

First United Methodist Church
Ash Wednesday
February 13, 2013

PRELUDE

WORDS OF WELCOME AND EXPLANATION

A TIME FOR CENTERING

Just As I Am

* CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Welcome to a season of self-examination. Now is the time for us to look into our life and search for those things that separate us from God.

People: We seek communion with our Creator. We open our lives to the light of grace, that the darkness of sin may be dispelled.

Leader: We need not be afraid of our failings nor fear our mistakes. God's mercy is abundant and God's forgiveness is readily offered.

People: We place our trust in God's love. We are ready to receive God's grace, which enables us to grow.

Leader: Do not let the heaviness of past mistakes and burden of regrets weigh you down. God is willing to carry your load.

People: May God lift our burden and give us rest. May God's grace free us from all that encumbers us.

* HYMN

"Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days"

* PRAYER FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

Gracious God, we come to you with hearts that hunger for your presence and spirits that thirst for your purpose. Grant us your grace, that in this service of worship and throughout the season of Lent, we will grow closer to you. Give us the grace to honestly confess those things that distance us from you. Help us hear the call of Jesus to release our burdens, and enable us to cast our cares on you. Inspire us to move forward in our love for you and in our service to your kingdom. So may we find true life in you and experience the joy of a deep and abiding relationship with you. This we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

HOMILY

A Projected Image

Danny Peck

THANKSGIVING OVER THE ASHES

PSALM OF PENANCE

Psalm 51:1-17

Read Responsively from page # 785

IMPOSITION OF THE ASHES

At this time, you are invited to consider where sin still reigns in your life or how you might grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ. Remembering both the need to confess and God's promise of pardon, you may come forward and receive the imposition of ashes as a sign of your penitence and willingness to receive God's grace.

WORDS OF PARDON AND RECONCILIATION

* HYMN

"I Surrender All"

* DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent, the 40 day season that precedes Holy Week and Easter. In the Christian Scriptures the number 40 is associated with significant times of preparation or spiritual growth. In the time of Noah, the rain lasted for 40 days and nights, as God purified the earth of an "evil generation. After their exodus from Egypt, the people of Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years as they learned to trust in God. Jesus, himself, spent 40 days in the wilderness after his baptism and before his public ministry. For modern Christians, the 40 days of Lent represent a time for reflection on how we live our lives and an opportunity for renewal of our spirits. During this time, we are invited to prepare ourselves to both hear and live out the good news of Easter through deeper disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

In the Ash Wednesday service, we return to a biblical method of expressing our spiritual disposition. Ashes are the traditional sign of sorrow and repentance and are also a sign of "mortality". As we confess that we are not the people we would like to be nor the people God intended us to be, we receive the mark of ashes symbolizing our repentance. We do so in the context that we are mortal, that our bodies will return to "dust and ashes," and that we will face our Creator at the end of our life. Despite this dark and foreboding symbolism, we worship in hope. The ashes are imposed in the sign of the cross, reminding us that through Jesus Christ we have victory over sin through his forgiveness and victory over death through his resurrection. By the power of his Spirit, we can be renewed.

