



ASH WEDNESDAY



CUCC

Columbia United Church of Christ



Wednesday, February 22, 2023

7:00 p.m.

*"...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*

*Litany of Confession and Assurance

Pastor Rick

Tonight, Ash Wednesday, begins our journey through Lent, Holy Week, and Easter. We begin our journey carrying nothing but the mark of God's beloved.

In this vulnerable place, 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 intentionally.

Let us pray...

Have mercy, tender God; forget that I defied you.
Wash away my sin, and cleanse me from my guilt.

**I know my sins well, for 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, and 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, it 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 via 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.

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 of 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

Psalter Lesson

Psalm 51:1-15

Aidan Pierson

The Psalmist reflects on King David's transgression with Bathsheba and the repentance David seeks from God. David admits he is a sinner in the eyes of God and begs for forgiveness. (page #452)

Gospel Lesson

Mark 13:1-13

Sofia Marienfeld-Crenshaw

Jesus challenges the idea that human constructs and ideas are mightier than God's plans and tells the disciples that even the mightiest Temple will one day fall. As we contemplate our identity (ashes and dust), we remember what matters most is our identity as God's people. All else is insignificant. (page #825)

Anthem

"To Dust"

Celebration Singers
Karen Marrolli

Sermon

"Through the Ashes"

Pastor Rick

*Hymn:

"Sweet Hour of Prayer"

#505

*Invitation to Communion

As we gather at this table, we remember that as Jesus shared this meal with his friends, he expressed a message of inclusion for all. In like manner, this meal is open to everyone, no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey; all are welcome to partake.

Communion Prayer

Blessing the Children "What Wondrous Love is This"

#223

In the Sacrament of Communion, the presence of Jesus prompts us to share the celebration 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 partake 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.

*The Lord's Prayer *(spoken by the congregation)*

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; And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

*Benediction

*Response: "Let There be Peace on Earth"

**Let there be Peace on Earth and Let it Begin with me!
Let there be Peace on Earth;
the Peace that was meant to be!
With God our Creator, Children all are we!
Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony!
Let Peace begin with me; let this be the moment now!
With every step I take let this be my solemn vow:
To take each moment and live each moment
in peace eternally!
Let there be Peace on Earth; and let it begin with me!**

*Postlude "A Spiritual Reflection" Amy Crousore
Spiritual/arr. Martin

Columbia United Church of Christ

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Ash Wednesday at Columbia UCC

Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent, which is the 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 Christ!

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 they represent 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 magazines, 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)



Lord, I Want To Be a Christian

African-American spiritual

together

Bayly, 1969; alt.

ry sang,
sts' songs,
our praise;
our heart,

ens rang,
be - longs,
cious ways.
cred art.

ic told,
to share,
ring brought,
nd give

un - fold.
of prayer.
er wrought.
ly live.

FERING 8.7.8.7.D.

1 Lord, I want to be a Chris-tian in my heart, in my heart;
2 Lord, I want to be more lov - ing in my heart, in my heart,
3 Lord, I want to be more ho - ly in my heart, in my heart;
4 Lord, I want to be like Je - sus in my heart, in my heart;

Lord, I want to be a Chris-tian in my heart.
Lord, I want to be more lov - ing in my heart.
Lord, I want to be more ho - ly in my heart.
Lord, I want to be like Je - sus in my heart.

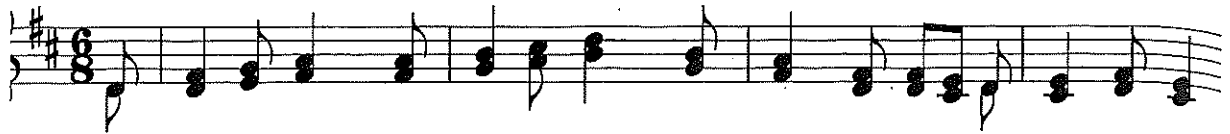
Refrain

In my heart, in my heart, in my heart,
In my heart, in my heart, in my heart,

Lord, I want to be a Chris-tian in my heart.
Lord, I want to be more lov - ing in my heart.
Lord, I want to be more ho - ly in my heart.
Lord, I want to be like Je - sus in my heart.

Sweet Hour of Prayer

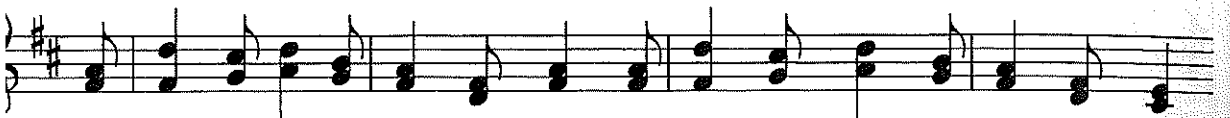
William Walford, 1845; alt.



1 Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer! that calls me from a world of care,
 2 Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer! the joys I feel, the bliss I share
 3 Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer! whose wings shall my pe - ti - tion bear



and bids me at my Ma-ker's throne let all my needs and wants be known,
 of those whose anx-ious spir-its burn with strong de-sires for your re-turn!
 to One whose truth and faith-ful - ness en - gage the wait - ing soul to bless.



In sea-sons of dis-tress and grief, my soul has of - ten found re - lief,
 With them I has-ten to the place where I would know my Sav-ior's face,
 And since I'm bid to seek God's face, be-lieve God's word, and trust God's grace,



and oft es-caped the tempt-er's snare by your re - turn, sweet hour of prayer!
 And glad - ly take my sta - tion there, and wait for you, sweet hour of prayer!
 I'll cast a - way my ev - ery care, and wait for you, sweet hour of prayer!



though credited to a different poet when first published in 45, researchers believe this hymn was written by William Alfred William Bradbury, a highly trained musician, sang

Tune: SWEET HOUR L.M.D.
 William B. Bradbury, 1861

What Wondrous Love Is This

John 19:17; Rev. 5:13

19th century, United States; alt.
First published in Mercer's Cluster, 1836

1 What won-drous love is this, O my soul! O my soul! What
2 To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing, to
3 And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on, and

won-drous love is this, O my soul! What won-drous love is
God and to the Lamb, I will sing; To God and to the
when from death I'm free, I'll sing on! And when from death I'm

this! that Christ should come in bliss to bear the heav-y cross for my
Lamb who is the great I Am, while mil - lions join the theme, I will
free, I'll sing and joy - ful be, and through e - ter - ni - ty I'll sing

soul, for my soul, to bear the heav-y cross for my soul!
sing, I will sing; while mil - lions join the theme, I will sing.
on, I'll sing on, and through e - ter - ni - ty I'll sing on!