



— JOEL 2:13 —

Return to the LORD your God,
for he is merciful and compassionate.



St. John's United Church of Christ

7 p.m. Ash Wednesday 2023

Welcome

Prelude

Lamb of God

Paris

*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.

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

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

All: **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.

All: **So come, let us pray for strength and imagination to follow Jesus wherever he will lead us this Lent.**

*Hymn #67:

"O God, Our Help in Ages Past"

(vs 1, 3, 5 & 6)

O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast,
and our eternal home!

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
soon bears us all away;
we fly forgotten, as a dream
dies at the opening day.

Before the hills in order stood,
or earth received her frame,
from everlasting thou art God,
to endless years the same.

O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
be thou our guide while life shall last,
and our eternal home.

***OPENING PRAYER:** O God of our salvation, we come before you on this beginning of the season of repentance and reflection, of turning and returning. May we trust in your mercy, seek the reign of Christ in our lives and rely upon the Spirit's power. Through Jesus Christ, who is the path homeward to you. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

-Based on Psalm 51.

L: Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love.

P: Against you alone, we have sinned and done what is evil in your sight.

L: According to your abundant mercy, blot out our transgressions.

P: Knowing you desire truth in the inward being, we name now our transgressions before you with broken and contrite hearts... .

Period of silence

L: Wash us thoroughly from our iniquity, and cleanse us from our sin.
P: Create in each of us a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within us.
L: Do not cast us away from your presence or take your holy spirit from us.
P: Then the joy of your salvation will be restored and we shall be sustained.
L: Blow the trumpet in Zion! God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
All: Blow the trumpet in Zion! We are forgiven and freed to live anew in Jesus Christ! Amen.

Scripture Readings

Old Testament Lesson Joel 2:1-2, 12-17
Epistle Lesson 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:2
Gospel Lesson Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Message: "Genuine Love, Genuine Piety."

Hymn: # 572 "Take Time to be Holy (all verses)

Take time to be holy,
speak oft with thy Lord;
abide in him always,
and feed on his word.
Make friends of God's children,
help those who are weak,
forgetting in nothing
God's blessing to seek.

Take time to be holy,
the world rushes on;
spend much time in secret
with Jesus alone.
By looking to Jesus,
like him thou shalt be;
thy friends in thy conduct
his likeness shall see.

Take time to be holy,
let him be thy guide,
and run not before him,
whatever betide;
in joy or in sorrow,
still follow the Lord,
and, looking to Jesus,
still trust in his word.

Take time to be holy,
be calm in thy soul,
each thought and each motive
beneath his control;
thus led by his spirit
to fountains of love,
thou soon shalt be fitted
for service above.

Holy Communion and the Ceremony of Ashes

The Imposition of Ashes

Invitation to Communion

One: We celebrate this holy meal because Jesus' ministry happened around tables: tables where the unwelcome were invited in, tables where even the marginalized were heard; where the powerful were taught and humbled, tables where the hungry were fed and the thirsty were given something to drink. In these meals God's saving presence was revealed and made real, and a new form of community was given birth.

All: We come to this table to meet Jesus, made known in the breaking of the bread.

Communion Prayer

Breaking Bread, Pouring Wine

Prayer of Our Savior

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

Sharing the Elements

***Prayer of Thanksgiving** (*in unison*)

We thank you God because you have invited us to this table. Here we are strengthened for the task ahead of us: the loving of the world. Here we receive all Christ's gifts. Strengthen our faith. Help us love one another and your creation more.
As we return home wearing our ashes, keep us aware of our sins and of your grace in forgiveness. Make our lives a form of praise for your love shown to us through Jesus Christ.
Amen.

***Hymn #431:**

"Go My Children With My Blessing"

**Go, My children, with My blessing,
Never alone.
Waking, sleeping, I am with you;
You are my own.
In My love's baptismal river,
I have made you Mine forever.
Go, My children, with My blessing -
You are My own.**

**Go, My children, fed and nourished,
Closer to Me;
Grow in love and love by serving,
Joyful and free.
Here My Spirit's power filled you;
Here His tender comfort stilled you.
Go, My children, fed and nourished,
Joyful and free.**

**Go, My children, sins forgiven,
At peace and pure.
Here you learned how much I love you,
What I can cure.
Here you heard My dear Son's story;
Here you touched Him, saw His glory,
Go My children, sins forgiven,
At peace and pure.**

Benediction:

Postlude

Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross

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Preaching:	Reverend Shari Maddox
Director of Music Ministry:	Ruth Notch
Liturgist:	Reverend Mark Strothmann

Join Us Sunday at 10 am for the First Sunday of Lent