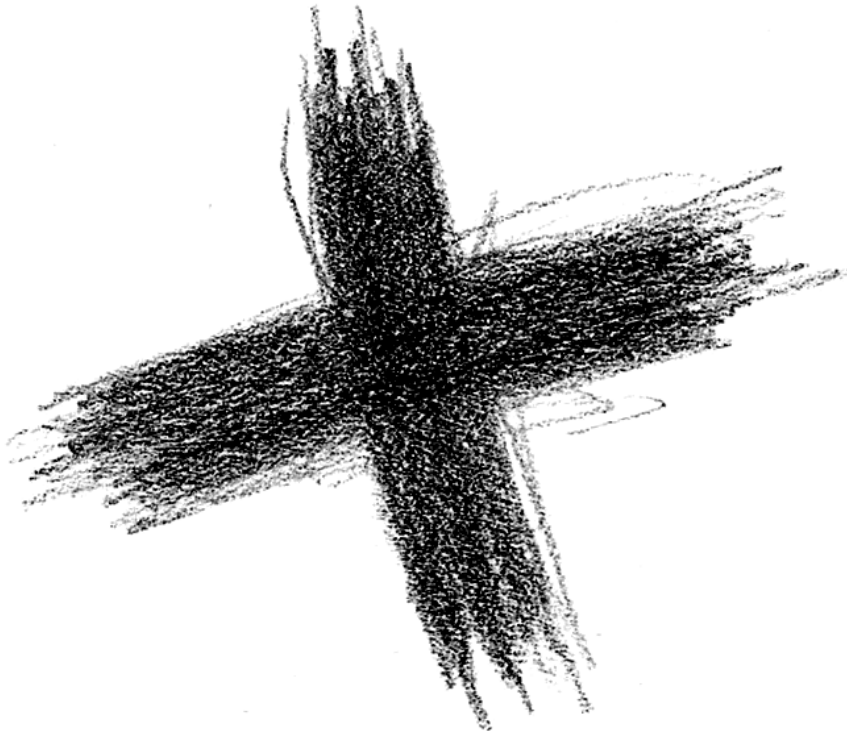


*Ash Wednesday*

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

February 18, 2026

Ash Wednesday

7:00 p.m.

## WORDS OF GATHERING

### PRELUDE

*Psalm Prelude: Expectavi*

Fenton Groden

*Psalm 130:5 - "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope."*

### \*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

*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)

**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

Psalm 51:1-3, 6-12

Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy,  
blot out my transgressions.  
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my guilt.  
For I know my transgressions,  
and my wrongdoings are ever before me.

You desire truth in the inward being;  
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

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Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.  
Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.  
Hide your face from my sins,  
and blot out all my iniquities.  
Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your holy spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

#### ASH WEDNESDAY REFLECTION

MUSIC FOR REFLECTION                      *Just as I Am, Without One Plea*  
Shellie Brook, guitar

#### 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.**

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.*

\*MUSIC FOR MEDITATION

*Dies Cinerum (Ash Wednesday)*

Peter Leys

\*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*

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\*BENEDICTION BLESSING

POSTLUDE

*Quoniam Si Voluisses*

Giovanni Paisiello

Psalm 51:18 - *"For if you had desired sacrifice, I would have given it; with burnt offerings you will not be delighted."*

RETIRING OFFERING

*This evening's offering is a retiring offering. The offering plate 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

Sue Ruggiero

Sally Bowkett, Sally Hooper, Doug Topliffe

### Ministers to the World

Senior Pastor

Associate Pastor

Student Pastor

Organist

Deacon in Charge

Deacons

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*Permission to podcast/stream the music in this service  
obtained from One License with license #A-731944.*

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

*Our bulletin cover was created by Laura R. Norton, [www.LettersAloft.com](http://www.LettersAloft.com)*