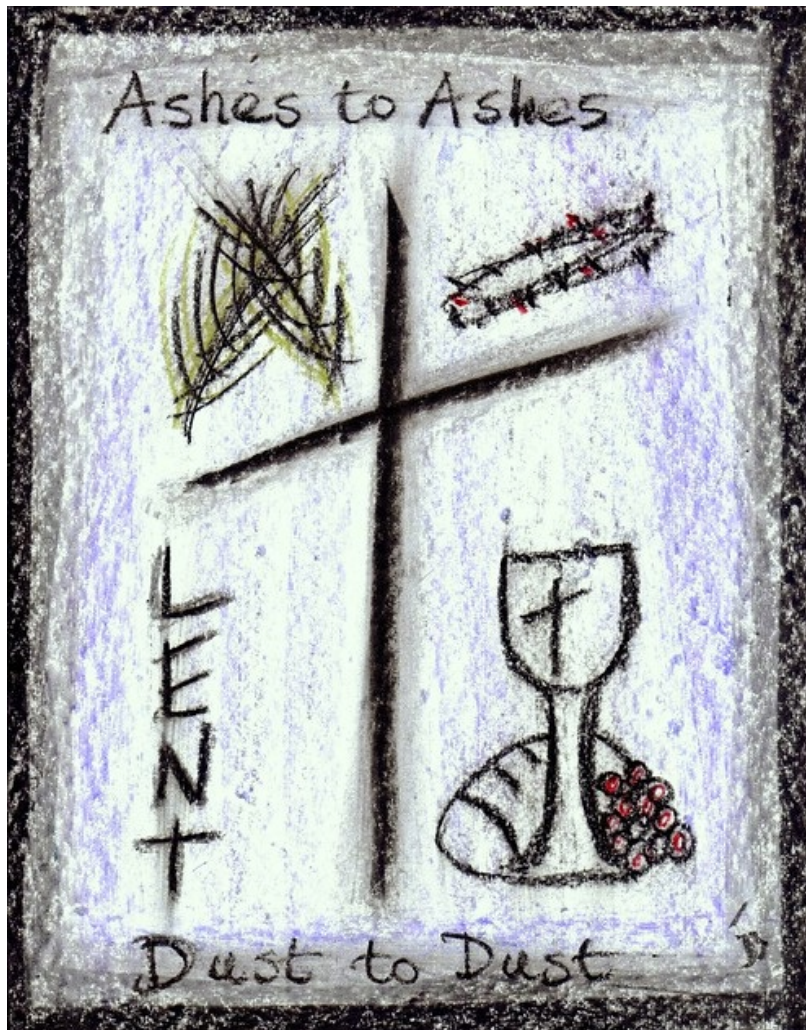


The United Church of Christ of Robesonia

301 West Penn Avenue, Robesonia, PA 19551

610-621-5770 -- office@sprucc.org -- www.sprucc.org

*No matter who you are,
or where you are on life's journey,
you're welcome here.*



*Welcome to our
6:30pm Worship Service
In-Person & Streaming Online*

+ † +

Wednesday, February 14, 2024
Ash Wednesday

Welcome

*May God's loving presence be very real to you,
and may you receive strength and guidance today
That will enable you to handle life's challenges.*



Children's Bulletins

Crayons and activity bulletins are available in the narthex.
The activities match today's Bible readings and are designed for 3-6 & 7-12 year olds.

Biblias en Español

Biblias Bilingües en Español y Inglés están disponible en el vestíbulo narthex en la mesa de visitantes azul.
(*Bilingual Bibles in Spanish & English are available in the narthex hallway on the blue visitors' table.*)

Nursery

Persons of all ages (including children) are welcome to participate in the entire worship service. For an additional option, we have a supervised nursery for 0-8 year olds, located on the first floor. Please see Nursery Coordinators, Laurie Ostimchuk, Beth Miller & Geri Gammel if you are in need of the nursery.

Junior Worship

On the 2nd and 3rd Sunday of the month, following the mini message, the option of "Junior Worship" is offered downstairs for elementary age children to learn more about today's scripture lessons with fellow youth.

Restrooms

Restrooms are located both on the first and second floors to the left of the elevator. The third toilet stall in each of our four restrooms has a high toilet and handrails.

Changing Tables

All four of our restrooms have changing tables. Each restroom has two "child care protection seats" to keep toddlers safe and secure while their parents use the restroom.

Water Fountains

Water fountains are located on both the first and second floors to the left of the elevator.

Sunday School & Adult Faith Formation Classes

Classes for all ages are held at 9:00am.

Sunday Worship

Sunday Worship is held at 10:15am.

Youth Group

Our Youth Group, for those in grades 5-12 (or ages 12-20 years old), meets on the 2nd and Last Thursday of the month from 6:00-7:00pm. Members and visitors alike are welcome.

Young Children & Family Ministries

This ministry's focus is on children younger than youth group and their families, and most of the monthly activities are welcoming of children of all ages. Members and visitors alike are welcome.

Prayer and Care

If you would like to add yourself or someone else to the prayer list, or request a pastoral call, please call or email the church office. You are welcome to take home with you a copy of *Our Daily Bread* daily devotional booklet, located on a table in the narthex hallway.

Looking for a Church to Call Home

If you are looking for a new church family home, we would be happy for you to consider United Church of Christ of Robesonia. For more information about our church, we invite you to talk with our pastors, an usher, a greeter, or any member of our church.

More Information....

Additional literature about our missions, ministries, and fellowship opportunities is located on the **Blue Visitor Table** in the narthex hallway, or contact us using the contact information on the front page of this bulletin.

Please let us know if we can be in prayer with you or if there is any way in which we can help make your worship experience more meaningful.

*{Symbols used in this bulletin: *= if able please stand; ♪# = Red Hymnal Page; ♪# = Blue Hymnal Page}*

Virtual Worship Service

Online: **Live Stream** at sprucc.org - Live or Watch & Listen Later on **Our YouTube Channel**
Facebook Live at <https://www.facebook.com/www.sprucc.org/> - Live or Watch & Listen Later
Phone Stream at 1-888-649-5770 - Live or Listen Later

If you have any access problems, please let us know at 610-621-5770 or Office@sprucc.org



www.sprucc.org



Free WiFi

ORDER FOR WORSHIP

We Gather

*We are coming together as a community of faith to worship our God,
and provide for one another our love, support, and care.*

A TIME OF GATHERING

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

*{If you have not already done so,
please sign and pass the pew welcome pad
to the person next to you.}*

MEDITATIVE PRAYER BEFORE WORSHIP[®] *(Individual Silent Prayer)*

Gracious and merciful God, we return to you with hearts that long for healing and minds that seek meaning for our days. Examine us and all our ways. Keep us from the self-delusions that overlook our sin and ignore our alienation. We tremble as we sense your presence. We are afraid to face your judgement. Yet we are eager to be reconciled to you. We want to know you more fully and serve you more faithfully. Come among us in convincing ways on this holy day and in this season. Amen.

PIANO PRELUDE

{Those who are able, please rise}

*PROCESSIONAL HYMN

"Savior When in Dust"

♪ *Red #219*
Public Domain

*INVOCATION

Leader: In the name of God the Father, and of God the Son, and of God the Holy Spirit.

All: **Amen**

*CALL TO WORSHIP^①

Leader: Let us look to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was waiting endured the cross.

People: **Jesus came to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the year of God's favor.**

We Repent

This is a time to confess our wrongdoings and neglects, ask for God's mercy, admit our need for God's forgiving grace, hear the assurance of our forgiveness, and then give God our thanks and praise.

*CALL TO CONFESSION ^② (Leader)

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are called to struggle against everything that leads us away from the love of God and neighbor. Repentance, fasting, prayer, study, and works of love help us return to that love. I invite you, therefore, to commit yourselves to love God and neighbor by confessing your sin and by asking God for strength to persevere in your Lenten discipline.

*CONFESSION OF SIN ^⑤ (Unison)

Leader: Let us pray....

People: Most holy and merciful God: We confess to you and to one another, and to the world communion of saints in heaven and on earth, that we have sinned by our own fault in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

Leader: We have not loved you with all our heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven.

People: Have mercy on us, O God.

Leader: We have been deaf to your call to serve as Christ served us. We have not been true to the mind of Christ. We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

People: Have mercy on us, O God.

Leader: We confess to you, O God, all our past unfaithfulness. The pride, hypocrisy, and impatience in our lives,

People: We confess to you, O God.

Leader: Our self-indulgent appetites and ways and our exploitation of other people,

People: We confess to you, O God.

Leader: Our anger at our own frustration and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves,

People: We confess to you, O God.

Leader: Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts and our dishonesty in our daily life and work,

People: We confess to you, O God.

Leader: Our negligence in prayer and worship and our failure to commend the faith that is in us,

People: We confess to you, O God.

Leader: Accept our repentance, O God, for the wrongs we have done. For our neglect of human need and suffering and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,

People: Accept our repentance, O God.

Leader: For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and for our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us,

People: Accept our repentance, O God.

Leader: For our waste and pollution of your creation and our lack of concern for those who come after us,

People: Accept our repentance, O God.

Leader: Restore us, O God, and let your anger depart from us.

People: Favorably hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.

ALL: Amen.

*SILENT PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

{A time to silently offer our personal prayers of confession}

*CONSECRATION OF THE ASHES ^① (Leader)

Holy and merciful God, we acknowledge you as our Creator. We live in the shadow of our mortality because of sin, but we long for immortality. Consecrate these ashes as a symbol of our origin, and consecrate your humble servants bowed before you in patience, that by the Grace of our Lord Jesus, we may walk in newness of life. **Amen.**

*IMPOSITION OF ASHES

{For those who wish to participate in the imposition of ashes, please come forward by coming down the center aisle, and after receiving ashes, re-enter the pew by side aisles.}

*{If you would like the ashes placed on your **forehead**, simply keep your hands to your side.*

*If you prefer to have the ashes placed on the **back of your hand**, rather than on your forehead, simply stretch out your hand when you approach the pastor.}*

{Please note that palm ashes are extremely acidic and may result in a rash for those with sensitive skin.

We do not recommend infants receiving ashes.}

*SUNG PRAYER FOR MERCY

“Kyrie”

♪ Red #518
Public Domain

Leader (*spoken*): Lord, have mercy upon us.
People (*sung*): Lord, have mercy upon us.
Leader (*spoken*): Christ, have mercy upon us.
People (*sung*): Christ, have mercy upon us.
Leader (*spoken*): Lord, have mercy upon us.
People (*sung*): Lord, have mercy upon us.

*ASSURANCE OF PARDON ^② (Leader)

Leader: Almighty God does not desire the death of sinners, but rather that they may turn from their wickedness and live. Therefore we implore God to grant us true repentance and the Holy Spirit that those things which we do this day may be pleasing to God, that the rest of our lives may be lived faithfully, and that at the last we may come to God's eternal joy; through Jesus the Christ.

ALL: Thanks be to God!

{please be seated}

We Hear the Word of God

We seek to learn more about God’s love and grace, and how we are to live our lives as disciples of Jesus Christ. The Bible is our primary text on faith, which we consider to be scripture - sacred writings. We believe the Bible to be the “inspired word of God.” Gospel (which means “Good News”) refers to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, which are Christians’ most central books of the Bible.

PROCLAMATION OF SCRIPTURE

Lesson [Isaiah 58:1-12](#)
Lesson [2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10](#)

Leader: This is the word of the Lord.
People: **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21](#)

Leader: This is the gospel of the Lord.
People: **Thanks be to God.**

MINI-MESSAGE

SERMON

We Respond with Thanks

We have heard God’s call and have come and worshiped, we have confessed our sins and been assured of our forgiveness, we have learned more about God’s grace and God’s will. We now respond by re-affirming our faith in God, praying with and for one another, trusting in God’s providence in our world, and giving of ourselves for the sake of the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ.

{Ushers, please assemble at rear of Sanctuary}

OFFERTORY INVITATION ^②

Leader: When you give, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.
People: **We give, not to be praised or thanked, but to praise God and proclaim the good news of salvation.**

RETURNING GOD’S TITHES AND PRESENTING OUR OFFERINGS

[Online Giving](#)

{Today, we will be passing the offering plate in person. You may also offer your tithe and offering to God through our secure [Online Giving](#) option on our website at sprucc.org ([Click Here](#)), or you may mail your offering to United Church of Christ of Robesonia; 301 West Penn Ave; Robesonia, PA 19551}.

CHORAL OFFERTORY

“If You But Trust in God to Guide You”

Lani Smith

{Those who are able, please rise}

***OFFERTORY RESPONSE**

“We Give Thee But Thine Own”

W&R #688

How/Foley; Public Domain

**We give Thee but Thine own, What-e’er the gift may be:
All that we have is Thine alone, A trust, O Lord, from Thee.**

***OFFERTORY PRAYER** ^② *(Leader)*

Loving God, in our relationship with you we have everything we need. We are rich, and have much to share. With joy and gladness, we dedicate our offerings to the work you call us to do. Lead us, by this investment of our money, to greater investment of our time and skills in the ways of heaven. May our love be genuine, our speech truthful, and our leadership patient and kind as we labor to bring others to your holy mountain. **Amen.**

Sacrament of Holy Communion ^{①④}

*The Sacrament of Holy Communion is the central act of Christian worship, bringing us more fully together with one another and the Triune God, through the sacrifice of the body and blood of Jesus Christ.
(Matthew 26:20-30, Mark 14:17-26, Luke 22:14-23, John 13:21-30)*

***INVITATION**

Leader: Dearly beloved in the Lord: Our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ instituted the Holy Communion of his Body and Blood, that it might be the abiding memorial of his atoning death; the seal of his perpetual presence in the Church through the Holy Spirit; the mystical representation of the sacrifice of himself on the cross; the pledge of his undying love for his people; and the bond of his living union and fellowship with them to the end of time.

ALL: **The celebration of the Lord’s Supper has ever been regarded by the Church as the innermost sanctuary of the whole Christian worship. What we do here is not merely with signs, but with the realities these signs represent. We seek to approach the Lord’s Table rightly, striving to be devout and repentant, with a believing mind.**

Leader: We cordially invite to partake of this Sacrament all who are truly grieved and penitent for their sins, who look to the Lord Jesus Christ for righteousness and salvation, who abide in the fellowship of his Church, and who desire to possess his Spirit and walk in his ways. To all such the compassionate Redeemer himself says: Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

***COMMUNION PRAYER**

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to the Lord.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Leader:

It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to you, O Holy Lord, Father Almighty, Everlasting God, who created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, who made humankind in your own image, and whose tender mercies are over all your works.

We bless you for the beauty and bounty of the earth and for the vision of the day when sharing by all will mean scarcity for none.

We remember the covenant you made with your people Israel, and we give you thanks for all our ancestors in faith. We rejoice that you call us to reconciliation with you and all people everywhere and that you remain faithful to your covenant even when we are faithless.

We rejoice that you call the entire human family to this table of sacrifice and victory. We come in remembrance and celebration of the gift of Jesus Christ, whom you sent, in the fullness of time, to be the good news. Born of Mary, our sister in faith, Christ lived among us to reveal the mystery of your Word, to suffer and die on the cross for us, to be raised from death on the third day, and then to live in glory.

We give thanks to you, gracious God, for the presence of your Holy Spirit in the church you have gathered. With your sons and daughters of faith in all places and times, we praise you with joy and sing....

***SANCTUS**

“Holy, Holy, Holy”

*Seraphic Hymn
One License #A-728042*

{Sanctus is Latin for “Holy.” Seraphic Hymn refers to the song of the Seraphim Angels. Sabaoth is a Hebrew name for God, referring to God as both creator and ruler of the world}.

**Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth;
Heaven and earth are full, are full of the majesty of thy glory,
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest!
Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord,
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest!**

{Please be seated}

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Leader:

Lord, we remember that on the night of betrayal and desertion, and on the eve of death, Jesus gathered the disciples for the feast of Passover. Jesus took bread, and after giving thanks to you, broke it, and gave it to the disciples, saying: "This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes again.

Leader: Therefore we proclaim the mystery of our faith.

**ALL: Christ has died,
Christ is risen,
Christ will come again.**

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

Ordained Minister:

Eternal God, we unite in this covenant of faith, recalling Christ's suffering and death, rejoicing in Christ's resurrection, and awaiting Christ's return in victory. We offer you these gifts of the earth and of our labor. We present to you our very lives, committed to your service in behalf of all people.

Consecrate, therefore, by your Holy Spirit, bless these gifts of bread and wine, both here within this sanctuary and within our homes, and bless us that as we receive them at this table, we may offer you our faith and praise, we may be united in communion with Christ and with one another, and we may continue faithful in all things.

ALL: Be present with us as we share this meal, and throughout all our lives, that we may know you as the Holy One, who with Christ and the Holy Spirit, lives for ever. Amen.

BREAKING BREAD AND RAISING CUP

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.**

LAMB OF GOD

Leader: Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:

People: have mercy on us.

Leader: Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:

People: have mercy on us.

Leader: Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:

People: grant us peace.

CALL TO THE SUPPER

Leader: The gifts of God for the people of God.
Come, for all things are ready.

SHARING THE ELEMENTS

{This evening we will be partaking of communion in the pews.

*The Elders will first distribute the bread,
Gluten free bread is in the **center**,
and **regular bread** is in the **outer ring**.
The Pastor will then instruct the congregation
to eat the bread at the same time.*

*The Elders will distribute the wine and grape juice.
The **wine is red** in the outer rings, and
the **grape juice is white** in the inner ring.
The Pastor will then instruct the congregation
to drink of the cup at the same time.}*

*- - -
{We invite all Christians who
profess a belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour
to participate in the sacrament of Holy Communion.
You do not need to be a member of this congregation
or of the UCC to participate in Communion.}*

*- - -
Youth & Children:
Children of Members who have not yet professed their Christian faith through the Rite of Confirmation
are to participate in communion and refresher classes prior to communing,
and follow the "Children & Communion Guide."*

Children of Visitors - if you commune at your home church, you are welcome to commune here.

*- - -
{Those who are able, please rise}*

*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Leader: Bountiful God, we give you thanks that you have refreshed us at your table by granting us the presence of Christ. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and send us forth into the world in courage and peace, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen.

We Are Sent Out

*In response to God's love and grace,
we go out into the world to share God's Good News
through our words and actions.*

*COMMISSION ²

Leader: Go forth in the steadfast love of God.
Spread the good news of salvation from sin.

**People: Our spirits have been fed in this time of worship.
Our lives have been cleansed by a merciful God.**

Leader: Share with others the joy of living in God's grace.
Let your fasting and sacrifices be a blessing to others.

**People: Our lips will declare God's praise.
Our secret alms will extend God's love.**

ALL: Amen.

*BENEDICTION

*THREE FOLD SUNG AMEN

♪ **Red #558**
Public Domain

*SENDING HYMN

"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"

♪ **Red #158**
One License #A-728042

*{Acolyte carries the light back into the world, leading us,
as we now go to carry God's light and love back into the world.}*

POSTLUDE

Free WiFi: StPaulsUCC-Guest & StPaulsUCC-5G-Guest
Password (for both): iamheretoserve



The Flow of the Worship Service

Our worship service has an intentional order to it. The flow of worship is called the liturgical movement. The movement reminds us weekly of our journey in faith of moving from being separated from God by sin, to being restored by God's grace as disciples of Christ. It is based on the sixth chapter of the Biblical book of Isaiah.

- (1) God welcomes us and invites us
- (2) We respond to God's call by worshipping Him
- (3) We confess our need for God's forgiveness and grace
- (4) We are assured of God's forgiveness and grace
- (5) We learn more about God's will through scripture, song, and sermon
- (6) We grow closer to God and one another through prayer
- (7) We give God thanks by offering our time, talent, and treasure
- (8) We experience greater oneness with God and each another through Communion
- (9) God sends us into the world to share His love and grace with others



Worship Service Resource Credits

Biblical quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible (1989) by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

- ① Reprinted with permission from *The New Century Hymnal* of the United Church of Christ. (1995). Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press. and/or the *Book of Worship* of the United Church of Christ (1986). New York: United Church of Christ Office for Church Life and Leadership.
 - ① United Church of Christ Neighbors in Need (NIN) 2023 Resources.
 - ② *Led By Love* by Lavon Baylor. (1996). United Church Press; Cleveland, OH.
 - ② *Occasional Services; A Companion to the Lutheran Book of Worship*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress. (1982).
 - ③ Reprinted with permission from *Sundays and Seasons*. (2023). Augsburg Fortress.
 - ④ Reprinted with permission from the *Order of Worship for the Reformed Church in the United States*. and/or *The Hymnal of the Evangelical and Reformed Church*. (1985) New York: United Church Press.
 - ⑤ Reprinted with permission from *Sourcebook of Worship Services*
 - ⑤ scouting.org - resources for Boy Scouts of America
 - ⑥ Reprinted with permission from *Worship Ways of the United Church of Christ*. (2013).
 - ⑦ *Sunday Sermons Preaching Resources*. (2017). Margate, NJ.
 - ⑦ Edmonds, Robert Lee (Editor). (2008). *In Our Own Way; Living a Scouting Life Through Faith; A Handbook of Prayer and Devotion*. Dallas, TX: Red Honor Press
 - ⑧ Reprinted with Permission from *Lecturn Resource*. 2014. Logos Productions, Inc., Inver Grove Heights, MN.
 - ⑨ Miller, Earl D. (1994). *Consecrating Stewards*. Ohio Conference, United Church of Christ.
 - ⑩ The Rev. Dr. Benjamin Motz
 - ⑩ The Rev. Mary Etta Mest
- One License is our Church Copyright License #A-728042,, which is a subscription service giving us copyright permission to print the words and music found in the bulletin and to live stream music on the internet during the Worship Service.
Cartoons are reprinted with permission from *JoyfulNoiseletter.com*. (2023).



Staff & Leadership

Pastor & Teacher: The Rev. Dr. Benjamin Motz - PastorMotz@sprucc.org - 610-621-5770 (O)

Pastor & Teacher: The Rev. Mary Etta Mest - mestme@aol.com - 610-659-2775 (C)

Music Minister: The Rev. Robert Masenheimer

Bell Choir Director: Miriam Borkert

Office Secretary: Geri Gammel - Office@sprucc.org - 610-621-5770 (O)

Sextons: Michael Pastor & Terry Pastor

Treasurer: Terry Pastor

Financial Secretary & Assistant Secretary: Geneva Aulenbach

Consistory President: George McLain

Consistory Vice President: Kirk Aulenbach

Consistory Secretary: Geri Gammel

About Today

Church Season: Epiphany - Lent - 40 days and six Sundays before Easter; a season of penitence as we reflect upon our personal sins, which led to the need for the sacrifice of Jesus' life for us upon the cross. The root word of "Lent" means "to lengthen", referring to the lengthening of days as we anticipate spring and the new life granted through the resurrection - moving from darkness to light.

Color of the Paraments (cloths on the altar and pulpit):

Purple - Symbolizing the passion (suffering) of Christ our King that led to his crucifixion.

The suggested scripture lessons are from the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), which selects passages throughout the Bible over a three year cycle. The RCL is the most common lectionary used by Christian churches. We are in **Year B**, which emphasizes the Gospel of Mark.

The Bible is in two sections: Old Testament - OT (scripture prior to Christ's birth), located in the first 2/3 of the Bible; and New Testament - NT (about Christ & early church).

Wednesday, February 14th - Lectionary Reading for Ash Wednesday

Joel 2:1-2,12-17 *or* Isaiah 58:1-12; Psalm 51:1-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Joel

This OT book is attributed to the prophet Joel. The name Joel means, "the Lord is my God." This book is believed to be written between 800-300 BC. The book begins with a swarm of locusts, but ends with the people worshipping and finding joy, after fasting and repenting.

Isaiah

The book of Isaiah (OT) is attributed to three prophets. The first of whom is from where the book gets its name, and is about Isaiah's call to become a prophet and his prophecy that Jerusalem will face God's judgement regarding its immorality in order to be God's Holy City (chaps. 1-39, written 738-688 B.C.), the second is about living in exile in Babylon (chaps. 40-55, written 597-539 B.C.), and the third is about the return from exile to Judah and the rebuilding of the Temple (chaps. 56-66, written 520-515 B.C.). A prophet is one who is divinely appointed by God to lead and instruct.

Psalm 51

This OT song was composed by King David when the prophet Nathan confronted him with his sin in Bathsheba. This is a prayer for help, offered by one who is deeply aware of their sin and guilt, knowing the need for God's forgiveness.

The Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians

This NT Epistle (letter) was written by the Apostle Paul between 50-56 A.D. to a gentile congregation he had founded several years earlier in Corinth (the capital city of the Roman province of Achaia, a large and prospering urban center that was ethnically, culturally, and religiously diverse). This letter is believed to be a compilation of fragments of multiple letters. This letter is in response to Titus' glowing reports and other negative reports Paul has received about this church. Paul was a Christian, Jew, Pharisee, Roman citizen, and church leader, who had a direct encounter with Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus after Jesus' ascension into heaven. Paul wrote more of the NT than any other person.

The Gospel According to Matthew

Matthew's Gospel was written around 80-90 A.D. in Antioch, Syria by a Greek-speaking Jewish Christian. The first writing was probably by a Christian scribe who wrote in the name of Matthew. Matthew was a disciple who knew Jesus personally.

Next Sunday, February 18, 2024, Lectionary Reading for the First Sunday in Lent

Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15

Why Ashes on Ash Wednesday

by Pastor Ben Motz

The putting on of ashes as a part of Ash Wednesday began in Germany in the 9th century. The use of ashes then became widely used in the 10th century. The ashes were from burning the palms from the previous Palm Sunday. Ashes were originally sprinkled over the head, rather than making a sign of the cross.

There were two primary reasons for using ashes on Ash Wednesday. The first is that Ash Wednesday is the beginning of 40 days of fasting during Lent. These 40 days end on Easter. The 40 days do not include Sundays, which are considered to be breaks in the fast. These 40 days are based on Jesus being tempted by the devil in the wilderness for 40 days before beginning his ministry (*Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, & Luke 4:1-12*). The story of his temptation is generally read on the First Sunday of Lent.

The second reason is that of the symbolism of Adam and Eve being kicked out of the Garden of Eden when they sinned (*Genesis 3*). After which, they became mortal and now would die and become dust, just as we will become dust. As the palm branches become dust, so too will we. As Paul writes, Jesus is the second Adam who returns us to immortality through his death on the cross to atone for our sins. The use of ashes is therefore a form of public penance - publicly showing that we acknowledge that we are sinful people in need of forgiveness through divine intervention. Fasting is an aspect of this penance, and continues throughout the 40 days of Lent. Penance itself continues until Maundy Thursday (the Thursday before Easter), when Jesus was crucified, taking upon himself our sin.

The use of ashes in our Judeo/Christian faith is much older than the 9th Century. The use of ashes dates all the way back to Old Testament times. One example is that from the book of *Isaiah 58:1-12*, which is another common Ash Wednesday scripture reading. In this passage, to show their repentance, people are wearing sackcloths and ashes. A sackcloth would be like wearing a burlap sack.

We also learn from Isaiah that fasting and wearing of ashes should not be just religious symbolism. It needs to also include the humbling yourself and doing more to serve others, such as feeding the hungry, releasing captives, giving shelter and clothing to the poor, and working towards justice & peace. It is better not to do it all, than it is to do it just as a religious ritual. Jesus also tells us in *Matthew 6:1-21* that if our ashes and fasting is just about religious ritual and piety we should not be doing it at all, which is how the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur has become corrupted in that passage. Biblically, when fasting you are to give the food that you would normally eat to the poor, or give the money you would normally spend on that food in some way to serve God more fully by more fully serving your fellow humankind, in some way that gives God glory. One such way that the members of UCC churches do this is through the special One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering envelopes during Lent which is used by the UCC to provide disaster relief aid around the world.

In the Old Testament, ashes are used primarily for two purposes: purification and penitence. An example of purification can be seen in the book of *Numbers*, where Moses tells the Israelites to use the ashes of a sacrificed heifer to designate a place for purification - to make that place holy for God. An example of penitence, can be seen in the book of *Jonah*, where the king of Nineveh took off his robe and put on a sackcloth and sat in ashes to demonstrate his repentance to God. Upon seeing the outward and inward repentance of their king, God spared the people of Nineveh from wrath.

Ashes continue to be used for both purposes today. In the Roman rite, when consecrating a new church, water, salt, wine, and ashes are mixed together and the sprinkled on the altar and walls of the building at various places to purify it and prepare for the consecration rite. In the 4th century ashes and sackcloth with ashes on it began to be commonly used by the church to show public discipline of a particular individual. During the 10th and 11th centuries such public discipline became obsolete, and it is during that time that Ash Wednesday became popular as a form of modified public discipline.

The ashes are meant to publicly show that you see yourself as a sinner in need of repentance. As part of that the person giving the ashes, which is generally a pastor or priest, is to verbally abase you with scripture to remind you that you are but a humble, mortal sinner. The most common scripture used for this is *Genesis 3:19*, "*Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return*," which is the scripture generally used here at UCC of Robesonia.

The use of ashes has come and gone over the years. During the 1500s most churches stopped using ashes. During the mid 1600s churches began using them again. In the 1970s it began to become more popular again in the U.S. and has been growing in use in the U.S. and in Europe again.

Most Protestant churches incorporate the ashes during the confession before the sermon to liturgically link it with penitence, which is the way it was originally done in Germany in 9th century. During the 1600s most Roman Catholic churches began having ashes at end of worship, so that it would be after the sermon and communion. The two primary reasons being were: one, it had not been used for a period of time and it was easier to add it to the end of the service than to change the liturgy to incorporate it within the service; and two, to liturgically link the use of ashes with fasting, so that you do not eat communion after the fast has begun.

Should I receive ashes?

You are certainly welcome to receive ashes here. You do not need to be a member of UCC of Robesonia or a member of the United Church of Christ to receive ashes – all are welcome to receive the ashes. However, prayerfully ask yourself: What do the ashes mean to me? How will I use them?

If the ashes are for you a public sign that you see yourself as a humble sinner in need of discipline and forgiveness; that you need to be rebuked; that you need to be humble; that you need the sacrifice of Christ; that you are unworthy of that sacrifice; and that you intend to give even more of yourself to God during the next 40 days - then the wearing of ashes may be one way in which that can be demonstrated.

If you are wearing the ashes because it is a religious ritual; or so you can tell some relative or friend that you got your ashes and communion; or to show off your Christian faith and piety to others; or you are not planning to give more of yourself to God and in service to others during this Lenten season - then as Jesus instructs, you should probably keep yourself clean of ashes.

**Remember
you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.**

219

The Christian Life

ROBERT GRANT, 1815

7. 7. 7. 7. D.

SPANISH HYMN
Arr. BENJAMIN CARR, 1826*Not too fast*

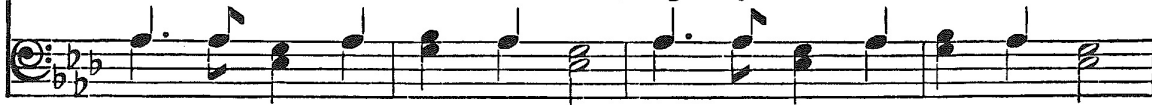
1. Sav - iour, when in dust to Thee Low we bow the a - dor - ing knee;
2. By Thy help - less in - fant years; By Thy life of want and tears;
3. By Thine hour of dire de - spair; By Thine ag - o - ny of prayer;
4. By Thy deep ex - pir - ing groan; By the sad se - pul - chral stone;



When, re - pent - ant, to the skies Scarce we lift our weep - ing eyes;
 By Thy days of sore dis - tress In the sav - age wil - der - ness;
 By the cross, the nail, the thorn, Pier - ing spear, and tor - turing scorn;
 By the vault, whose dark a - bode Held in vain the ris - ing God;



O by all Thy pains and woe Suf - fered once for man be - low,
 By the dread mys - te - rious hour Of the in - sult - ing tempt - er's power;
 By the gloom that veiled the skies O'er the dread - ful sac - ri - fice;
 O from earth to heaven re - stored, Might - y, re - as - cend - ed Lord,



Bend - ing from Thy throne on high, Hear our sol - emn lit - a - ny.
 Turn, O turn a favor - ing eye; Hear our sol - emn lit - a - ny.
 Lis - ten to our hum - ble cry; Hear our sol - emn lit - a - ny.
 Lis - ten, lis - ten to the cry Of our sol - emn lit - a - ny. A - MEN.



Alternative tune, Aberystwyth.

327 The Old Rugged Cross

He humbled Himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross. Philippians 2:8

B \flat B \flat ^o B \flat E \flat E \flat ^o E \flat C F7 B \flat / \bar{F}

1. On a hill far a - way stood an old rug-ged cross, The em-blem of
 2. O the old rug-ged cross, so de - spised by the world, Has a won-drous at-
 3. In the old rug-ged cross, stained with blood so di - vine, A won - drous

F7 B \flat B \flat ^o B \flat E \flat E \flat ^o E \flat

4. To the old rug-ged cross I will ev - er be true; Its shame and re-
 suf - f'ring and shame; And I love that old cross, where the dear - est and best
 trac - tion for me; For the dear Lamb of God left His glo - ry - a - bove
 beau - ty I see; For 'twas on that old cross Je - sus suf - fered and died
 proach glad - ly bear. Then He'll call me some-day to my home far a - way,

C F7 F9 B \flat / \bar{F} F7 B \flat Refrain F B \flat / \bar{F} F7

7. For a world of lost sin - ners was slain.
 To bear it to dark Cal - va - ry. So I'll cher - ish the old rug-ged
 To par - don and sanc - ti - fy me. cross, the
 Where His glo - ry for - ev - er I'll share.

B \flat B \flat ^o E \flat / \bar{B} B \flat B \flat D E \flat E \flat ^{#4} E \flat B \flat

10. cross,
 old rug-ged cross,
 11. Till my tro-phies at last I lay down. I will cling to the
 12. I will cling to the
 13. I will cling to the

B \flat $\frac{B\flat}{B\flat}$ B \flat E \flat $\frac{B\flat}{F}$ F 7 B \flat 7

old rug - ged cross, And ex - change it some - day for a crown.
cross, the old rug - ged cross,

14 15 16

TEXT: George Bennard
MUSIC: George Bennard

OLD RUGGED CROSS
Irregular meter

158

ISAAC WATTS, 1707
In moderate time

L. M.

HAMBURG
LOWELL MASON, 1825

1. When I sur - vey the won - drous cross On which the
2. For - bid it, Lord, that I should boast, Save in the
3. See, from His head, His hands, His feet, Sor - row and
4. Were the whole realm of na - ture mine, That were a

Prince of Glo - ry died, My rich - est gain I
death of Christ my God; All the vain things that
love flow min - gled down: Did e'er such love and
pres - ent far too small; Love so a - maz - ing,

count but loss, And pour con - tempt on all my pride.
charm me most, I sac - ri - fice them to His blood.
sor - row meet, Or thorns com - pose so rich a crown?
so di - vine, De - mands my soul, my life, my all. A-MEN.

Alternative tune, *Rockingham Old*.