

First Congregational Church
Our Church in Worship

March 2, 2022 4:30 PM

Ash Wednesday

PRELUDE *Wondrous Grace* – arr. Mary Ann Fritz Adam Peithmann

*CALL TO WORSHIP (Responsive) Rev. Barbara Papagian
LEADER: The season of Lent calls us to journey along the edge, to anticipate that final trip to Jerusalem.
PEOPLE: **Lent calls us to the cutting edge; when the wheat falls to the ground and new life comes forth.**
LEADER: Lent not only calls us to give up something but also invites us to participate in the mystery of God-with-us.
PEOPLE: **By your grace, call us from grief into gladness, despair into hope, estrangement into right relations with each other and with the earth.**

OPENING PRAYER (Responsive)
LEADER: You chose a people for your own, to lavish love upon, raise up prophets, priests and kings, to be the nation through which the Messiah would be revealed to the world, and through whom your kingdom would come. You chose this people gathered here to be your children, loved and blessed, forgiven through the one who knows no sin, the King of Glory whose crown was made of thorns, and whose name we raise in worship.
ALL: **Come, all who are thirsty says Jesus, our Lord, come, all who are weak, taste the living water that I shall give. Dip your hands in the stream, refresh body and soul, drink from it, depend on it, for this water will never run dry. Come, all who are thirsty says Jesus, our Lord.**

OPENING HYMN NO. 180 *Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days*

SERVICE OF THE WORD

PASTORAL PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

SCRIPTURE LESSON Isaiah 58:1-11 Carol Soucy

MEDITATION

SERVICE OF ASHES

LITANY OF CONFESSION

LEADER: We now prepare ourselves by confessing to God our brokenness and need.
PEOPLE: **We have sinned in what we have thought and said and in the wrong we have done and the good we have not done.**
LEADER: We have sinned in ignorance and weakness.
PEOPLE: **We have sinned through our own deliberate fault.**
LEADER: We are truly sorry and we repent and turn to You, Lord.
ALL: **Forgive us, Lord. Have mercy on us and renew our lives to the glory of Your Name.**

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence, so that we may remember that only by your gracious gift are we given everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Savior.
Amen.

Those who wish to, may come forward to receive the ashes. Due to Covid social distancing, ashes will be put on the back of the hand rather than the forehead.

PRAYER OF HEALING (Responsive)

LEADER: In our striving to follow Christ, God is a sure and constant presence, never coercing commitment but always inviting it. God holds before us priorities that emerge from the Word; God enlightens us when our understandings are dim; God beckons us to embody belief in deed; God strengthens us in spirit and truth. It is so that we are loved by God.
PEOPLE: **The One whose light illuminates our defects and flaws is the same One who died regardless of them. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us", offering forever the gift of forgiveness. It is God who said, "Let light shine!" who makes of us what no striving, no system can. It is God's light, shining in our hearts, that makes us children of light.**

CLOSING HYMN NO. 559 *All the Way My Savior Leads Me*

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

O Sacred Head, Now Wounded – Dieterich Buxtehude

WHY DO WE GATHER

Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent with a moving and ancient ceremony that originated in Gaul in the sixth century. Our Ash Wednesday worship service is penitential in nature. It calls upon us to humbly face in ourselves those ways in which we fall short of God's will for our lives. In this way, we open ourselves to the possibility of God's healing grace and forgiveness.

The ashes are traditionally produced by burning the dried palms left over from the previous year's Palm Sunday service. In the burning of the palms, we recognize that those who cheered Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday were some of the same people who called for his crucifixion the following Friday. Ash Wednesday invites us to recognize that, in much the same way, by our own failures of love and faith, we too participate in the crucifixion of Christ. Yet, as our faith in Christ affirms, all those who come before God seeking forgiveness will be joyfully received.

The service of ashes is one of confession and healing, as well as a rededication to the ministry of Christ. The ashes are placed on the forehead in the sign of the cross as a reminder of Paul's words, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."

First Congregational Church

United Church of Christ

508 Union Street • Manchester, New Hampshire

FCCManchesterNH.org • 603-625-5093

You are welcome here! • We are an Open & Affirming Congregation