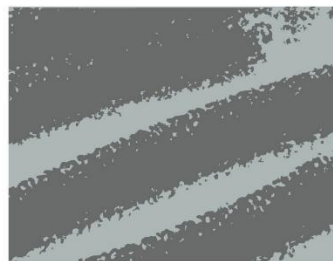


Welcome to
St. Paul's United Church of Christ

An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ

March 5, 2025



ASH
WEDNESDAY

GOD IS STILL SPEAKING



*NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE, OR WHERE YOU ARE ON
LIFE'S JOURNEY YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!*

Worship Leadership

Preacher: The Rev. John J. Ward-Diorio
The Rev. Allyssa A. Boyer

Ministry of Music

Minister of Music: Eric R. Dundore
Assistant Music Director: Mark A. Dundore
Organist: Sarah A. Myers
Assistant Organist: Patrice G. Miller

Ministry of Audio and Video

Jeffrey A. Dundore

Pastor Emeritus

The Rev. Dr. Thomas E. Herrold

Ministers

The Entire Congregation

*Visit the church website, under the 'Sign Up' menu heading,
to help as a Sunday volunteer or Worship Participant.
We're grateful for your generosity.*

ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

626 Williams Grove Road
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055
(717)766-7931

saintpaulsucc-mech.org

Office: stpaulstaff@outlook.com

Rev. John: revjohnwd@outlook.com

Rev. Allyssa: allyssaboyer@outlook.com



ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
SERVICE OF WORSHIP

ASH WEDNESDAY

7:30PM March 5, 2025

Please note: the livestream broadcast begins with the announcements. If you do not wish to appear in the livestream, it is best to sit in one of the back three pews of the sanctuary.

**Those who are comfortable doing so are invited to stand.*

THE RINGING OF THE CHIMES

THE WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE ORGAN PRELUDE "Just As I Am"

Tom Birchwood

CALL TO WORSHIP (responsive)

One: Friends and neighbors, in the middle of our busy week, we pause to observe Ash Wednesday together as a faith community.

All: We come to remember that God made us from fragile, blessed dust and breathes through us the breath of life and love.

One: From dust we are created in God's image, and to God's good dust we shall return.

All: With dust and oil we claim the mark of God's beloved creatures.

One: On this night we begin our 40-day Lenten journey to again seek to discover who we are created to be as God's Beloved.

All: In daily practices of prayer and service we will embark upon this Lenten journey. We follow Jesus, God's Beloved Child, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, in whom we see God's image most clearly.

One: So come, let us pray for strength and imagination to follow Jesus wherever he will lead us this Lent.

*THE HYMN No. 211 "Lord Jesus, Who through Forty Days"

*PRAYER OF INVOCATION & CONFESSION (responsive)

One: Glorious God, Your thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are Your ways our ways. You look at the ugliest soul and see, still unstirred, the wings of an angel.

All: We scan the finest of our neighbors, anxious to find the flaw.

One: You view time in the context of eternity, and so find a place for waiting, for yearning, even for suffering, even for dying.

All: We demand instant results, and look for tomorrow before savoring today.

One: You know that only one who suffers can ultimately save, that is why You walk the way of the cross.

All: We fear that vulnerability which defies our power; and so we cry for crucifixion.

One: Your thoughts are not our thoughts, O God,

All: Neither are your ways our ways.

One: And yet we know Your Way is life lived in community with all, while, left to our own devices, we focus solely on ourselves. But we are here, not to have our worst confirmed, but to have our best liberated.

All: So we pray: Forgive us in what has gone wrong, repair in us what is wasted, reveal in us what is good.

One: And nourish us with better food than we could ever purchase: Your word, Your love, Your inspiration, Your daily bread for our life's journey, in the company of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE (Responsive):

One: As we lay down what is past, we sense God's forgiveness; a forgiveness that is always there and there for all people.

**ALL: We lay down what is past and look to the future.
We take into our daily life signs of hope and healing.
We reach beyond ourselves and seek connection.
We seek to share our lives with others;
touching and reshaping the wider world so it more reflects God's Dream. Amen.**

If you are able, please rise and greet one another with signs of Peace.

*THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

ANTHEM "Touch Me With Ashes"

Nordmeyer

Chancel Choir

THE RESPONSE:

One: God is Still Speaking.

All: Thanks be to God!

THE HEBREW SCRIPTURE READING

Isaiah 58:1-14

THE GOSPEL READING

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

THE MEDITATION

*THE HYMN No. 207 "Just as I Am"

THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES & THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

BLESSING THE ASHES (Unison)

May these ashes be blessed. May they be for us a symbol of our return to the earth. May we be blessed. May we be grounded in Your everlasting love, as forgiven and forgiving people. Amen.

THE INVITATION

THE COMMUNION PRAYER (Responsive)

One: God be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Gracious God, we praise You and give You thanks.

All: It is good and right to give God our thanks and praise.

One: For the love we name Creative God, and all that is. For the one we name Jesus, and his message of peace, justice, and inclusiveness that is the Realm of God. For the renewing strength and freedom of the Spirit, always present in the breath of life;

All: We give thanks for God's presence in the midst of life.

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE 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.

THE CELEBRATION

We remember the stories...

How Jesus gathered with friends and foes to tell them of a re-imagined way of living and being.

A way that did not conform to the standards of the Roman Empire or any other system of governance that suppressed people until starvation and deprivation resulted in death.

In this way, the issues of life and death, justice and injustice, conflict and peace, goodness and evil were talked through and made real to ordinary people.

So in our time and in this place, with today's issues before us, let us continue the tradition: to break bread together.

We remember what that tradition says... At the end of a journey, among friends, gathered round a table...

Jesus took bread, gave thanks, and broke it: 'This bread is broken, as my body will be.'

And he handed it to his friends, and invited them to eat:

'Remember all that I have been to you.'

We remember...

We recall how Jesus poured a cup of wine, offered thanks for it, and gave it to his friends:

'This wine is poured out as my life will be. As you drink, give thanks for all I have given.'

We give thanks...

Bread...the very stuff of life, in which is gathered up

warm sun, rich earth, gentle rain, human labor and knowledge and skill.

Wine...fruit of the vine, nurtured, tended, harvested, and pressed out for us to drink.

Real food and drink, reminding us we are asked to offer, to give our real lives.

These are the gifts of God;
they are for the people of God.
Come, for all is ready.

THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES & THE DISTRIBUTION OF ELEMENTS

All who wish to receive ashes and Holy Communion will be invited to come forward by an usher. Please use the side aisles to come forward. The pastors will make the sign of the cross with ashes on your forehead or the back of your hand.

Once you have received ashes, proceed to the center, in front of the chancel, to receive a piece of bread, which may then be dipped into the chalice of red wine or white grape juice. After receiving the elements, please return to your seat using the center aisle.

For those who wish to remain seated, an usher will bring a tray of Holy Communion elements to you. If you would like to receive ashes, please let the usher know, and they will inform one of the pastors who will then bring ashes to you.

For those participating online, if you have something that is symbolic of ash, we invite you to make a sign of the cross on your forehead or the back of your hand, saying these words: "Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return." We invite you to place some bread and wine or juice before you and share in Holy Communion. We trust that God will extend God's blessings upon your ashes and Holy Communion elements regardless of where you are.

THE PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING (Unison)

Gracious God, we thank You for Your Presence within us. Your Spirit is a source of healing, wisdom, and inspiration. During our Lenten journey, we pray Your Spirit may strengthen us when we feel weak, warm us when we are cold-hearted, bend us when we are stubborn, move us when we are uncaring, and guide us in the way of love. May Your Spirit shine in all we do. Amen.

*HYMN "Ash Wednesday Comes" (to the tune of no. 300, "Jesus Shall Reign")

***Ash Wednesday comes, and Lord, we hear
The word for which our spirits yearn;
Amid this world's distress and fear,
We hear your loving call: "Return!"***

***"Return to me with all your heart"
With fasting, weeping, mourning, too.
O God, we seek a brand new start,
A new beginning here with you.***

***You call to us — the old, the young;
You summon nations strong and weak.
When we have drifted toward the wrong,
You call us back, your way to seek.***

***O God most merciful and kind,
Your love is not a prize we earn;***

***Yet in our life with you we find
The joy that comes when we return.***

Text: Copyright © 2011 by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. All rights reserved.

“Blessing the Dust” by Jan Richardson

All those days
you felt like dust,
like dirt,
as if all you had to do
was turn your face
toward the wind
and be scattered
to the four corners

or swept away
by the smallest breath
as insubstantial—

did you not know
what the Holy One
can do with dust?

This is the day
we freely say
we are scorched.

This is the hour
we are marked
by what has made it
through the burning.

This is the moment
we ask for the blessing
that lives within

***THE BENEDICTION**

Blessings, like God’s love, are not one-way experiences. As you have been blessed with the mark of God’s love, you are now called to go out from this place and bless others. May the God who created you, create opportunities for serving others. May the Christ who teaches you, teach you during Lent how to love all. And may the Spirit of Gentleness be your companion along this Lenten journey. Amen.

The livestream ends after the Postlude. You’re welcome to converse in the Narthex after the Three-fold Amen. However, if you choose to stay for the Postlude, please remain silent until the conclusion.

the ancient ashes,
that makes its home
inside the soil of
this sacred earth.

So let us be marked
not for sorrow.
And let us be marked
not for shame.
Let us be marked
not for false humility
or for thinking
we are less
than we are

but for claiming
what God can do
within the dust,
within the dirt,
within the stuff
of which the world
is made
and the stars that blaze
in our bones
and the galaxies that spiral
inside the smudge
we bear.

References:

Iona Community Wild Goose Worship Group, *Stages on the Way: Worship Resources for Lent, Holy Week, and Easter*, 2000, GIA Publications.

Withrow, L., *Seasons of Prayer: Resources for Worship*, 1995, G.B: London. SPCK.

Jones, Robert, “Holy Communion Liturgy,” Literacy & Liturgy Seminar, Westar Institute.

Richardson, Jan, “Blessing the Dust,” pp. 89-90, *Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons*, 2015, Wanton Gospeller Press. Copyright Jan Richardson, janrichardson.com

Van de Laar, John, “The Wisdom of Ash,” 2010, posted on sacredise.com. Copyright John van de Laar.

The Wisdom of Ash by John van de Laar

There is a wisdom in ash,
that we need so much,
but seldom hear.

It's the wisdom of grief,
that reminds us of our mortality,
and that Life is more than this dust can
contain.

It's the wisdom of confession,
that brings our darkness out of hiding,

and opens the windows to Light.

It's the wisdom of repentance,
that stops us in our tracks,
and charts the way to Love.

There's a wisdom in ash,
and we welcome it, Jesus,
thankful for the renewing gifts it brings.

Amen.

LENTEN READING GROUP

Hopeful Lament: Tending Our Grief Through Spiritual Practices, by Terra McDaniel is our Lenten Book read. At the end of each chapter is a particular practice to help us integrate what we have read. We will learn the ancient pattern of writing laments found in the Psalms and write our own, to be shared, or not, with the group. We will once again offer two discussion times on Mondays: 1-2:30 and 6:30-8:00. We will begin on March 10 and finish on April 14. Sign up on the bulletin board in the Commons.

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

Our congregation has been invited to join in an ecumenical education series where we explore topics related to our Christian faith within our local community. These conversations happen monthly and are hosted by different congregations in our area. Monaghan Presbyterian Church will host the next conversation on the topic, “**Walking Alongside the Unhoused.**” Light refreshments will be provided. We hope you can join us for this opportunity for conversation with our neighbors.

Date: Sunday, March 23, 2025

Time: 6:30-8:00 PM

Location: Monaghan Presbyterian Church, 1185 Gettysburg Pike, Dillsburg, PA 17019