



WORSHIP AT 12:05 AND 7:30

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

February 22, 2023

Ash Wednesday

WELCOME TO FIRST CHURCH!

If you are visiting today and looking for a church home, welcome! *For more than 170 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.*

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. You can give online following the QR code below. Thank you for your generosity.



PRELUDE

*"Da Jesus an dem Kreuze standt"
(As Jesus stood beside the Cross)*

Samuel Scheidt

Please stand as you are able.

* ENTER TO WORSHIP

Rev. 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

Lord, who throughout these forty days

St. Flavian

1. Lord, who through-out these for - ty days For us didst fast and pray,
 2. As Thou with Sa - tan didst con - tend, And didst the vic - tory win,
 3. And through these days of pen - i - tence, And through Thy Pas - sion - tide,
 4. A - bide with us, that so, this life Of suf - fering o - ver - past,

Teach us with Thee to mourn our sins, And close by Thee to stay.
 O give us strength in Thee to fight, In Thee to con - quer sin.
 Yea, ev - er - more, in life and death, O Lord, with us a - bide.
 An Eas - ter of un - end - ing joy We may at - tain at last!

* INVOCATION

The Rev. Joanna Samuelson

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

William Mathias

(organ)

Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have
mer - cy. Christ, have mer - cy. Christ, have mer - cy. Christ, have mer -
- cy. Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy.

THE HEBREW SCRIPTURE

Joel 2: 1-2, 12-17

Rev. Samuelson

A reading from the book of Joel, chapter 2.

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near— a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness spread upon the mountains a great and powerful army comes; their like has never been from of old, nor will be again after them in ages to come.

Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the LORD, your God, for God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. Who knows whether God will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind, a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD, your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her canopy. Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep. Let them say, "Spare your people, O LORD, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"

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

P: Thanks be to God.

ANTHEM (7:30)

Lamb of God

arr. F. Melius Christiansen

Lamb of God most holy! Who on the cross didn't suffer,
Patient still and lowly, Thyself to scorn didst offer;
Our sins by Thee were taken, Or hope had us forsaken;
Have mercy on us, O Jesu!

A reading from the second letter of Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 5.

So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God's appeal is made through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake, God made the One who was without sin to be sin, so that by this means we might become the righteousness of God.

As Christ's coworkers, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For God says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you." See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

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

P: Thanks be to God.

* GOSPEL HYMN

The Glory of These Forty Days

Erhalt Uns, Herr

1. The glo - ry of these for - ty days We
 2. A - lone and fast - ing, Mo - ses saw The
 3. So Dan - iel trained his mys - tic sight, De -
 4. Then grant that we like them be true, Con -

cel - e - brate with songs of praise; For Christ, by whom all
 lov - ing God who gave the law; And to E - li - jah,
 liv - ered from the li - on's might; And John, the Bride - groom's
 sumed in fast and prayer with You; Our spir - its strength-en

things were made, Him - self has fast - ed and has prayed.
 fast - ing, came The steeds and char - i - ots of flame.
 friend, be - came The her - ald of Mes - si - ah's name.
 with Your grace, And give us joy to see Your face.

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 6.

Jesus said, “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. “So whenever you give alms, 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. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“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. 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.

“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. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 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.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

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

P: Thanks be to God.

MEDITATION

“Forgiven and Forgiving”

Rev. Ahrens

First in the Lenten sermon series, “Forgiveness”

INVITATION TO KEEP A HOLY LENT

Rev. Samuelson

Leader:

Sisters and brothers in Christ: Every year at Easter we celebrate with joy our redemption and renewal through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The season of Lent is a time to prepare for this celebration and to make room in our lives for the Spirit of God to renew us in this mystery. We begin this holy season by acknowledging our need for repentance and our need for the love and forgiveness shown to us in Jesus Christ.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of Christ, to observe a Holy Lent,
by self-examination and penitence,
by prayer and fasting,
by practicing works of love,
and by reading and reflecting on God’s Holy Word.

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth:
Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence,
that we may remember that it is only by your gracious gift that we are given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

People: Amen.

A period of silence is observed for reflection.

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

After the ministers impose ashes on themselves, 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 prayer. Those who are worshipping with us online are invited to make the mark of the cross on your forehead or palm. When the ashes are imposed, you are invited to say, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

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

Rev. Ahrens/Rev. Samuelson

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 those for whom you are praying.

Rev. Ahrens

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

Just as I Am, Without One Plea

Woodworth

1. Just as I am, with - out one plea But that your blood was
 2. Just as I am, though tossed a - bout With man - y a con - flict,
 3. Just as I am, you will re - ceive, Will wel - come, par - don,
 4. Just as I am, your love un - known Has bro - ken ev - ery

shed for me, And that you called in - vit - ing
 man - y a doubt, Fight - ings and fears with - in, with -
 cleanse, re - lieve; Be - cause your prom - ise I be -
 bar - rier down; Now to be yours, and yours a -

me,
 out,
 lieve,
 lone,
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

* 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

"Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir" (LV 27)
(From deep affliction I cry to you)

Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow

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

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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.

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 God's love and justice between ourselves, and throughout the world.

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



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
God is still speaking,

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