

First United Methodist Church

Conway, South Carolina

Ash Wednesday

February 22, 2012

7:30 p.m.

The use of ashes as a sign of mortality and repentance has a long history in Jewish and Christian worship, and the Imposition of Ashes can be a powerful nonverbal and experiential way of participating in the call to repentance and reconciliation. This practice is the historic focus of Ash Wednesday observance and gave the day its name.

Voluntary

Greeting

Leader: From dust we came, to dust we will return.

People: We belong to God.

Leader: We gather in penitence, we gather in confidence.

People: We belong to God.

Leader: At the beginning of Lent, at every moment of our lives.

People: We belong to God.

Opening Prayer *(In unison)*

O God of our salvation,
we come before you on this beginning of the season
of repentance and reflection, of turning and returning.

May we trust in your mercy,
seek the reign of Christ in our lives and rely upon the Spirit's power.

Through Jesus Christ, who is the path homeward to you. Amen.

* Hymn No. 297

Beneath the Cross of Jesus

St. Christopher

Meditation on the Scripture

Mark 11-8

Invitation to the Observance of Lenten Discipline

Litany of Confession and Pardon

Leader: Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love.

People: Against you alone, we have sinned and done what is evil in your sight.

Leader: According to your abundant mercy blot, out our transgressions.

People: Knowing you desire truth in the inward being, we name now our transgressions before you with broken and contrite hearts... *(pause for silent prayers)*

Leader: Wash us thoroughly from our iniquity, and cleanse us from our sin.

People: Create in each of us a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within us.

Leader: Do not cast us away from your presence or take your holy spirit from us.

People: Then the joy of your salvation will be restored and we shall be sustained.

Leader: God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. We are forgiven and freed to live anew in Jesus Christ!

Thanksgiving over the Ashes

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence, so that we may remember that only by your gracious gift are we given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Imposition of Ashes

The congregation may come forward. The pastor will make a cross of ashes on the forehead of each person.

Pray as you are led by the Holy Spirit.

When all are seated again, the pastor then says:

May the almighty and merciful God, who desires not the death of a sinner but that we turn from wickedness and live, accept your repentance, forgive your sins, and restore you by the Holy Spirit to newness of life. Amen.

A Prayer for Lent *(In unison)*

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 loneliness and in community,
in emptiness and fulfillment, in sadness and 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.

* Hymn No. 172

My Jesus, I Love Thee

Gordon

* Dismissal with Blessing

Go in peace. Give up something if it brings you closer to our Lord, who gave up so much for you. But to feel still closer to him, take on something. Take on someone's guilt or sickness or fear of death and, by sharing it, offer it up to God as your Lenten sacrifice.

And may God put your observance of Lent to work for your growth in faith, hope and love for the sake of him who bore our burdens and carried our sorrows, even his crucified and risen Son. Amen.

* Going Forth

* *Those who are able, please stand.*