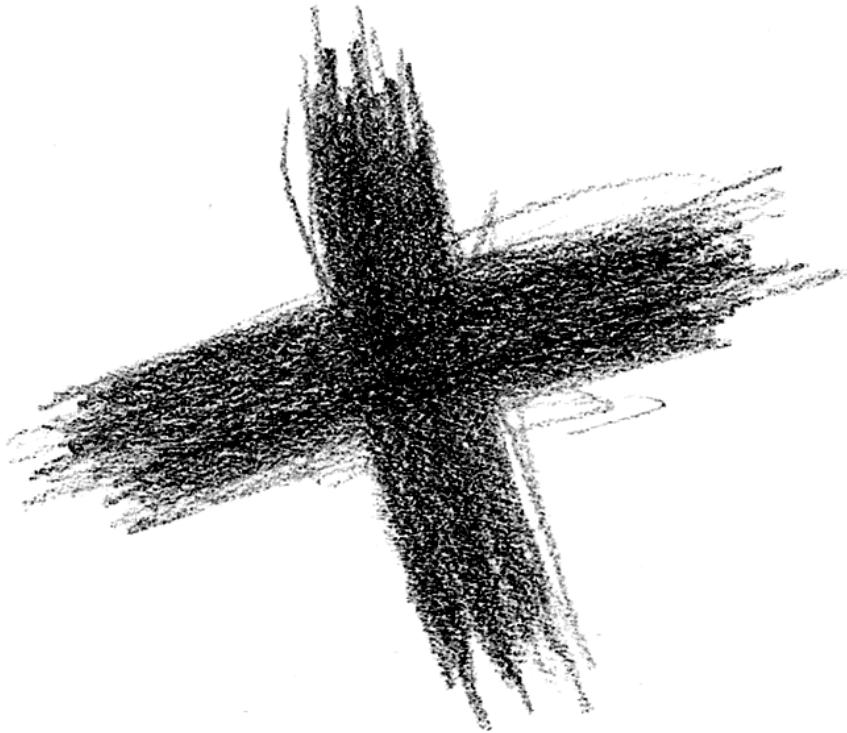


Ash Wednesday

AND TO DUST YOU SHALL RETURN



REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE DUST

THE ORDER OF SERVICE FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD

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

March 5, 2025

Ash Wednesday

7:00 p.m.

WORDS OF GATHERING

PRELUDE

Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy

Marilyn Thompson

*CALL TO WORSHIP and PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Please rise in body or spirit.

One: In the shadows of evening,
in the comfort of community, we come to you, O God.

Many: **We come seeking connection;
we come seeking relationship;
we come seeking healing and wholeness.**

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

Many: **We come to you for renewal;
we come to you for respite;
we come to you for restoration and redemption.**

One: In the cover of the night,
in the security of sanctuary, we come to you, O God.

Many: **We come longing for peace;
we come longing for strength;
we come longing for sanctification and transformation.**

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

*HYMN

Just as I Am, Without One Plea

insert

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)

**God of restoration,
we come before you carrying burdens we struggle to bear:
Our falterings and our failings.
Our excuses and our arrogance.
Our anger and our apathy.**

**We come longing to set this weight down,
as you create us anew.
We confess that we have not loved you fully,
and have not loved our neighbor as ourselves,
and have not loved even ourselves.**

**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,
known only to you...**

SILENT PRAYER

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

“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.

“And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

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“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

MUSIC FOR REFLECTION

Abide With Me; 'Tis Eventide

Harrison Millard/
arr. Rachel P. Mohlman

READING

“Blessing the Dust for Ash Wednesday”

Jan Richardson

All those days
you felt like dust,
like dirt,
as if all you had to do
was turn your face
toward the wind
and be scattered
to the four corners
or swept away
by the smallest breath
as insubstantial—
did you not know
what the Holy One
can do with dust?

This is the day
we freely say
we are scorched.
This is the hour
we are marked
by what has made it
through the burning.
This is the moment
we ask for the blessing
that lives within
the ancient ashes,
that makes its home
inside the soil of
this sacred earth.

So let us be marked
not for sorrow.
And let us be marked
not for shame.
Let us be marked
not for false humility
or for thinking
we are less than we are
but for claiming
what God can do
within the dust,
within the dirt,
within the stuff
of which the world is made
and the stars that blaze
in our bones
and the galaxies that spiral
inside the smudge
we bear.

INVITATION and DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES

Those who wish to receive ashes are invited to come forward forming two lines 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 after receiving the ashes. If you choose not to receive ashes, we invite you to join the circle for communion.

*INVITATION TO THE TABLE

One: We come to the table as an Easter people;
tempted to tell only our stories of triumph and victory,
tempted to move directly to the celebration in joy.

Many: We come to the table, there is room for us here.

One: We come to the table scarred from the world;
bringing an unsettling awareness that all is not well,
bringing an uncomfortable memory of the cross looming in the distance.

Many: We come to the table, there is room for us here.

One: 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.

Many: We come to the table, there is room for us here.

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One: 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.

Many: **We 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 of juice, and eat and drink as you're served. Please place the empty cup back in the tray.

*COMMUNION MEDITATION

The Lamb of God

James Mansfield

*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

Breathe on Me, Breath of God

insert

*BENEDICTION BLESSING

POSTLUDE

Fuga III from Three Preludes & Fugues, Op. 16

Clara Schumann

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.

*(*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. Charlotte E. Y. Bell

Shellie Brook

Michael Havay

Roger Hooper

Russ Demarest, Sally Hooper, Doug Topliffe

Ministers to the World

Senior Pastor

Associate Pastor

Student Pastor

Organist

Deacon in Charge

Deacons

*Permission to podcast/stream the music in this service
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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.*

Ash Wednesday, March 5, 2025