

Mifflin Avenue and South Avenue United Methodist Churches



February 14, 2024

Ash Wednesday

7:00 pm

ORDER OF WORSHIP

CELEBRATION THROUGH CENTERING

PRELUDE 'I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say' arr. James E. Clemens

CHIMES AND BRINGING FORTH THE LIGHT

CENTERING WORDS AND INTRODUCTION

Pastor: Ash Wednesday begins the forty days of preparation and self-examination of Lent, as we move toward the cross and empty grave.

People: On Ash Wednesday, we are like Isaiah, seeing who we are in light of God's majesty:

Pastor: We are mortal, frail, and dependent.

People: We examine ourselves, allowing God's holy light to reveal our sin, leading us to come in repentance before God.

Pastor: We can be honest about our frailty; about the temptations and weaknesses we face in this life. Ash Wednesday is also about recognizing the God who saved us from sin and death. Jesus stared death in the face and won.

People: So, with Christ Jesus, we too can stare death in the face, and enter into the fullness of life that will not end when our bodies die.

Pastor: As we begin our time of worship, let's join God's heart as we come to meet God during this time of worship.

HYMN: 'Come and Find the Quiet Center' TFWS No. 2128

OPENING PRAYER

We turn to you, God of life on this first day of Lent, as we recall our own mortality. With hearts torn open by our actions we need your guidance and your healing forgiveness. Ready us to receive your mercy and grace, and cleanse us of the ash of human failing, that we may embrace the words you speak--words that lead to eternal life. Amen.

INTROIT 'Spirit of the Living God' 'No. 393

ANTHEM 'What Wondrous Love Is This' Lloyd Larson

CELEBRATION THROUGH THE WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Pastor: O Lord, open our eyes, our ears our minds, and our hearts.

People: that we might behold wondrous things out of your word.

CHORAL RESPONSE 'Thy Word' No. 601 (Refrain only)
Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

FIRST LESSON Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION 'Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus' No. 349
*Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.*

Pastor: The Lord be with you,
People: and also with you.
Pastor: A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.
People: Glory to You, O Lord.

*THE GOSPEL IS READ Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-21

*THE GOSPEL RESPONSE

Pastor: The Gospel of the Living Christ.
People: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*GLORIA PATRI No. 70

CELEBRATION THROUGH PROCLAMATION

Homily 'Be Careful' Rev. Russel Shuluga

FOUR MEDITATIONS

1. MEDITATION ON THE BREATH OF LIFE

Settle into your seat, close your eyes and imagine a place that brings you comfort and peace.
Breathe in the goodness of that space. Breathe forth the goodness that is within you.

*Be still and know that I am God
Be still and know that I am
Be still and know that I
Be still and know that
Be still and know
Be still and
Be still
Be*

SILENT MEDITATION

HYMN 'Near to the Heart of God' No. 472

2. MEDITATION ON LETTING GO

Tonight begins our journey through Lent, Holy Week, and Easter. And like any well-prepared traveler, we confess that we want to pack our bags to make sure we are comfortable for our 6-week journey. But Ash Wednesday is about leaving baggage behind and braving the unknown carrying nothing but the mark of God's beloved. In this vulnerable place, we confess that we want to be surrounded by all of the things that make us feel better about ourselves, including things we think God needs in order to love us. And yet God whispers to us that we are made in the divine image and that faithfulness to that knowledge is all we need for the journey of life. So let us ponder what it is that we may let go of this Lent, in order to help us hear more clearly the stories of Jesus' extravagant love for all, and to follow him more bravely and confidently.

SILENT MEDITATION

3. MEDITATION ON FRAILTY AND FORGIVENESS

CALL TO CONFESSION

Traditionally Ash Wednesday is a time to consider the reality of sin in our lives, our failures to live up to the promise of the image of God. Psalm 51 is known as the classic "Penitential Psalm" used to give voice to our sorrow for sin and to our hope for forgiveness.

My brothers and sisters, the hour of God's favor draws near, the day of his mercy and of our salvation approaches, when death was destroyed and eternal life began. As we begin this season of Lent, we gather today to acknowledge that we are sinners. As we express our sorrow, may God be merciful to us and restore us to his friendship.

LITANY OF CONFESSION

Pastor: Have mercy on me O God in your great kindness: in the fullness of your mercy blot out my offences.

People: Wash away all my guilt: and cleanse me from my sin.

HYMN

'Heal Me, Hands of Jesus'

'No. 262 V. 1

*Heal me, hands of Jesus, and search out all my pain;
Restore my hope, remove my fear, and bring me peace again.*

Pastor: For I acknowledge my faults: and my sin is always before me.

People: Against you only have I sinned and done evil in your sight.

HYMN

'Heal Me Hands of Jesus'

No. 262 V. 2

*Cleanse me, blood of Jesus, take bitterness away,
Let me forgive as one forgiven and bring me peace today.*

Pastor: Create in me a clean heart O God: and renew a right spirit within me.

People: Do not cast me away from your presence: do not take your holy spirit from me.

HYMN

'Heal Me Hands of Jesus'

No. 262 V. 3

*Know me, mind of Jesus, and show me all my sin;
Dispel the memories of guilt and bring me peace with-in.*

Pastor: Give me the joy of your help again and strengthen me with a willing spirit.

People: O Lord open my lips: and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

HYMN

'Heal Me Hands of Jesus'

No. 262 V. 4

*Fill me, joy of Jesus; anxiety shall cease,
And heaven's serenity be mine, for Jesus brings me peace!*

SILENT CONFESSION

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Know that God loves you, forgives you, welcomes you and rejoices in you

***Grace alone which God supplies, strength unknown he will provide.
Christ in us our Corner stone; we will go forth in grace alone...***

4. MEDITATION ON THE POSSIBILITIES OF DUST

INVITATION TO THE OBSERVANCE OF LENTEN DISCIPLINE

*Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:
the early Christians observed with great devotion
the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection,
and it became the custom of the Church that before the Easter celebration
there should be a forty-day season of spiritual preparation.*

*During this season converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism.
It was also a time when persons who had committed serious sins
and had separated themselves from the community of faith
were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness,
and restored to participation in the life of the Church.*

*In this way the whole congregation was reminded
of the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ
and the need we all have to renew our faith.*

*I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church,
to observe a holy Lent:
by self-examination and repentance;
by prayer, fasting, and self-denial;
and by reading and meditating on God's Holy Word.
To make a right beginning of repentance,
and as a mark of our mortal nature,
let us now bow before our Creator and Redeemer.*

SILENT PRAYER

THANKSGIVING OVER THE 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.***

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

(During the singing of the hymn, you are invited to come forward for the imposition of ashes)

HYMN

'Just as I Am, Without One Plea'

No. 357

***Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me,
and that thou bidst me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.***

***Just as I am, and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blot,
to thee whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.***

***Just as I am, though tossed about with many a conflict, many a doubt,
fightings and fears within, without, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.***

*Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind; sight, riches, healing of the mind,
yea, all I need in thee to find, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

*Just as I am, thou wilt receive, wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
because thy promise I believe, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

*Just as I am, thy love unknown hath broken every barrier down;
now, to be thine, yea thine alone, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

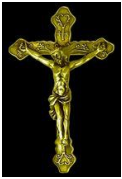
CELEBRATION THROUGH SENDING

*BENEDICTION

Pastor: With the ash of repentance, we have entered Lent.

People: With contrite hearts, we await our Lord.

Pastor: Go forth and make preparations to receive the power of God.



*BENEDICTION RESPONSE

'Danish Amen'
A-men, a-men, a – men.

No. 898

*CLOSING HYMN

'Sing Out! We're Made of Common Dust' Carolyn Winfrey Gillette
(CANONBURY 8.8.8.8 ("Lord, Speak to Me, That I May Speak"))

***Sing out! We're made of common dust;
One day, to dust we shall return!
Yet, God, you've placed your mark on us
And so for you our spirits yearn.***

***This gift of ashes we receive
Reminds us we belong to you.
You call us to repent, believe,
and seek your Way in all we do.***

***The dust and dirt of children's play,
of youthful times, of working years
Are part of life — and life's decay;
We wash the dust with sorrow's tears.***

***We sing, O God, of what you give:
This ash reminds us we are yours.
In life we're claimed, in death we live!
In Christ our life, your love endures.***

*POSTLUDE

'Petition for Peace'

J. M. Stevens

WE TAKE THE LIGHT OF JESUS INTO THE WORLD

POWER OF PRAYER

SOUTH AVENUE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

All essential workers
Amy Mroz
Barbara – Dontae Pendelton's grandmother
Belinda & Doug Bishop
Bill Clor – friend of Shirley and Frank Oratto
Caleb Scott Ingram & family - Bob & Sharon Beattie's great nephew
Clarence Hoener, Jr.
Debbi Whitezell - niece of Mary Lou Whitezell
Deborah Webb
Delores and Michael Deaney – friends of the Church
Denise Hansen – Ruth Nelson's niece
Dontae – long term care and recovery
Dorothy Hawkins
Friends serving on front lines as first responders/medical professionals
Gary Tevis – friend of the Pischke family
Holly Davis
Israel and citizens of Gaza
Janette Nelson – Ruth Nelson's sister
Joanne and Marv Chidester
Josefina and Tom Morrissey – friends of Ruth Nelson
Mary Lou Whitezell
Nancy Hamilton
Our military and all people throughout the Middle East
Ruth Nelson
The Peace Makers
Ukraine: its people, animals and very earth, as well as those offering help & refuge
United Methodist Denomination
Vincent Mroz
Wilma Jones Cox
Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi
Nancy Shuluga
Pastor Russel Shuluga
Paul Ritchey, Pittsburgh District Superintendent
South Avenue UMC

POWER OF PRAYER

MIFFLIN AVENUE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Nancy Shuluga

Shuluga Family

Kathy (Carolyn's friend) - diagnosed with early dementia

Those affected by violence

Middle East conflict

Morris's children

Ginnie White - prayers for good health

Those who need prayers and don't ask for prayers

People who are traveling

Kathy (Carolyn's friend) - diagnosed with early dementia

Those affected by COVID, RSV and the FLU

Lainee Rivers (Kim's friend) – prayers needed

Dave McEchern (Kim's friend) – prayers needed

Kristina Terrell (Kim's friend) – prayers needed

Virginia Atkinson

Those affected by gun violence

President Carter—in hospice

Jim White (Ginnie's son) - recovery from rotator cuff surgery

Steven Akers—health concerns

Judy Spencer Baker - continued prayers

Aubrie (Ginnie's granddaughter) – diagnosed with breast cancer

Joe (Ginnie & Sue's cousin) - diagnosed with myeloma cancer

Gary (Ginnie's son) - continued good health

Rev. Russel W. Shuluga

Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi

Rev. Paul Ritchey— Pittsburgh/Greensburg DS

People of Ukraine

Mifflin Avenue United Methodist Church