
St. James'-Rosemount United Church

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God's Compassionate Community Sharing Christian Faith



February 17th – Ash Wednesday
Worship Leader: Rev. Chris Fickling

Welcome!

Welcome to worship! We're glad you're here!

WE GATHER IN GOD'S HOPE

VU: Voices United

MV: More Voices

* Please remain seated for all of service.*

We would like to acknowledge that we are on the Haldimand Tract, traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishnaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples.

Introduction

One: For believers and many non-believers, Lent is an invitation to confront our own weaknesses, our own shortcomings, for getting rid of the ways of life that are between us and the person we ought to be, or that we want to be. It is a time to look inward, but also outward, towards works of service, works of love for others.

On Ash Wednesday, we display the twin symbols — dust and the sign of the cross. Dust is not only from the Book of Genesis: "We are dust and to dust we shall return." Dust is a sign of indifference. We are blind to the dust all around us. Even when we're stuck indoors like this pandemic, it is very easy to ignore the dust that has been settling around us. And yet it reminds us on Ash Wednesday that we are responsible for the dust, we're responsible for those lives all around us, we're responsible for one another. We're responsible for showing love.

The dust coupled with the sign of the cross reminds us that even though life is fleeting, even though we pray our troubles are fleeting, Jesus and the cross reminds us that nothing can destroy life. For the presence of God lifts us above the worries of this world.

Welcome

One: Welcome to Ash Wednesday service as together we gather in this very holy time to mark our journey into

Lent. As we begin, you may want to have a few things: paper, a candle, some oil, (water), ashes if you have them, but I want you to participate in whatever ways that are holy to you. If all you can find is a washable marker, that's perfect. You can make a cross on your hand or forehead and it washes off when you need it to (with soap!) If you have some palm branches you can have them ready and burn them in advance...

it's a very holy thing to remember how long a year is. Some of these palm branches are from just last year, and you can think about how the world has changed in a year. Last year, at this time, there was very little talk of covid and that cough going around. Last year, by this time, we were putting in orders and thinking about Easter celebrations, we were doing an Ash Wednesday Service in the parlour at the church and everything was good. And now? It's a little bit more difficult.

In the ashes of everything that's come to pass in this last year, in the ways that our lives have been profoundly changed, in the deaths of our friends, and family, in these ashes of all that ways, we pray to God: God keep us safe. Remind us that the year lay before, and whatever bad things happen, whatever worrisome happens, Easter always follows. Easter always comes. So as we move through service, you're invited to participate in whatever ways that you can. As we open our service today, let us pray.

Opening Prayer

One: We're ready this year, God.

This life of dust is already dry and
thoroughly scattered,
our hearts already rent and humbled.

Spare us the rituals,
the soul-startling trumpets and the stern finger;
only draw near in mercy and love these ashes.

Show us how to love the ashes too,
confident that the ember from which they

were shed still burns bright,
still glows with holy fire, still throws off sparks
onto the dust until even these mere ashes
blaze anew. Amen

WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD

Hymn

Within Our Darkest Night
*Within our darkest night,
You kindle a fire that never dies away,
never dies away.*

Taizé

Psalm 51 *adapted by James Taylor*

Take pity on me God, as a God of love and of mercy,
show mercy to *me*. For I have disgraced myself, and you.

The stink of my sinning clings to my skin
like the spray of a skunk; I cannot wash it off.

I know too well what I have done; my past hangs over my
future like a dark cloud.

I took my chances, and cut my corners.

I cared only what other people thought of me.

Now I see that each time I hurt another person,
I hurt you. You have every right to condemn me.

But what else can you expect from me?

I was conceived in a human womb, born to a human mother,
brought up in a human society.

But you expect me to be holy like you, through and through.

Teach me, then!

Scrape the crusted barnacles from my brain, and fill it
with fresh concepts; wipe my slate clean,
and give me new chalk to start again.

If you must turn away from me, turn away from my bad side.

Close your eyes to my many weaknesses.

Give me a second chance, Lord; start me over again,
with a transplant of your holiness.

Hymn

Lord, Prepare Me
*Lord, prepare me
to be a sanctuary,
pure and holy
tried and true;
with thanksgiving,*

MV18

***I'll be a living
sanctuary for you.***

Writing our Prayers/Making our Ashes

Take some time to write down a prayer on a piece of paper that you feel comfortable burning. This step can be omitted if it's not safe to burn the paper where you are (making sure for proper ventilation and safety). This prayer would be what we want help with in this our Ash Wednesday journey.

Some of us might be praying for more faith in this time, to carry us until we can all meet again, all of our prayers are different and unique.

We burn our prayers knowing that in the ashes of all that is, God can bring about new life. Some prayers we've carried for a long time. Sometimes it's like the last year, the journey has been incredibly difficult, so letting go can be a hard, difficult thing.

Imposition of Ashes

(And so when all your prayers are burnt) You can take your marker, or your burnt prayers, or palm branches (or a burnt stick/charcoal) and mix it with a bit of oil. Oil is something we use in baptism it reminds us of the mark of God, the love of God that isn't washed away. It doesn't disappear because of covid. Or because of troubles. Or because of worries we've carried. That mark that is on our heart, and on our head is with us always. God's love and God's light is with us forevermore.

We draw a cross to remind us that our journeys are shared with Jesus. He had bad days and bad years too.

As you mark your cross, hear these words:

You are a child of God, your love, your prayers, your journey is sacred to the divine. You are dust and to dust you shall return, but this life and this love will carry you forevermore.

Music

Beautiful Things

Gungor

All this pain

I wonder if I'll ever find my way

I wonder if my life could really change, at all

*All this earth
Could all that is lost ever be found?
Could a garden come out from this ground, at all?
You make beautiful things
You make beautiful things out of the dust
You make beautiful things
You make beautiful things out of us
All around,
Hope is springing up from this old ground
Out of chaos life is being found, in you
You make beautiful things
You make beautiful things out of the dust
You make beautiful things
You make beautiful things out of us
Oh, you make beautiful things
You make beautiful things out of the dust
You make beautiful things
You make beautiful things out of us
You make me new,
You are making me new
You make me new,
You are making me new
(Making me new)*

Closing Prayer

Truly dust we are, and to dust we shall return;
and truly yours we are, and to you we shall return.
Help this to be a time of turning round and beginning again.
Through the forty days of Lent, help us to follow you
and to find you: in the discipline of praying
and in the drudgery of caring –
in whatever we deny ourselves,
and whatever we set ourselves to learn or do.
Help us to discover you
in our loneliness and in community,
in our emptiness and our fulfilment,
in our sadness and our laughter.
Help us to find you when we ourselves are lost.
Help us to follow you on the journey to Jerusalem
to the waving palms of the people's hope,
to their rejection, to the cross and empty tomb.

Help us to perceive new growth amid the ashes of the old.
Help us, carrying your cross, to be signs of your
Kingdom. Amen.