



March 5, 2025
 Worship Series: Entering the Passion of Jesus
 Preparing the Canvas

PREWORSHIP MUSIC
WORSHIP BELL TOLLS

GREETING AND CALL TO WORSHIP

Pastor: Welcome to this Ash Wednesday service, which marks the beginning of our Lenten journey. So much of life happens around us, even to us, that we take little time to notice the bigger picture. The amount of noise, stimulation, news, and expectations which come at us from all directions and varied sources can outweigh our ability to adequately process all of it. And so we filter it. In order to survive we just stop looking closely at life. While this is necessary, it can also dull our senses for seeing the things that are most important in life. In this season called Lent, this year, we will intentionally put a “frame” around the scenes of Jesus’ final week. We call this final week “Jesus’ PASSION.”

The word “passion” comes from the Latin *pati*, which means “to endure” or “to suffer.” To remember Jesus’ PASSION is to remember the events of his final week beginning with Palm Sunday when Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem and culminating in his suffering on the cross. As we examine these “freeze-frames” of Jesus’ Passion we will also “frame” our own lives in a way that might help us to better see what really matters. But before we get to those stories and place ourselves in the picture of the narrative, we will now ready ourselves for this journey by preparing the canvas of our lives, reapplying a base coat on which to create new works of art.

The theme for Lent this year is "Entering the Passion of Jesus." In this season of Lent, we will intentionally put a "frame" around the scenes of Jesus' last week. In looking at these "freeze-frames" of Jesus' life, we will also "frame" our own lives, in a way that we might be better able to see what really matters.

Ash Wednesday Service - **March 5 at 6:30 PM** - Preparing the Canvas

Lent 1 with Sacrament of Holy Communion - **March 9 at 9:45 am** - The Parade: Risking Reputation

Lent 2 - **March 16 at 9:45 am** - The Temple - Risking Righteous Anger

Lent 3 - **March 23 at 9:45 am** - The Lesson - Risking Challenge

Lent 4 - **March 30 at 9:45 am** - The First Dinner - Risking Rejection

Lent 5 - **April 6 at 9:45 am** - The Last Supper - Risking the Loss of Friends

PALM Sunday - **April 13 at 9:45 am** - The Garden: Risking Temptation

Maundy Thursday - **April 17 at 6 pm** - In Remembrance of Me

Community Good Friday - **April 18 at 2 pm** - Location TBD

Easter Sunrise - **April 20 at 6:30 am** - Hoover Cemetery, Mt. Wolf

Easter Breakfast - **April 20 at 7:30 am** - Starview UCC Fellowship Hall

Easter Service with Holy Communion & Baptism - **April 20 at 9 am**

PRELUDE

Entering the Passion (Bell)

CHOIR PROCESSION & CANDLELIGHTING

Please write a regret, lament, or confession you hope to let go of this Lenten season. Fold your paper for privacy and place it in the brown paper bag on the Communion Table. These will be burned along with some palm branches from 2024. The “ashes of our regrets, laments, and confessions” will be used later in the service in a special way that will provide a visual worship aid for the remainder of our Lenten journey.

Music Director will indicate when we are to join in singing the following...

Marcia McFee
Chuck Bell

En - ter. En-ter the pas - sion. En-ter the place we be-long,
not just look-ing on. For this is our pas-sion. En-ter the pas-sion.
En-ter the sto - ry... En-ter the pas-sion... En-ter His pas-sion...

SCRIPTURE READINGS: DUST TO DUST

Pastor: Paint is made from the stuff of earth. Early on, humans began mixing various elements of earth to create colors with which they could make their marks and pass on their visions and stories. Like that paint and everything else around us, we too are made from the stuff of the earth. Hear this from the second chapter of Genesis:

Liturgist: *“On the day the Lord God made earth and sky—before any wild plants appeared on the earth, and before any field crops grew, because the Lord God hadn’t yet sent rain on the earth and there was still no human being to farm the fertile land, though a stream rose from the earth and watered all of the fertile land—the Lord God formed the human from the topsoil of the fertile land and blew life’s breath into [the human’s] nostrils. The human came to life.” (Genesis 2:4a-7)*

Pastor: The story of creation also tries to make sense of the pain inherent in humanity and in life when we separate ourselves from God and from the goodness meant for us. In Genesis chapter three, we hear this:

Liturgist: *“... cursed is the fertile land because of you; in pain you will eat from it every day of your life. Weeds and thistles will grow for you, even as you eat the field’s plants; by the sweat of your face you will eat bread—until you return to the fertile land, since from it you were taken; you are [dust], to [dust] you will return.” (Genesis 3:17b-19)*

Verses (Ash Wednesday): Slower, with rubato (♩ = ca. 88)

1. Sound the trum - pet in Zi - on, an - nounce from the
2. Rend your hearts, not your gar - ments; re - turn to the
3. We have seen in the heav - ens and held in our
4. Let us fast from un - kind - ness and turn from our
5. Though this life that we trea - sure must fade like the

1. Lord that the day of God's fa - vor is
2. Lord, who de - lights when we of - fer a
3. arms what the hand of our Mak - er can
4. greed, giv - ing bread to the hun - gry and
5. grass, heav - en's glo - ry a - waits those who

1. ev - er close at hand. (Joel 2:1)
2. tru - ly hum - ble heart. (Joel 2:13)
3. fash - ion out of dust.
4. lift - ing up the poor. (Isaiah 58:6-7)
5. put their trust in God. (Psalm 37:2-3)

ASHES TO ASHES

Refrain: Moderato (♩ = ca. 92)

Soprano mp
Alto Ash - es to ash - es, from dust un - to
Baritone mp

dust. The cross on our fore - head, your prom - ise, O

mf
 God. Read - y us to fol - low the way of your
mf

f
 Son, to rise from these ash - es, re - deemed in the
f *mf*

To Verses *mp rit.* Final *mp* *Fine*
 fire of your love. love.

mp *mp*

Pastor: The Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) contains many references to the way that our early spiritual ancestors expressed their lament, their grief, and their confession: they would apply ashes to their heads and face and wear a course, woven cloth referred to as sack cloth, much like burlap. In the story of Queen Esther, her uncle, Mordecai, reacts to the news that his people were persecuted by an unjust ruler:

Liturgist: *“When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and sprinkled himself with ashes; then he rushed through the street of the city, shouting loudly: ‘An innocent nation is being destroyed!’” (Esther 4:1)*

Pastor: The stories of faith are not just long-ago stories. In our time and place in history, don't we too find ourselves lamenting unjust actions—in the society of which we are a part and even in our own lives? Step One in preparing our lives in this Lenten season is to lament and confess. We have regrets about what we have done, (*Meaning those words and deeds we expressed, and for which we believe God would not have desired of us*). We also lament those things that we left undone. (*Meaning words and actions we believe God would have wanted us to express, but we chose to ignore or withhold*). While so many things that are becoming tragically common in our day seem out of our control, we also must accept that sometimes we do not step up enough to enact the changes that must happen for all people and in order for all creation to thrive – and not just survive.

SONG OF LAMENT

Dust and Ashes Touch our Face

Bulletin, INSERT

ACT OF CONFESSION (Psalm 51:10-15)

*All people: 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.
 O Lord, open my lips,
 and my mouth will declare your praise. Amen.*

Pastor: The papers you wrote on as you entered are now ashes may have already thought of other things that you did not write down, or you may have entered the service after they were taken to be burned, but that's OK. God knows all the things that weigh heavy on our hearts, and we pray all those things are represented in these ashes. In the 6th century, the church began a ritual at the beginning of the Lenten season of imposing ashes as a sign that Jesus' followers were embarking on a journey of repentance and forgiveness. Tonight we will do something special with our ashes to help us understand the nature of God's amazing grace and love.

This is Gesso, a liquid agent that painters use to prepare a canvas for a work of art. A canvas is woven, much like the image of sack cloth that is woven like burlap. Its woven nature means that there are holes between the threads. And if a canvas is not prepared properly, the paint that is applied is in danger of being wasted or distorted as it soaks through the canvas. Tonight we will mix our ashes with Gesso and then paint this canvas as a symbol that God takes our regrets and laments and mixes them with unconditional love and never-ending second chances and creates something upon which we can create or build an even more beautiful work of art with our lives.

I invite you to please stand in body and/or spirit:

All people: This night, let us prepare the canvas of our lives to train our eyes to see; open our hearts to feel' ready our minds to grasp, and bare our souls to know. All through Lent, we will offer our confession and be met with this assurance:

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS and PASSING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

Pastor: You are forgiven and freed, encouraged and loved by a God who wants you to live fully. So let us enter the Passion of Christ, and pass the peace of Christ with each other, saying "Peace be with you."

All people: And also, with you.

ANTHEM

Chancel Choir

OFFERING INVITATION & PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Liturgist: By God's amazing grace, we are forgiven and set free. Let us rise from the ashes of our sin to begin anew. Let us consider what tithes and offerings we will give - not for the praise of others, but for God's resurrecting work in the world.

All people: In this season of denial and repentance, help us, O Lord, to transform the canvas of our lives that they might reflect more and more, the likeness of Jesus' life. Use what we offer to share with the hungry, provide shelter and clothing to the homeless and poor, and show compassion to the many who carry unshared burdens. In Christ, we pray. Amen.

SERMON

The Canvas of our Lives

Rev. Laura C. Baker

HYMN of PREPARATION

Ashes to Ashes

Bulletin, Pages 6-7

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

MUSIC FOR REFLECTION *Empty Canvas* (John Michael Talbot)

Empty canvas waits before the Painter.

It waits to be the painting it must be.

Unto this end it's rightfully been created.

To reflect rightfully what the Painter sees.

A beauty that will surely find its life within its dying,
so another might be born again;

In this constant death a constant beauty is created
within a constant love that never ends

Jesus is the Master Painter

and the Holy Spirit is the Master's Brush -

to be dipped in the colors that portray a Father's love;

that the Master's painting might be born of us;

that the canvas of our life might know the Master's touch;

to portray the beauty of the Master's Brush.

So an empty canvas waits before the Painter -

an empty canvas destined to be hung

within the gallery once it has been created.

Will the canvas bear the beauty of the Son?

BENEDICTION

Pastor: Fellow sojourners, we have begun our Lenten journey.

Our lives are a canvas awaiting the Master's brush.

On our journey will put a frame around a bit of life -
we'll section off a scene, we'll look long into a face,
to see what we can see.

This night we have prepared the canvas of our lives
with the hope of retraining our eyes to see,

to open our heart to feel, to ready our minds to grasp,
and bare our souls to our Creator's touch.

We await the Master's brush and wonder:

Will the canvas of my life bear the beauty of the Son?

POSTLUDE

Exiting the Passion (Bell)

Optional Unison

1 Dust and ash - es touch our face,
2 Dust and ash - es soil our hands—
3 Dust and ash - es choke our tongue

mark our fail - ure and our fall - ing. Ho - ly Spir - it, come,
greed of mark - et, pride of na - tion. Ho - ly Spir - it, come,
in the waste - land of de - pres - sion. Ho - ly Spir - it, come,

walk with us to - mor - row, take us as dis - ci - ples,
walk with us to - mor - row, as we pray and strug - gle,
walk with us to - mor - row, through all gloom and griev - ing

washed and wak - ened by your call - ing.
through the mesh - es of op - pres - sion.
to the paths of res - ur - rec - tion.

Refrain

Take us by the hand and lead us, lead us through the
de - sert sands, bring us liv - ing wa - ter,
Ho - ly Spir - it, come.

Words: Brian Wren 1986

Music: Ron Klusmeier 1995

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NEWELL
Irregular