**Ash Wednesday February 17, 2021**

**Welcome**

*(from The United Methodist Book of Worship)—Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. Lent comes from the Anglo-Saxon word lencten, which means “spring.” The season is a preparation for celebrating Easter. Historically, Lent began as a period of fasting and preparation for baptism by converts and then became a time for penance by all Christians. The First Sunday describes Jesus’ temptation by Satan; and the Sixth Sunday (Passion Palm Sunday), Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem and His subsequent passion and death. Because Sundays are always little Easters, the penitential spirit of Lent should be tempered with joyful expectation of the Resurrection.*

 **Opening Hymn** *“Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days”*

Lord, who throughout these forty days for us did fast and pray,

teach us with Thee to mourn our sins and close by Thee to stay.

As Thou didst hunger, bear, and thirst, so teach us gracious Lord,

to die to self, and chiefly live by Thy most holy Word.

**Call to Confession** *Joel 2:12-17*

Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your hearts, with fasting, with weeping, and with sorrow; tear your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord your God, for he is merciful and compassionate, very patient, full of faithful love, and ready to forgive. Who knows whether he will have a change of heart and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord your God?

Blow the horn in Zion; demand a fast; request a special assembly. Gather the people;

prepare a holy meeting; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants.

Let the groom leave his room and the bride her chamber. Between the porch and the altar let the priests,

the Lord’s ministers, weep. Let them say, “Have mercy, Lord, on your people,

and don’t make your inheritance a disgrace, an example of failure among the nations.

Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’”

**Prayer of Confession**

**All-knowing God, we confess to You what we know of ourselves, that we are not the people**

**we want others to think we are. We are afraid to admit, even to ourselves,**

**what lies in the depths of our souls. But we cannot hide our true selves from You.**

**You know us as we are, and yet You still love us. Give us the courage to admit our failures**

**and limitations and, in doing so, place our trust in You. Raise us out of the paralysis of guilt**

**into the freedom and energy of forgiven people. And for us who find Your grace**

**and forgiveness hard to accept, we ask that You break our bondage and set us free;**

**through Jesus Christ our Savior and Redeemer. Amen.**

**Hymn** *“When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”*

When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died,

my richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.

See from His head, His hands, His feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down.

Did e’er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown?

**Declaration of Pardon** *2 Corinthians 5:17-21*

So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is part of the new creation. The old things have gone away,

and look, new things have arrived! All of these new things are from God, who reconciled us to himself

through Christ and who gave us the ministry of reconciliation. In other words,

God was reconciling the world to himself through Christ, by not counting people’s sins against them.

He has trusted us with this message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors who represent Christ.

God is negotiating with you through us. We beg you as Christ’s representatives, “Be reconciled to God!”

God caused the one who didn’t know sin to be sin for our sake

so that through him we could become the righteousness of God.

 **Hymn** *“When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”*

Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an tribute far too small;

love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

**Hearing God’s Word** *Genesis 3:1-19*

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”

**2**The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, **3**but God did say,

‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it,

or you will die.’” **4**“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman.

**5**“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,

knowing good and evil.” **6**When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food

and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.

She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. **7**Then the eyes of both of them

were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. **8**Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking

in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

**9**But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?” **10**He answered, “I heard you in the garden,

and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” **11**And He said, “Who told you that you were naked?

Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” **12**The man said,

“The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

**13**Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said,

“The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” **14**So the Lord God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals!
You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.

**15**And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” **16**To the woman he said, “I will make your pains

in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children.

Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”

**17**To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree

about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it,’ “Cursed is the ground because of you;

through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. **18**It will produce thorns and thistles

for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. **19**By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food

until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

**Meditation** *“Dust to Dust”*

 ***Amazing Grace……***

 **Closing Hymn** *“Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days”*

Lord, who throughout these forty days for us did fast and pray,

teach us with Thee to mourn our sins and close by Thee to stay.

And through these days of penitence, and through Thy passion tide,

yea, evermore in life and death, Jesus with us abide.

Abide with us, that so, this life of suffering over past,

an Easter of unending joy we may attain at last.

 **Sending Out**

*We welcome you to tonight’s Ash Wednesday service and pray that your time here tonight will bless you as you begin this season of Lent in preparation to celebrate Christ’s resurrection at Easter. In addition to personal time of study, prayer, and devotion, you are encouraged to join together for a time of Lenten Reflection at 7 PM each Wednesday during Lent via Zoom.*