as you desire. We ask these things in your name.

P: Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,
for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.
Amen.**

* CLOSING HYMN 409 Wild and lone the prophet's voice *Aberystwyth*

* BENEDICTION AND DISMISSAL Rev. Ahrens

L: May God bless you and keep you. May God's face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May God look upon you with kindness and give you peace.

P: Amen.

L: Depart to love and serve the Lord our God.

P: Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE *Chorale dorien* Jehan Alain

Please be seated for the Postlude.

After its conclusion, please depart in silence.

First Church is a faith community:

- Called together by God, the Creator and Sustainer of life, to worship, pray and serve;
- Led by Jesus Christ, our Teacher and Savior, to learn the faith and welcome all God's children;
- Empowered by the Holy Spirit to witness to God's love and justice between ourselves, and throughout the world.

Our Open and Affirming Statement

We, the members of First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, believe the following represents our commitment and desire to reach out and welcome all those in need of and searching for God's love: We believe that we are all created in God's image, female and male, and we are called to love our neighbors as Jesus loves us. We believe we are many members, but one body in Christ, and called to unite all people in God's love. We welcome and affirm all people. We invite those who are seeking God's presence in their lives to join us on our common journey. Our faith community seeks to unite persons of all ages, races, nationalities, ethnicities, sexual orientations, mental and physical abilities, socioeconomic levels and political and theological backgrounds. Together in our diversity, and being empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit, we will "do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God." (Micah 6:8)

(adopted September 8, 2002 by the congregation)



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