



# ASH Wednesday

## ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE OF WORSHIP W/The Imposition Of Ashes

“Beautiful Things – Be Careful of the Sting”

7:15 p.m. – February 14, 2018

**HIGHLANDS UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE OF WORSHIP  
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**MUSIC AS WE GATHER**

(Tonight is about our sin and our hope. Embracing the fact of our sinfulness and claiming our hope in the one who forgives. As we prepare to worship we'll listen to a popular song called "Beautiful Things" by a husband and wife duo known as "Gungor." It is an anthem for Ash Wednesday as we are reminded that God is able to make us rise up from the ashes of sin and death into new life.)

**PRELUDE**

**"Beautiful Things"**

*"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 up from this ground at all?  
Refrain: 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. Refrain:*

*You make me new, You are making me new You make me new,  
You are making me new, You are making me new. Refrain:  
You are making me new You make me new, You are making me new"*

**GATHERING FOR WORSHIP & OPENING PRAYER**

God's people have been called to gather.

**From infants to aged grandparents, all are welcome.**

God's people have been called to repent.

**From those who wear their faults on their sleeves,  
to those whose secret hearts are broken, all are welcome.**

God's people have been called to be reconciled to our God.

**From those who have turned away,  
to those whose pain whispers in the night, all are welcome.**

God's people are called and reminded that with God nothing is impossible.

**With God, in Christ, all things, including us, including me, can be made new!**

God's beautiful sinful people are gathered, let us worship.

**\* HYMN**

**"JESUS, THE VERY THOUGHT OF THEE"**

- 1. Jesus, The Very Thought Of Thee With Sweetness Fills My Breast;  
But Sweeter Far Thy Face To See, And In Thy Presence Rest.**
- 2. Nor Voice Can Sing, Nor Heart Can Frame, Nor Can The Mind Recall  
A Sweeter Sound Than Thy Blest Name, O Savior Of Us All.**
- 3. O Hope Of Every Contrite Heart, O Joy Of All The Meek, To Those Who Fall,  
How Kind Thou Art! How Good To Those Who Seek!**
- 4. But What To Those Who Find? Ah, This Nor Tongue Nor Pen Can Show:  
The Love Of Jesus, What It Is None But His Loved Ones Know.**
- 5. Jesus, Our Only Joy Be Thou, As Thou Our Prize Wilt Be;  
Jesus, Be Thou Our Glory Now, And Through Eternity.**

\*-Those who are comfortable will please stand

## RESPONSIVE AND CHORAL PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND CONTRITION

### WITH SCRIPTURE (from Psalm 51)

On Sunday we experienced such joy! We were on the mountain top with Jesus, witnessing his conversation with Moses and Elijah.

**We now descend the mountain and step into the darkness that is deeper than night - it is the darkness of the unknown.**

Tonight we will hear words that will chill our spirits. We will receive the mark of the ashes and be reminded of the sacrifice and commitment we are about to make for the journey.

**Forgive us for our fears and hesitancy, Lord. Heal our spirits. Enable us to enter into this time of learning and testing with courage and trust.**

In the anguished penitent voice of King David, we find words of contrition from Psalm 51.

**Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.**



The sac - ri-fice You ac- cept, O God, is a hum - ble spir - it.

Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment. Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me. You desire truth in the inward being; therefore, teach me wisdom in my secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.



The sac - ri-fice You ac- cept, O God, is a hum - ble spir - it.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.



The sac - ri-fice You ac- cept, O God, is a hum - ble spir - it.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.  
 For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you  
 would not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a  
 broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.



## CHORAL RESPONSE TO CONFESSION

### "Wash Me Thoroughly"

Halls

*"Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and forgive me all my sin.  
 For I acknowledge my faults and my sin is ever before me." (Psalm 51:2-3)*

## THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES

(Ashes are merely reminders of our mortality and of our creation 'out of nothing.' They are spiritually tied to observances of mourning and in Lent we begin our time of penitence ever mindful of 'mourning' our sinfulness. Receiving ashes is not a requirement of the faith, merely a reminder of our finite presence over against God's infinite love. Those who desire to receive ashes now come forward. Traditionally the Minister will sign you with ashes on your forehead saying, "Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return," but the sign may also be received on your hand or you may simply touch the ashes yourself.)

## SCRIPTURE READING

Genesis 3:17-19

## ANTHEM

### "All Things of Dust to Dust Return" Troeger/Ferguson

*"All things of dust to dust return on earth and in the sky.  
 The hottest, brightest suns that burn in time grow dim and die.*

*The fish that leap, the birds that soar, the newborn young that play,  
 the leaves that fill the forest floor revert to dust and clay.*

*Lord, mark with dust and ash my brow so I may comprehend  
 that every moment here and now links me to that same end*

*I share with all that breathe and burn, that flare and fade and tire  
 yet by their waning light discern your own undying fire.*

*Lord, make upon my brow this sign: a stark and barren cross  
 reminding me that though divine you know my pain and loss,*

*and at the touch of dust and ash awake my heart to view  
 how death itself is but a flash that dies away in you."*

## BLESSING AND MARKING WITH THE ASHES

Dear friends in Christ, let us ask our God to bless these ashes which we will use as the mark of our repentance:

**Lord, even as we bare our sinful souls to you, we pray that you would bless these ashes by which we show that we are dust. May the mark of the cross remind us of the pardon for our sins in your sacrificial love. In these forty days, keep us faithful to the discipline of Lent, for you do not want sinners to die but to live with the risen Christ.**

Almighty God, from the dust of the earth you have created us. May these ashes be for us a sign of our mortality and penitence, and a reminder, in your cross, that only by your gracious gift are we given forgiveness and eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

**Amen.**

## **HYMNS DURING THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES**

### **“Sunday’s Palms Are Wednesday’s Ashes”**

(Sing the Faith No. 2138)

**Sunday’s palms are Wednesday’s ashes, as another Lent begins;  
Thus we kneel before our maker in contrition for our sins.  
We have marred baptismal pledges, in rebellion gone astray;  
Now, returning, seek forgiveness; grant us pardon, God, this day.**

**We have failed to love our neighbors, their offences to forgive;  
have not listened to their troubles, nor have cared just how they live,  
we are jealous, proud, impatient, loving overmuch our things;  
may the yielding of our failings be our Lenten offerings.**

**We are hasty to judge others, blind to proof of human need;  
and our lack of understanding demonstrates our inner greed;  
we have wasted earth’s resources, want and suffering we’ve ignored;  
come and cleanse us, then restore us; make new hearts within us Lord.**

### **“O God, Be Merciful to Me”**

Carol Winfrey Gillette

(Tune: “The Lord’s My Shepherd” (Crimond))

**O God, be merciful to me Because your love is strong;  
Now wash me from iniquity And cleanse me from all wrong.**

**These words are old, but still they live Within our hearts today.  
We cry to you: "O God, forgive!" And "Wash our sins away!"**

**My sin has kept me far from you; Your wrath is justified.  
Why is it, Lord?— The things I do Have crushed my bones inside!**

**I try to make it on my own As if I'm all I need,  
Until I find I'm all alone, Wrapped up in pride and greed.**

**Yet this is not the final word, For you forgive our sin!  
When we return to you, O Lord, You give us joy again.  
(If Needed)**

### **“HAVE MERCY ON US, LIVING LORD”**

(Tune: No. 505, St. Flavian)

**Have mercy on us, living Lord, Remember not our sin.  
According to Your steadfast love Come, cleanse us deep within.**

**Our sin and guilt are heavy, Lord, And evil in Your sight.  
Against You only have we sinned; Your judgment, Lord, is right.**

**We're born into a guilty world And sinful in our ways.  
Lord, teach us wisdom in our hearts And lead us all our days.**

**So come and purify our lives, Our hearts with love redeem.  
Restore us to Your life-filled ways. Come, Lord, and make us clean.**

**Your Spirit place within our hearts That we may teach Your ways,  
And all the people of the earth Shall learn to sing Your praise.**

**You are not pleased with sacrifice, It brings You no delight.  
A humble spirit given in love Is pleasing in Your sight.**

**Rebuild Your people with Your love, Renew us every day;  
With hearts renewed, in all our work, Our lives shall sing Your praise.**

**THE EPISTLE LESSON** 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2 (NT: p. 181)

**\*THE GOSPEL LESSON** Matthew 6:1-6; 16-21, 25-33 (NT: p. 5)

**MEDITATION "Beautiful Things – Be Careful of the Sting"**

### **PRAYERS FOR BLESSING AND INTERCESSION**

O God, Wisdom of the Ages, bless these gathered in worship and all those everywhere who are seeking you in the faith. Instill in us perseverance in the journey. Enlighten our minds and open our hearts to you. Help us seek so that we may find and ask that we might find grace upon grace.

Keep all who come to you, O Lord, in whatever service this Lent, in your loving care. Watch over them as they draw closer to you.

**The eyes of all look to you for mercy, Almighty God. Without your Spirit, we are but dust, full of death and decay. And we are anything at all but beautiful. Breathe your life into us to renew us. Renew your church that we might be witness to your resurrection hope in Christ to a despairing world. Help us care for your good creation. Speak peace to silence all wars. Tend the wounds of all victims of violence. Feed the hungry. Grant your wisdom, courage, and love to all who serve in positions of power over others that your justice may fill the earth with gladness. Gather the dying in your arms, and strengthen those weary with care for others. Comfort all who grieve, and turn their mourning into dancing in the delight of all your saints who forever sing before your glory.**

God of holiness:

**your day comes near, and we tremble, not out of fear,  
but from awe and gratitude. For on your day, we are fully known,  
completely restored, reconciled to you forever.**

Jesus Christ, Grace Bearer:

**as we come to your fast, may we be filled with your hope;  
as we receive your gifts, may our hearts be opened to others;  
as we begin our journey with you, may we put no roadblocks  
in the path to Jerusalem.**

Holy Spirit, Creator of clean hearts:

**as water rushes into to fill a void, may your holy presence  
fill the emptiness of our souls.**

Holy God, three in one, thank you for embracing us, in spite of our sin,  
to be your children so that we might have hope in you. Thank you for making  
beautiful things out of dust. Hear us now as we pray as Jesus taught us, saying,  
"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."

**\*SENDING (Responsively)**

Journey now the pathway to new life.

**We go on the way of the cross.**

Travel now the road through death to resurrection.

**We go on the way of the cross.**

Set out with Jesus through wilderness to garden.

**We go on the way of the cross.**

And live the life of blessing, the way of truth, in the love that renews,  
rebirths, re-creates you.

**We go on the way of the cross.**

**\*HYMN OF RESPONSE NO. 85 "What Wondrous Love is This"**

1. What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul,  
What wondrous love is this, O my soul!  
What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss  
To bear the heavy cross for my soul, for my soul,  
To bear the heavy cross for my soul!

2. To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing,  
To God and to the Lamb, I will sing;  
To God and to the Lamb who is the great I Am,  
While millions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing;  
While millions join the theme, I will sing!

**\*BENEDICTION**

**\*RESPONSE**

3. And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on,  
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on;  
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing and joyful be,  
And through eternity I'll sing on, I'll sing on,  
And through eternity I'll sing on!

\* \* \* \* \*

**\*-Those who are able will please stand**



**WELCOME TO THIS SERVICE THAT MARKS THE BEGINNING OF THE SEASON OF LENT** by marking each of us with the ashes of repentance. Lent is the 40 days between now and Easter not counting Sundays. Join us for all of our special observances for Lent, Holy Week and Easter.

**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 forty days represents the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, enduring the temptation of Satan. Lent is a time of repentance, fasting and preparation for the coming of Easter. It is a time of self-examination and reflection. In the early church, Lent was a time to prepare new converts for baptism. Today, Christians focus on their relationship with God, often choosing to give up something or to 'take something on' like volunteering and giving of themselves for others. Sundays in Lent are not counted in the forty days because each Sunday represents a "mini-Easter" and the reverent spirit of Lent is tempered with joyful anticipation of the Resurrection.

**TAKE UP YOUR CROSS! CARRY A NAIL:** Jesus invites us to take up our crosses and follow him. As a Lenten reminder to follow Jesus on this journey to Holy Week and Easter we invite you to wear a simple cross during the season. You may have your cross from last year, but if you do not have a cross to wear please take a 'cross' from the basket and wear it or carry it during these Lenten days. We are also providing a 'nail' if you would like to carry one during Lent as a symbol of Jesus' sacrifice. When we come on Good Friday night we will use our crosses and nails as a part of our Good Friday "Tenebrae" observance.

#### ***Where do the ashes come from?***

On what we now call Palm Sunday, Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem while people waved palms and cheered him on. Less than a week later, Jesus was killed. The palms that were waved in joy became ashes of sorrow. We get ashes for Ash Wednesday by saving the palms from Palm Sunday, burning them, and mixing them with a little water (like tears) or oil. It's symbolic.

#### ***What do Christians do with ashes?***

At an Ash Wednesday service, you are invited to come forward to receive the ashes. The minister will make a small cross on your forehead by smudging the ashes and saying "remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return," which reminds us of the creation story. While the ashes remind us of our mortality and sin, the cross reminds us of Jesus' resurrection (life after death) and forgiveness. It's a powerful, non-verbal way that we can experience God's forgiveness and renewal as we return to Jesus.

