

February 22, 2012

Ash Wednesday

*Welcome! No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey
you are welcome here.*

Prelude: *Music for Meditation*

Greeting

LEADER: Let us look to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was waiting, endured the cross.

Silence may be observed for reflection and prayer.

Scripture Lessons

First Lesson Psalm 51:1-17

Second Lesson Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Litany of Confession

LEADER: Let us pray.

PEOPLE: Most holy and merciful God: We confess to you and to one another, and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth, that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

LEADER: We have not loved you with all our heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

PEOPLE: Have mercy on us, O God.

LEADER: We have been deaf to your call to serve as Christ served us. We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven.

PEOPLE: Have mercy on us, O God.

LEADER: We confess to you, O God:

Our self-indulgence that keeps us indifferent to the exploitation of other people,

PEOPLE: We confess to you, O God.

LEADER: Our own frustration that feeds our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves,

PEOPLE: We confess to you, O God.

LEADER: Our attachment to worldly goods that excuses our own dishonesty in life and work,

PEOPLE: We confess to you, O God.

LEADER: Our negligence in prayer and worship that dulls us to the faith that is within us,

PEOPLE: We confess to you, O God.

LEADER: Restore us, O God, by your spirit who breathes new life and calls life from death,

PEOPLE: Favorably hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.

LEADER. Bless now these ashes to be for us a call to humility and a reminder of our repentance as we commence our spiritual pilgrimage of Lent toward the bright morning of Easter renewal.

PEOPLE. Bless us, humble us, and embolden us to walk in your way and serve others in your name. Amen.

Silence may be observed for confession and prayer.

(Those who wish to receive ashes may come forward and stand or kneel at the railing as you await imposition of the ashes.) The leader will apply ashes to the forehead of each person with these words:

LEADER: Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

RECIPIENT: Amen. Spirit of Christ have mercy.

After all who wish to receive ashes have received them, the prayers of confession will be concluded with these words:

LEADER: Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation,

PEOPLE: That we may show forth your glory.

LEADER: By the cross and passion of our Savior,

PEOPLE: Bring us with all your saints to the joy of Christ's resurrection.

ALL: Amen.

LEADER (*addressing the congregation*): Almighty God does not desire punishment for sin, but rather that we may turn from our sin and live. Therefore we implore God to grant us true repentance and the Holy Spirit that the rest of our lives may be lived faithfully, and that at the last we may come to God's eternal joy; through Jesus the Christ.

ALL: Thanks be to God!

LEADER: Go now and walk in the way of peace.

PEOPLE: Amen.

Participants may remain in the sanctuary for prayer and meditation, or leave the sanctuary in silence.

GRACE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

An Open and Affirming Congregation

25 East Second St.

Frederick MD 21701

Phone: 301-662-3312 Fax: 301-663-0146

Email: admin@grucc.com www.grucc.com

Rev. Dr. Douglas Griffin, Interim Pastor

dgriffin@grucc.com

SCRIPTURES AND THOUGHTS FOR MEDITATION

Joel 2:12 Yet even now, says the LORD,
return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
13 rend your hearts and not your clothing.
Return to the LORD, your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,
and relents from punishing.
14 Who knows whether he will not turn and relent,
and leave a blessing behind him,
a grain offering and a drink offering
for the LORD, your God?

- *Ash Wednesday begins the Season of Lent with prayers of repentance from sin. Sin is not so much a moral stain or impurity as it is missing the mark of what we could be.*
- *Sin is failing to recognize the divine nature that is within us. That divine nature prompts us to be compassionate, loving people.*
- *The forty days of Lent recall the wilderness wanderings of Israel for forty years and the trials of Jesus in the wilderness for forty days following his baptism. In the wilderness we are outside the security and control of what is familiar to us. In the wilderness is where the creative power of Christ's spirit may be found.*
- *Jesus gave us a new commandment: to love one another. That commandment trumps all others in the Bible!*

Our faith is 2000 years old, but our thinking is not!

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**

