

**Fifth Avenue United Methodist Church
323 South Fifth Avenue,
West Bend, Wisconsin 53095
February 14, 2024
7:00 pm**

**LITURGY: Refocusing and realigning ourselves
in relationship to God and one another.**



ASH WEDNESDAY - *Ash Wednesday is about refocusing and realigning ourselves in relationship to God and one another. We must encounter our sinfulness and frailty not with shame and blame but with honesty and truth, trusting that God receives our confession.*

**PRELUDE “Dust and Ashes” by Brian Wren and David Haas
Deanna Gibeau, Organist**

GREETING **Pastor Clarissa**
TFWS 2164
“Sanctuary” x3

CALL TO GATHER (UNISON) **Ellen Johnson, Liturgist**

All: Holy God, we embark on this Lenten journey grateful for your presence along the way. Walk alongside us to call us to repentance, to woo us from our idols, to open our eyes to our neighbor in need, to guide us in the way of sacrifice. Meet us in our fears and joys alike and sustain us in our weakness. Pour out your Spirit upon us, that these 40 days might become for us a journey that renews our hope, strengthens our faith, and prepares us for the agony of the cross as well as the new life of resurrection. Amen.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (Responsively)

L: Confession is an act of trust. When we honestly name our sins, individual and corporate, to God, we trust that God receives our confession, because it is God’s grace that empowers us to recognize our sin and repent. So, let us join our voices in confessing our sin before God and one another:

L: Merciful God, we confess that too often we make choices about what we should and should not do based on what others will think of us. We seek the validation of family, friends, and even strangers instead of resting in our sacred worth and identity in you. And so, we travel the path of least resistance when we know that path does not align with yours.

P: Forgive us, God, when we perform for one another instead of living with integrity in you.

L: Merciful God, we confess that we place too much value on money, prestige, and influence. We live in a society that tells us we need more and more and more in order to live secure and satisfied lives, and we choose to live according to this lie to the detriment of ourselves and our neighbors.

P: Forgive us, God, when we treasure wealth, status, possessions, and power over and above contrition, humility, generosity, and mutuality.

L: Merciful God, we confess that we do not love you rightly. While we may love you with part of our lives, we do not love you as God with our whole lives. We resist your call to surrender our lives into your hands and to trust that you will care for us as individuals and as a community better than we could ever do on our own.

P: Forgive us, God, when we point our hearts toward selfish gain instead of the lasting worth of life with you.

Prayers of silent confession.

L: Receive this good news: we love because God first loved us. In the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.

P: In the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.

L: Repent and believe, for God's grace empowers us live in the humility of the beautiful and freeing truth that God is God, and we are not.

All: Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN

"GATHER US IN"

TFWS 2236

WE PROCLAIM

EPISTLE LESSON

2 Corinthians 5:20b - 6:2

All: So, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God. For our sake God made the one who knew no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. As we work together with him, we entreat you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, "At an acceptable time, I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you." Look now is the acceptable time; look, now is the day of salvation!

GOSPEL READING

Matthew 6:1-4; 19-21

"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. "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.

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

INVITATION TO THE OBSERVANCE OF LENTEN DISCIPLINE

Pastor: Dear brothers and sisters in Christ: the early Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the church that before the Easter celebration there should be a forty-day season of spiritual preparation. During this season converts to the faith were prepared for holy baptism; it was also a time when persons who had committed serious sins and had separated themselves from the community of faith were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness and restored to participation in the life of the church. In this way the whole congregation was reminded of the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the need we all have to renew our faith. I invite you, therefore, in the name of the church, to observe a holy Lent by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial, and by reading and meditation on God's holy word.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Pastor: We begin our Lenten observance by using the centuries-old symbol of ashes. By this we are reminded of our own frailty and mortality and called to humility and penitence.

People: Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. May these ashes be to us a sign of our mortality, that we may remember that it is only by your gracious gift that we are given everlasting life. Amen.

Leader: Almighty and everlasting God,

People: We enter this season of Lent in penitence and humility, aware of our own mortality and sinfulness. Encourage us with your presence, we pray, that we may empty ourselves of whatever separates us from you and one another. Teach us to rely on no strength but yours, as we journey with your Son toward your kingdom through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

THOSE WHO WISH TO RECEIVE ASHES MAY COME FORWARD.

HYMN

"Just as I Am, Without One Plea"

UMH 357

EUCCHARIST

Pastor: God of light and dust be with you,

All: And also with you.

Pastor: Open wide our hearts:

All: We open them up to our God.

Pastor: Let us give thanks to God our Creator.

All: Even in the midst of the wilderness, we give God our praise.

Pastor: It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. We give you thanks because you have loved us and valued us even though we are but dust. You have forgiven our sins, transformed us into your people, and filled us with your Holy Spirit so that we may triumph over evil and grow in grace, enabling us to live faithfully as your redeemed and holy people. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

All: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Pastor: As Jesus continued on his journey, he could see that his time was drawing nearer. Our Christ knew that his love and leadership would take him to the cross. And as the final night was upon him, he drew close to his friends. To embrace the love he had with them, he shared one last table. Jesus embraced the bread in his weathered hands, broke it, gave it to his friends asking them to remember

him. Jesus clasped the cup containing the fruit of the vine, gave thanks one last time and asked them to remember him. In remembering him, we speak the words together in prayer, using the words closest to your hearts saying... Our Father, who art in heaven... **(On the screen)**

The bread of life. The cup of the new covenant. Both given to us. Both we partake together as we remember our servant-leader Jesus the Christ.

UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

All: Even as we come to the table tonight remembering our frailty with the dust on our heads, we also give God our thanks for this meal. We give our gratitude that we have come together as one Body of Christ. In these next 40 days and as we walk the road to the crucifixion, continue to keep us awake to the ways we can bring Jesus the Christ's servant-leadership to our world. Amen.

HYMN

"Lead Me, Guide Me" x3

TFWS 2214

Leader: May God, who has forgiven and fed us, now make us strong for these days ahead. May Jesus lead us, and we be found faithful to follow. May the Spirit drive us into the wilderness, burning away the chaff of our lives, and purifying our hearts for all to see and be blessed.

Pastor: And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Mercy, Master, and Fire, be with us and remain with us always!

POSTLUDE

"Purify My Heart"

by Richard Leach and Amanda Husberg

Lent is a time to prepare for Easter. I commit myself to the following disciplines for these 40 days, in order to experience the depth and power of the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior.

First check the ones you feel prompted to do. Then pray about it and circle the ones you will be able to follow through on.

INWARD AND PERSONAL DISCIPLINES

Become healthier, body, mind, and spirit:

- _____Spend time in solitude and prayer daily
- _____Fast from food one day a week. Give the time and money to Jesus
- _____Fast from a habit I need to give up
- _____Read twice through the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke & John
- _____Join a Bible study group
- _____Get enough healthy food, rest & exercise
- _____Reconcile with at least one person I am at odds with
- _____Attend all the Holy Week services as an act of love toward Jesus

- _____ Inventory my priorities and reorder them in the light of Christ's love
- _____ Try to make my lifestyle match my priorities
- _____ Give up a grudge
- _____ Forgive someone
- _____ Worship every week.
- _____ Find a prayer partner
- _____ Pray for my enemies

OUTWARD AND SOCIAL DISCIPLINES

Listen and respond to Christ's call to a ministry of service:

- _____ Write a letter of affirmation once a week to someone who is not expecting it, or someone who has touched my life.
- _____ Go to coffee or dinner with someone I want to know better
- _____ Recycle
- _____ Share a meal with a church family member
- _____ Donate toward No More Malaria. Work to increase awareness of this effort.
- _____ Volunteer to help with Family Promise (March 8 –15)
- _____ Say "no" to something that is a waste of money and time
- _____ Pray for the courage to share my faith openly
- _____ Decide to become a member of the church
- _____ Rebuke the spirit of criticism and get my own tongue in control
- _____ Pray with someone/for someone
- _____ Bring an acquaintance to church on Palm Sunday and Easter
- _____ Seriously consider the membership vows to support the church with "my prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness."

Others

As a way of being held accountable, I will find someone with whom I can covenant so that we can share our intentions and encourage each other's growth in Christ.

Signed _____