



ASH WEDNESDAY



C U C C

Columbia United Church of Christ



Wednesday, March 6, 2019
7:00pm

"...then God formed humanity from the dust of the ground, and breathed into its nostrils the breath of life; and God's Creation became a living being..." -Genesis 2:7



*Columbia
United Church
Of Christ*



March 6, 2019 7:00pm Worship "Ash Wednesday"

**indicates that all are invited to stand, if comfortably able*

"Have mercy on me, O God;

According to Your Steadfast Love;

According to Your Abundant Mercy, blot out my transgressions..."

-Psalm 51:1

Worship Summons	Genesis 2:4b-7 Genesis 3:19b	Andie Rapp (page #2)
Prelude	"Lord, I Want to be a Christian"	Amy Crousore Kurt Kaiser

Bringing in the Light of Christ

*Call to Worship Ember Piersee

Friends and neighbors, in the middle of our busy week, we pause to observe Ash Wednesday together as a faith community.

**We remember that God made us from fragile, blessed dust
And breathes through us the breath of life and love.**

From dust we are created in God's image
and to God's good dust we shall return.

**With dust and oil we claim the mark
of God's beloved creature.**

Today we begin our 40-day Lenten journey
to discover who we are created to be as God's beloved.

**In daily practices of prayer and service
we will embark upon this Lenten journey.**

We follow Jesus, God's Beloved Child,
bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh
in whom we see God's image most clearly.

**So come, let us pray for strength and imagination
to follow Jesus wherever he will lead us this Lent.
Come, let us worship God!**

*Opening Hymn

“Gather Us In”

(insert)

*Litany of Confession and Assurance

Sophie Schupp

Tonight begins our journey through Lent, Holy Week, and Easter. Like any well-prepared traveler, we confess that we want to pack our bags to make sure we are comfortable for our 6-week journey.

But Ash Wednesday is about leaving baggage behind and braving the unknown, carrying nothing but the mark of God’s beloved.

In this vulnerable place, we confess that we want to be surrounded by all of the things that make us feel better about ourselves, including things we think that God needs in order to love us.

Yet God whispers to us that we are made in the divine image and that faithfulness to that knowledge is all we need for the journey.

So let us ponder what it is that we may let go of this Lent, in order to help us hear more clearly the stories of Jesus’ extravagant love for all, and to follow him more bravely and confidently.

Let us pray...

Have mercy, tender God; forget that I defied you.

Wash away my sin, cleanse me from my guilt.

**I know my sins well, they stare me in the face,
Sins done to you alone before your very eyes.**

How right your condemnation! Your verdict is clearly just.

You see me for what I am: frail, a sinner.

**You love those centered in truth;
teach me your hidden wisdom.**

Wash me with fresh water, wash me bright and clean.

Fill me with happy songs! Let the bones you bruised now dance,
Shut your eyes to my sin, make my guilt disappear.

**Creator, reshape my heart; God, steady my spirit.
Do not cast me aside stripped of your Holy Spirit.**

Save me, bring back my joy, support me, strengthen my will,
Then I will teach your way and turn to you.

**Help me, stop my tears, and I will sing your goodness.
Lord, give me words and I will shout your praise.**

**In the name of Christ Jesus we come to you,
confessing our sins of separation
and praising your name; Amen**

*Prayer Response “Jesus, Remember Me”

Jesus, Remember me...

When you come into your Kingdom.

Jesus, Remember me...

When you come into your Kingdom.

*Assurance of Pardon

Pastor Rick

Know that God loves you, forgives you,
welcomes you and rejoices in you.

I announce, therefore, in the name of Jesus Christ,
we are forgiven and renewed!

In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and set free!

Thanks be to God forever more! Amen.

*Prayer Response Gloria Patri

Glory Be to the Father;

and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost!

As it was in the beginning; is now and ever shall be;

world without end!

Amen, Amen!

Children’s Time

Pastor Rick

“I Have Decided to Follow Jesus”

(Sung as children return to their seats)

I have decided to follow Jesus; (3x)

No turning back, no turning back.

The world behind me, the cross before me (3x)

No turning back, no turning back.

Imposition of Ashes

Ashes are placed on the forehead of all who choose as a part of the act of confession and as a sign of our acceptance of our own mortality and our penance. Come forward by the center aisle and receive the ashes; you may return by the side aisles.

Please bring your offering forward at this time as well, and place it in the offering plates on the communion table.

You have come to this place to acknowledge Jesus and his life and death, as well as our own. While we wear the symbol of all death on our foreheads and hands, know in your hearts that this is not all there is. “Ashes to ashes and dust to dust” is the nature our lives; but the true life is the “Alleluia” that we will shout 40 days hence. Have faith in the fire of Christ’s love in your life and work as you come forth remembering Christ’s death while living Christ’s Resurrection.

Prayer of Penance

Pastor Rick

Almighty and everlasting God, who forgives the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and humble hearts that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our flaws, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

Hebrew Scriptures Joel 2:1-2,12-13

Noah Braedehoeft

The Prophet Joel is speaking of darkness coming upon the people; and God's Wisdom, a light in the darkness. He appeals to everyone to repent (turn toward God) and receive the light. (page #740)

Gospel Lesson Matthew 5:1-20

Ryan Schoeneberg

Jesus offers an inaugural address that upends everything the Jewish people knew. He speaks of turning things around in a way that would be inconceivable to the people who thought they knew the way proper Jews should behave. (page #785)

Anthem

Celebration Singers

“Reflections on Life and the Word” *Patricia Mock/Faye Lopez*

Sermon

“Embracing God”

Pastor Rick

*Hymn:

“Sweet Hour of Prayer”

#505

*Invitation to Communion

Communion Prayer

Blessing the Children “LORD, I Want to be a Christian”

#454

In the Sacrament of Communion, we most closely see Jesus in our midst. Our desire to share this presence prompts us to celebrate with our children, granting them a special blessing. During the hymn, our children are invited to come forward via the center aisle and receive a special blessing.

Institution; Fraction; Distribution

The ushers will serve you where you sit; all are invited to then serve one another. You may eat the elements when you receive them; or you may wait for Pastor Rick.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

In this season of Lent and in this meal, we remember even more diligently Christ's ministry on earth, dear God. We follow him. We fast with him. We join our hearts in the passion of his ministry and the promises of his life. Thank you, dear God for this bread and this cup; may they transform us so that we will indeed share it with others, as we walk more closely with you.

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Ash Wednesday at Columbia UCC

Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent, which is forty days leading to Easter. It is a time for Christians to follow Jesus' life and death with the intention of strengthening their faith in God and widening their service in the ways of Jesus. We want to become more like him!

We shall participate in the blessing and imposition of ashes in our worship this evening. In the Hebrew Bible, ashes placed on one's body was a sign of mortality, and also a symbol of turning and returning to God.

For Christians, the ashes marked on the forehead or hand with the sign of the cross are intended to signify our death to old worldly ways without God, and acceptance and participation in the New Life Christ offers.

Our Ash Wednesday service is a bit more somber than our usual Sunday morning services. For a different kind of service, come back Sunday morning!

Today is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the 40-day period (excluding Sundays) that ends with Holy Week. Across the land, Christians from various denominations will commemorate the day by fasting, praying or participating in ceremonies in which ashes are crossed on their foreheads. Many will abstain from a particular food, beverage or activity until Easter, in recognition of Jesus' great sacrifice. These rituals symbolize our connection to God and our acknowledgment that despite being created in God's image, we are mere mortals who sin and mess up more often than we get it right. This season gives us the opportunity to publicly embrace our shortcomings, or at least recognize the fact that we often don't measure up, faith wise. In our "survival of the fittest," "may the best man (or woman) win" society, it's not easy to admit that we are not perfect. Most of us know that perfection is impossible in human form, but let the tabloids, news magazine shows and celebrity profiles tell it, perfection can be bought in a bottle or Botox needle, discovered in a therapist's chair or molded on a personal trainer's gym floor mat. It can be acquired at an elite university or in some of the boardrooms of the most powerful companies across the globe. The truth is, if we were perfect we might not feel a need for God. And surely we wouldn't give a second thought to Lent. Then, where would we find ourselves?

"Draw close to God, and God will draw close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, you hypocrites. Let there be tears for the wrong things you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. When you bow down before the Lord and admit your dependence on God, God will lift you up and give you honor." -James 4:8-10 (New Living Translation)

