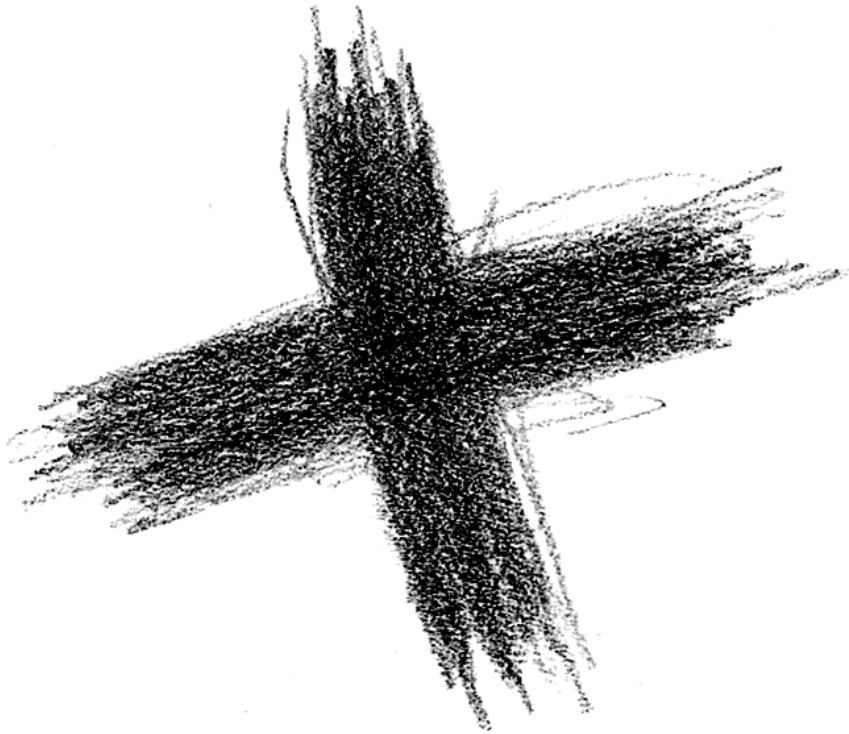


Ash Wednesday

AND TO DUST YOU SHALL RETURN



REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE DUST

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THE ORDER OF SERVICE FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD

The Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
Amherst, New Hampshire

February 22, 2023

Ash Wednesday

7:00 p.m.

PRELUDE

TOLLING OF THE BELLS

WELCOME

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Please stand in body or in spirit.

Leader: In the softness of evening,
in the solace of silence we come to you, O God.

**People: We come for acceptance;
we come for community;
we come for forgiveness and love.**

Leader: In the serenity of day's end,
in the restfulness of worship we come to you, O God.

**People: We come to you for respite;
we come to you for completion;
we come to you for forgiveness and love.**

Leader: In the quiet of the night,
in the security of darkness we come to you, O God.

**People: We come for peace;
we come for comfort;
we come for forgiveness and love.**

**All: We come, O Lord of Light,
seeking the illumination of your Word.
We come for the path we cannot find;
we come for the life we fear to live.
We come to you to help us rise from the ashes;
for you give us breath and being.**

*HYMN

Sweet Hour of Prayer

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SETTING THE TABLE

The congregation may be seated.

The table is set with bread, juice, water, and ashes. Each gift is introduced as it is presented.

CALL TO CONFESSION

CONFESSIONAL PRAYER (unison)

We bring our burdens and our failings to you, O God,
as you bear the heavy load for us.

We place upon you our excuses, our shortcomings,
our anger and our desire,
knowing that you can remove this weight from us
and restore us to life.

We confess that we have not loved you fully
and have not loved our neighbor as ourselves.

We confess that we have not fully loved even our selves.

Forgive us and help us to turn towards you.

Restore what has been broken,

transform what has withered,

find what has been lost,

so we may be the living, loving image of you in creation.

In your healing presence, we now share our yearnings and failings,
known only to you, in the silence...

SILENT PRAYER

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 6:9-21

“Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is 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.”

ASH WEDNESDAY REFLECTION

*HYMN

Just as I Am, Without One Plea

No. 370

INVITATION and DISTRIBUTION of ASHES

Those who wish to receive ashes are invited to come forward down the center aisle. You may choose to receive the ashes on your forehead or on the back of your hand. Please bring your bulletin and form a circle around the sanctuary after receiving the ashes. If you do not choose to receive ashes, please join the circle anyway.

*INVITATION TO THE TABLE

Leader: We come to the table as an Easter people;
tempted to tell only our faith stories of triumph and victory,
tempted to move directly to the party with flowers and balloons.

People: Come to the table, there is room for us here.

Leader: We come to the table scarred from the world;
bringing some vague awareness that all is not well,
bringing some distant memory that the costly cross looms in the distance.

People: Come to the table, there is room for us here.

Leader: We come to the table with a sense of unease;
knowing that we too have betrayed or denied out of fear,
knowing that we too have been reluctant to claim Jesus as our own.

People: Come to the table, there is room for us here.

Leader: We come to this table with hope,
knowing that all are welcome here,
knowing that no one is turned away from God's abundant grace.

People: Come to the table, to remember and to be renewed.

*TABLE PRAYER

*SHARING OF COMMUNION

The bread and the cup will be brought to you in the circle by our pastors and our deacons. You are invited to take a piece of bread and a cup, and eat and drink as you're served. Please place the empty cup back in the tray.

*MUSIC FOR REFLECTION

*THE LORD'S PRAYER (unison)

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.

*HYMN

What Wonderous Love Is This

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*BENEDICTION BLESSING

RETIRING OFFERING

This evening's offering is a retiring offering. The offering pate is on the table at the rear of the sanctuary. All who wish to contribute to the missions and ministry of this church are invited to do so.

POSTLUDE

*(*Indicates that those who are able may stand.)*

PARTICIPATING IN TONIGHT'S SERVICE

Members and Friends of The Congregational Church

Rev. Maureen R. Frescott

Rev. Katherine R. Kennedy

Peter Labombarde

Doug Topliffe

Ministers to the World

Senior Pastor

Associate Pastor

Guest Organist

Videographer

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*Today's liturgy has been adapted from the following sources:
Lisa Frenz, Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, Jessica Gazzola,
K. HawkerSelf, and Jan Richardson.*

Our bulletin cover was created by Laura R. Norton, www.LettersAloft.com.