



First Parish Church, Congregational
On the Village Green
Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts

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WORSHIP SERVICE
Ash Wednesday
February 14, 2018, 7-7:30 PM

“The Lord is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.” (Psalm 103:8, 10)

ORGAN PRELUDE: “*What Wondrous Love Is This*”
Traditional American Melody
Setting by Don Hustad (1918-2013)

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP (from *Bread for the Journey*, based on the book of Hebrews)

Leader: In many and various ways, God has spoken of old to our ancestors by the prophets.

People: But in these last days, God has spoken to us through Jesus the Christ.

Leader: We have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses,

People: But one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning.

Leader: Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

All: Let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe; for our God is a purifying fire.

ANTHEM: “*Wondrous Love*”
Appalachian folk hymn (from Southern Harmony, 1835)
Arranged by Austin C. Lovelace (1919-2010)

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 dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul,

To bear the dreadful curse for my soul!

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.

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 His love for me,
And through eternity I'll sing on, I'll sing on,
And through eternity I'll sing on.

SCRIPTURE READING: Psalm 103:1-14

MEDITATION: *“What Is Ash Wednesday All About?”* Rev. Schmidt

A LITANY OF CONFESSION (adapted from the UCC Book of Worship)

Call to Confession (spoken by the pastor)

God of grace and love, we confess to you and to one another that at times we have strayed from following the path of love. At times we have sinned in thought, word and deed--we have missed the targets you set for us--by what we have done, and by what we have left undone... Have mercy on us, O God.

And help us live by faith.

At times we have not forgiven others—or ourselves—as you have forgiven us... Have mercy on us, O God.

And help us live by faith.

We confess to you, O God, our past unfaithfulness. We confess to you the things we feel guilty about— both the things that are our fault-- and the things that we have no control over (but wish we did!)... Have mercy on us, O God.

And help us live by faith.

We confess those times when we value comfort more than challenge and when we envy those more fortunate than ourselves... Have mercy on us, O God.

And help us live by faith.

We confess to you our tendency to make prayer a last resort rather than a primary option... Have mercy on us, O God.

And help us live by faith.

We confess to you our neglect of human need and our indifference to suffering—including, sometimes, our own... Have mercy on us, O God.

And help us live by faith.

We confess to you our false judgments and uncharitable thoughts toward you, our neighbors, and ourselves... Have mercy on us, O God.

And help us live by faith.

We confess to you our waste and pollution of your creation and our limited concern for those who come after us... Have mercy on us, O God.

And help us live by faith.

Our Response: Letting Go and Receiving Ashes

INSTRUCTIONS (to be read by the Pastor)

1. *In just a moment, on the slip of paper in your bulletin, you will be invited to **write down one thing you would like to let go** in this Lenten Season in order to better live by faith and hit the targets God has set for us. It could be a behavior, an attitude, or something material.*

2. *When you have written what you want on the paper, please move up front and **set your note on fire, dropping it in the metal pan**, trusting God that as the flames consume the paper, so you are freed from whatever was holding you back from living more fully by faith.*

3. *After you have burned your slip of paper, **you are invited, if you wish, to go to Rev. Marlayna to receive ashes (on your forehead or the back of your hand)** as a sign that we are all human; we all are mortal; we all make mistakes; we all need forgiveness; we are all in this together. (Or, if you prefer not to receive ashes, please feel free to simply ask Rev. Marlayna for a word of blessing.)*

[Pastor will say]: “Trust in God and live by faith; know the blessing of forgiveness”

AFFIRMATION OF FORGIVENESS (spoken at the end by the pastor)

Having confessed to God our sins, having accepted God’s forgiveness, having let go of whatever has been holding us back from living more fully by faith, may these ashes be for us a reminder that despite our human flaws and frailties, we can trust God to transform our pain and suffering into something of infinite value. Amen.

***HYMN:** *“Lord, I Want to Be a Christian”*

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***BENEDICTION**

ORGAN POSTLUDE: *“How Firm a Foundation”*

Traditional American Melody

Setting by Don Hustad (1918-2013)