



Living by Faith, Known by Love, A Voice of Hope



First Church in Windsor, UCC

Ash Wednesday
March 2, 2022, at 7 p.m.

Prelude

Welcome

***Time of Centering**

One: Holy God, there are days when it is harder to pray than others;
days when the disappointments of yesterday still linger in the memory as the weight of the day
ahead feels too heavy to bear.

Two: And yet, these are the days we need prayer the most.

One: There are seasons in a relationship where it is harder to love than others;
seasons where the unbridled joy and endless hope have been harnessed by the
realities of careers, parenting, debt, aging, disappointments, and growing apart.

Two: And yet, these are the seasons we need to love one another the most.

One: There are times in our lives of faith when it is harder to remain faith-filled than others; times
when the dark night of the soul remains through sunrises too numerous to count, and the hope
of relief seems afar off.

Two: And yet, these are the times when we need our faith the most.

One: Speak to us anew in days, seasons, and times that are parched and passionless,
and refresh the dry places in our lives. Speak to us in the deep, secret places where others
cannot enter and your voice reverberates our entire being.

Two: Speak to us anew, Holy God. Amen.

***Hymn**

Precious Lord, Take My Hand

Words and music by Thomas A. Dorsey

© 1938 UniChappell Music, Inc.

Used by permission. CCLI License #11115938

**Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand,
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.
Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light:
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.**

**When my way grows drear, precious Lord, linger near,
when my life is almost gone.
Hear me cry, hear my call, hold my hand, lest I fall:
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.**

**When the shadows appear and the night draws near,
and the day is past and gone,
at the river I stand, guide my feet, hold my hand:
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.**

Prayer of Invocation

Amazing God, you visited your son Jesus upon us, so draw us together in worship. Look upon us, for we are paralyzed in so many ways and in need of healing. May your Word minister to us in such a way that we can stand up for what is right and good. Help us to walk courageously where you would have us go, offering healing to a hurting world. Amen.

Prayer of our Savior

God of truth, in this season of Lent, we may feel alone in the wilderness. Things may seem dark, scary and unknown, and yet we know that your Word is present even in the darkest of places. As we ponder the frailty of life, let your son's message break into our narrow worldviews – let us remember that we do not live on bread alone, that we will be lifted up out of danger, that we need only serve you, God. Be our guide through this wilderness, through temptation and difficult truths and the plagues of this world, so that we might emerge more true to your Word. Let your spirit take hold of us and transform this community and this world in love and justice. Amen.

Statement of Purpose

Deb Dupont

Friends in Christ, we begin today a forty-day journey toward Easter. We enter the Lenten season to prepare ourselves to welcome the risen Christ with lives renewed by the breath of the Spirit. We assume a discipline of self-examination, confession, and penitence. We dedicate ourselves to meditate upon the scriptures and to converse with God in prayer. We seek to be more faithful disciples of Christ whose lives are shaped by the one whom we confess to be Lord and Savior of the world. On this Ash Wednesday, let us remember that we are dust, and to dust we shall return.

Scripture

Isaiah 58:1-12

Jan Stevens

Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet.
Declare to my people their rebellion and to the descendants of Jacob their sins.
For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God.
They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them.
'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and you have not seen it?
Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?'
Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers.
Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists.
You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high.
Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves?
Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes?
Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?
Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?
Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?
Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear;
then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.
Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.
If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you

spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.

The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Hilary Carpenter

Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Homily

Pastor Nicole

“Ashes to Ashes”

Responsive Reading and Confession of Sin (From Psalm 51)

Refrain

I Love My God Who Heard My Cry

**I love my God, who heard my cry
And pitied every groan
Long as I live and troubles rise,
I'll hasten to God's throne.**

One: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

All: **Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.**

One: For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

All: **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.**

One: Indeed, when I was born, I became a sinner

All: **You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.**

One: Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be as clean as fresh snow

All: Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that have been crushed rejoice.
One: Hide your face from my sins and blot out all by iniquities
All: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within I me.
One: Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me
All: Restore to me the joy of your salvation and sustain in me a willing spirit. Then I will teach others your ways, and sinners will return to you.
One: Deliver me from bloodshed, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.
All: O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.
One: For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.
All: The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
One: Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
All: then you will delight in right sacrifices.

Refrain

I Love My God Who Heard My Cry

**I love my God, who heard my cry
And pitied every groan
Long as I live and troubles rise,
I'll hasten to God's throne.**

Assurance of Forgiveness

Prayer over the Ashes

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth.
May these ashes be to us a sign of our mortality and failures,
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 and the Waterfall Fabric

Closing Prayer

Ashes

by Rev. LaTrelle Miller Easterling

Just and Loving God,
As the ashes are spread down my forehead
I am reminded of the gift of grace you endured
for our new beginning.
You were deserted, but you did not desert us.
You were despised, but you did not despise humanity.
You were ridiculed, but you did not ridicule the guilty.
You withstood the darkness to offer us light.
I receive the ashes.
I draw closer to you.
I receive the ashes.

As the ashes are spread across my forehead
I am reminded of your love for all people.

Your love is from everlasting to everlasting.
Your love knows no worthy or unworthy.

Your love cannot be bought through wealth
nor acquired through fame.
Your love is complete.

I receive the ashes.
I draw closer to humankind.
I receive the ashes.

As I wear these ashes on my forehead
may they make a lasting impression upon my heart
to be more emptied of self, and more centered in you.
I receive the ashes.
I walk the path toward your waters of renewal.
I receive the ashes. Amen.

***Hymn**

It Is Well with My Soul
Words by Horatio Spafford
Music by Philip Bliss
Public domain

**When peace, like a river, upholds me each day,
when sorrows like sea billows roll,
whatever my lot, you have taught me to say,
“It is well, it is well with my soul.”
It is well with my soul, it is well, it is well with my soul.**

**Though evil should tempt me, though trials should come,
let this blessed assurance control,
that Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
and has paid life and blood for my soul.
It is well with my soul, it is well, it is well with my soul.**

**O God, speed the day that is filled with your light,
when clouds are rolled back like a scroll.
The trumpet shall sound and the Lord shall appear,
'even so,' it is well with my soul.
It is well with my soul, it is well, it is well with my soul.**

***Benediction**

Postlude

Deep River
African American spiritual
Public domain

Prayers of this service are used with permission. © Marcia McFee, www.worshipdesignstudio.com.
Prayer/Poem © Bishop LaTrelle Miller Easterling. Used with permission for “Roll Down Justice” Lent series by the
Worship Design Studio

*Please Stand as you are able. **Bolded text** to be read by all.