

First Parish Church
Manchester by the Sea, MA
February 14, 2024



ASH WEDNESDAY

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

One: Friends and neighbors, in the middle of our busy week, we pause to observe Ash Wednesday together as a faith community.

Many: We remember that God made us from fragile, blessed dust and breathes through us the breath of life and love.

One: From dust we are created in God's image and to God's good dust we shall return.

Many: With dust and oil we claim the mark of God's beloved creature.

One: Today we begin our 40-day Lenten journey to discover who we are created to be as God's beloved.

Many: In daily practices of prayer and service we will embark upon this Lenten journey.

One: We follow Jesus, God's Beloved Child, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh in whom we see God's image most clearly..

Many: We pray for strength and imagination to follow Jesus wherever he will lead us this Lent.

***OPENING HYMN #351P Nearer, My God, to Thee (v. 1)**

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

All: Help us, O God,

To be honest with ourselves and with you.

We want to change our wasteful, destructive ways.

We want to be rid of the evil that weighs us down,

The guilt that crushes our spirits.

Have mercy on us as we remember and confess our sins.

Purge us of all the pain and harm of our past.

Wash us in the flowing streams for your forgiving love.

**Create in us clean hearts.
And fill our lives with a new and right spirit.
Sustain our hearts day by day
In renewed focus on your steadfast love. Amen.**

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 51

MEDITATION ON THE WORD Rev. Katherine Schofield
"The Fast God Chooses"

SILENT PERSONAL REFLECTION

LITANY OF PENITENCE

Many: Holy and merciful God, we confess to you and to one another, that at times we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

One: We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven.

Many: Have mercy on us, O God.

One: We have not listened to your call to serve as Christ served us. We have not been true to the mind of Christ.

Many: Have mercy on us, O God.

One: We confess to you, O God, all our past unfaithfulness; the pride, hypocrisy, and impatience in our lives.

Many: Have mercy on us, O God.

One: We confess those times when we value comfort more than challenge and when we envy those more fortunate than ourselves.

Many: Have mercy on us, O God.

One: We confess our negligence in prayer and worship.

Many: Have mercy on us, O God.

One: Accept our repentance, O God, for the wrongs we have done. For our neglect of human need and suffering and our indifference to injustice and cruelty.

Many: Accept our repentance, O God.

One: For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors and ourselves, and for our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us,

Many: Accept our repentance, O God.

One: Restore us, O God, and let your anger depart from us.
Many: Favorably hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.

OUR RESPONSE: LETTING GO AND RECEIVING ASHES

- 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 of or take on in this Lenten Season. 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. Katherine 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. Katherine for a word of blessing.)*

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

**Gloria Patri #513P*

BENEDICTION

No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

**Please rise in body or in Spirit.*

The observance of Ash Wednesday became part of the Christian tradition back in the sixth century. In the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation, many non-Catholic churches stopped observing Ash Wednesday. In recent years Protestant churches have gone back to this early practice as a way of recovering some of the power of the Lenten Season. A spirit of introspection and repentance can easily be lost in our fast paced world. When we observe Ash Wednesday and receive the ashes, we are reminded that our time on earth is limited and that the purpose of our life extends beyond this earthly realm.

Sunday Worship Series: Living Our Faith in Worship (2/18-3/17)

Each week we will explore a different spiritual discipline - Worship, Study, Service, Giving and Witness - and how it informs and shapes our worship.

**Weekly Group Study: Spiritual Practices to Deepen Our Faith
Mondays (2/19-3/18, 5 - 6pm on Zoom)**

Each week we will explore one of these five spiritual practices (Worship, Study, Serve, Give, and Witness) through scripture study and find suggestions for ways to grow in these disciplines. This study draws on resources from "The Walk" by Adam Hamilton. No preparation required, but there is an accompanying book available to those who are interested.

Vespers Evening Prayer Service, Wednesdays, 6:30pm

Meditation, candlelight and prayer.

Weekly At-Home Devotional: "Wendell Berry and the Sabbath Poetry of Lent" Available in the Narthex and in the Weekly E-News.