



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

February 26, 2020

Ash Wednesday

The central event of the Christian faith is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the Christian faith the season of Lent is the preparation for the celebration of the mystery of redemption which occurs on Easter with Christ's resurrection. The season of Lent, which lasts forty days, is a time of introspection as we journey close to Jesus. On the other side of Easter is the celebration of the Fifty Days. Lent leading up to Easter and the Fifty Days following are seen as one event, seen from two sides: cross and resurrection, each incomplete without the other.

In the early church, Lent was a time of preparation for the celebration of baptism at the Easter Vigil. Lent was a time to equip and nurture candidates for baptism and confirmation and to reflect deeply on the theme of baptismal discipleship. (The Sundays in Lent are not counted in this reckoning of the time between Ash Wednesday and Easter, as every Lord's Day is a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.)

Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent with a public act of confession and contrition. Acknowledging that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, we stand in solidarity as fellow creatures before our Creator, acutely aware of our mortality. We pledge ourselves anew to live unto God's Word in Jesus Christ, the eternal Word that remains forever. Ash Wednesday signifies a time to turn around, to change directions, to repent. This first day of Lent reminds us that unless we are willing to die to ourselves, we cannot be raised to new life with Christ. The Church is calling us to enter a time of deep spiritual reflection.

The first step of this journey calls us to acknowledge and confront our mortality, individually and corporately. In many traditions, this is symbolized through the imposition of ashes — placing a cross on one's forehead. During the imposition of ashes, the words: "You are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19) are repeated again and again. On Ash Wednesday, we begin our Lenten journey through the desert toward Easter.

During the final week of Lent which we call Holy Week, we hear the fullness of Christ's passion, his death, and resurrection. From Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem and on to the *Triduum* (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday), all of Holy Week focuses on the Passion. As his followers, we travel Christ's path of servanthood through the Lord's Supper and the suffering of the cross toward the glory of Easter, all of which underscores the inseparable link between the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Trusting in the "accomplished fact" of Christ's resurrection, however, we listen for the Word of God in the time-honored stories of the church's Lenten journey. We follow Jesus into the wilderness, resist temptation, fast, and proceed "on the way" to Jerusalem and the cross. Our Lenten journey is one of *metanoia* ("turning around"), of changing directions from self-serving toward the self-giving way of the cross.

from *Manual on the Liturgy-Lutheran Book of Worship*, Phillip H. Pfatteicher
Companion to the Book of Common Worship, Geneva Press, 2003

WELCOME TO FIRST CHURCH!

If you are visiting today and looking for a church home, welcome! *For more than 167 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 white roses and Ushers wearing red roses can assist you. Cards requesting prayer are in the Welcome Notebooks and should be 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 Fugue in A-flat Minor Johannes Brahms

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 572

John Merbecke

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) O Savior of the World John Goss
 O savior of the world, who by thy cross and precious blood hast redeemed us, save us and help us, we humbly beseech thee O Lord. Amen.

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 370 Just As I Am, Without One Plea *Woodworth*

GOSPEL READING Matthew 6:1–21 (N.T. p. 5) Rev. Ahrens
 L: The Word of God for the people of God.
P: Thanks be to God.

MEDITATION "In the Beginning: Becoming Christian" Rev. Ahrens
 (First in the nine-part series: *Christianity 101: Essential Questions of Christian Faith: A Lenten/Easter Journey*)
A time of reflection follows.

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 Rev. Ahrens and Rev. Corzine
 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 "Miserere mei" of William Byrd.

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 *Mon âme cherche une fin paisible* Jean Langlais

*Please be seated for the Postlude.
After its conclusion, please depart in silence.*

Welcome Statement

You are welcomed, affirmed and loved here; our faith informs us that you are a child of a loving God. Your characteristics and gifts will enrich our congregation. In this community, you will be celebrated, embraced and honored, no matter how you identify or how your identity may evolve. Wherever you are on your faith journey, we invite you to join us in our diverse yet united experience.

Open and Affirming Statement

We, the members of First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, welcome and affirm all. We believe we are all created in God's image and called to love our neighbors as Jesus loves us. We believe we are many members, but one body in Christ, called to unite all people in God's love. We are a community seeking God's presence and love in our lives. We seek to unite persons of all ages, races, nationalities, ethnicities, sexual orientations, sexes, gender identities and expressions, family structures, mental, intellectual and physical conditions, economic circumstances, political, theological and faith 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.

Revisions adopted January 27, 2019 by the congregation.

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.



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