

## Ash Wednesday Welcome

Good evening

My name is Danny Peck, and I'm the Youth Director here at First United Methodist Church. I'm filling in for Pastor Joe tonight, and I'd like to welcome you to our Ash Wednesday worship service.

Ash Wednesday emphasizes a dual encounter: we confront our own mortality and confess our sin before God within the community of faith. And we do so in the light of God's redeeming love in Jesus Christ.

At the close of the service we'll participate in the Imposition of Ashes. The use of ashes as a sign of mortality has a long history in Jewish and Christian worship. And the shape of the cross on our foreheads reminds us of the righteous believers in the book of Ezekiel who were sealed by God, protected by a mark on their foreheads, a mark in the shape of the Hebrew letter *tav*, which looked very much like the Greek letter *chi*, the first letter of *Christos*, Christ, or like our modern letter X, the shape of a cross.

I invite us all to recognize our mortality tonight. Our very different nature from that of God. But as we are aware of those ways in which we fall short, let us do so in an attitude of repentance, and in the hope of God's great renewal.