



Bethlehem United Church of Christ

Ash Wednesday, 2024

Worship Leader: Randy Koppenhaver

Organist: Polly Jeanty

RINGING OF THE BELLS

WELCOME

PRELUDE

“Open our Eyes”

Polly Jeanty

GREETING AND INTRODUCTION

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

And on the whole world, peace!

L: Friends in Christ... Let us begin the journey, then, with Jesus, with each other, and with the whole church everywhere.

*HYMN #173 vs. 1-2 “Lord, Who Throughout these Forty Days”

READINGS AND RESPONSES – THE SIGNS OF THE ASHES

1. Ashes, a sign of creation

READING *Genesis 2:4b-9*

Silence

RESPONSE From *Psalms 8*

O Lord, our God, how majestic is your name in all the earth!
**When I look to the heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars you established—
what are human beings that you are mindful of us?
mortals that you care for us?**
Yet you have made us only a little less than divine
and crowned us with glory and honor.
O Lord, our God, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

2. Ashes, a sign of mortality

READING *Genesis 3:8-13, 17-19*

Silence

RESPONSE #433 vs 1 “I want Jesus to Walk with Me”

3. Ashes, a sign of repentance

READING *Isaiah 58:1-12*

Silence

RESPONSE From *Psalms 130*

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord
Lord hear my voice!
Be attentive to my supplication!
If you should count our sins against us, Lord, who could stand?
But with you is forgiveness, so that you may be revered.
I wait for the Lord, my soul waits for God,
more than those who watch for the morning,
more than those who watch for the dawn.
Hope in the Lord forever,
for with God is steadfast love and power to save.

4. Ashes in the sign of the Cross

READING *Matthew 16:21-26a*

Silence

RESPONSE #433 vs 2

“I want Jesus to Walk with Me”

The Ritual of Ashes

BLESSING OF THE ASHES

THE SIGN OF ASHES

Those wishing to receive the imposition of ashes, should move to the center aisle. After you have received the sign of the ashes, please return via the side aisles.

RESPONSE #433 vs 3

“I want Jesus to Walk with Me”

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of Life and Love,
you hate nothing that you have created.
You forgive the sins of all who turn to you in confession,
and so we pray together:

**Forgive the words we failed to speak and those we should not have spoken.
Forgive the good we failed to do and the evil we have done.
Forgive the love we have withheld and the grudges we have cherished.
Forgive what we have been, amend who we are,
and direct who you would have us be, through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.**

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Hear and believe the Good News: anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The old life is gone, the new life has come. Know that you are forgiven and so, in Christ, forgive one another. **Thanks be to God, Amen**

Holy Communion

(God’s table is open to ALL, regardless of affiliation or membership. Please hold the elements until all have been served and we will partake together. All bread is gluten free. The inner circles are grape juice, the outer rings are wine.)

*HYMN #524 vs. 1-2 "Let us Break Bread Together"

INVITATION

THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

And we remember that on the bleak night of betrayal, he gathered his friends. Even with his betrayer beside him, he was grateful to you for life and all the gifts of this earth. He blessed and broke the bread, and gave it to them, saying, **'This is my body, broken for you. Eat it and remember me.'**

And when supper was over,
he took a cup filled with wine, and blessed it.
He gave it to them saying,

**'Take this and drink it,
it is my life-blood poured out for you
so that sins may be forgiven.**

"When you do these things together, remember me."

PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Come Holy Spirit, bless these gifts that earth has given and human hands have made.

By our eating and drinking, fill us with the joy of Christ and keep us persevering in his way, honoring our bodies, serving our neighbor, and praising your name.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.

SHARING THE MEAL

RESPONSE #524 vs. 3 "Let us Break Bread Together"

*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Let us give thanks. **Thank you, God, for life in the Spirit of Jesus, for gladness in this bread and cup, for love that cannot die, for peace the world cannot give, for joy in the company of friends, for the splendors of creation, and for the mission of justice you have made our own. Give us the fruits of this holy communion: oneness of heart, love for neighbors, forgiveness of enemies, the will to serve you every day, and life that never ends. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.**

OFFERTORY

"Oh Lord, Your Tenderness"

PRAYER: **Generous God, we thank you for opening our hearts to those in need, for providing abundantly for our needs, and for using us to water your garden and as menders of brokenness. Amen.**

*HYMN #467 vs. 1-2 "Abide With Me"

Blessing, Sending, and Peace

BLESSING (Cf. Isaiah 61:1-4)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon you,... and heal the despair of many generations.

RESPONSE

**And I shall greatly rejoice in the Lord;
for God has clothed me in garments of salvation,
and covered me with a robe of righteousness!
As the earth brings forth its shoots,
so God will cause justice and praise
to spring up before all nations!**

PEACE

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord!
Thanks be to God!

POSTLUDE

"Create in Me a New Heart"

Service adapted from:

<https://sicutlocutusest.com/2013/02/12/order-of-service-for-ash-wednesday-including-holy-communion/>