No matter who you are or where you are on your life’s journey, you are welcome in this Open and Affirming congregation of the United Church of Christ.

Order of Service for
Ash Wednesday, February 17, 2021

Minister: Rev. Sara Marean
Music Director: William Ogmundson
Welcome to this service of recognition of the beginning of Lent. Lent is a sacred time in the Christian tradition. We gather together to recognize our humanity and our divine relationship with God through Jesus Christ. We take more time to consider God’s intentions for our lives.

Prelude

Call to Worship
One: Friends and neighbors, in the middle of this season of Covid-19, we pause to observe Ash Wednesday together as a faith community.
All: 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.
All: 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.
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.

Opening Prayer
Written by Ernesto Barros Cardoso, Brazil

God of Life, prepare our hands for a touch
A new and different touch
Prepare our hands for a touch
A touch of encounter
A touch of awakening
A touch of hope
A touch of feeling
Many are the worn-out gestures
Many are the movements frozen in time
Many are the useless excuses just to repeat attitudes…
Give us daring
To create new titles of community
New links of affection
Breaking away from old ways of relating,
Encouraging true, meaningful ways to move to closeness.

Song “Give Me a Clean Heart” NCH #188
Give me a clean heart so I may serve you. God, fix my heart so that I may be used by you.
For I’m not worthy of all these blessings. Give me a clean heart and I’ll follow you.
PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
Heavenly God, as we enter this Lenten season, help us to fast from those things that keep us far from you and feast on the things that draw us closer to you. Grant, we pray, that our penances will purify us to receive the power of Christ’s resurrection at Easter. To fast from judging others and feast on what makes them special,

God help us.
To fast from unkind words and feast on kindness,

God help us.
To fast from jealousy and feast on offering compliments,

God help us.
To fast from getting angry and feast on being patient,

God help us.
To fast from worry and feast on trusting God,

God help us.
To fast from complaining and feast on gratitude,

God help us.
To fast from negative thoughts and feast on positive ones,

God help us.
To fast from nastiness and feast on friendliness,

God help us.
To fast from greed and feast on giving,

God help us.
To fast from being the center of attention and feast on giving attention to others,

God help us.
To fast from envy and feast on congratulating,

God help us.
To fast from conflict and feast on understanding,

God help us.
To fast from selfishness and feast on helping others,

God help us.
To fast from doubt and feast on faith,

God help us.
To fast from holding grudges and feast on forgiveness,

God help us.
To fast from gloominess and feast on happiness,

God help us.
To fast from discouragement and feast on hope,

God help us.
God, you give us this solemn Lenten season as a time to purify our lives and come to a deeper understanding of your love. May this time of fasting and feasting rid us of faults and bad habits while helping us to become more like you. Amen.

SECOND READING   Isaiah 58:1-12

SONG    “Spirit of the Living God”    NCH #283
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me; Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.  
Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.  Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

THIRD READING    Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

MEDITATION

ANNOPTING

You are invited to give and receive the imposition of ashes as a symbol of our commitment to journey together with Christ during this Lenten Season, saying

‘remember child of God, from dust you have come, and to dust you shall return.’

PRAYERS OF LAMENTATION AND HOPE

SONG  “O God, How We Have Wandered”   NCH #202
O God, how we have wandered and hidden from your face;  
In foolishness have squandered your legacy of grace.  
But how, in exile dwelling, we turn with fear and shame,  
As distant but compelling, you call us each by name.

And now at length discerning the evil that we do,  
By faith we are returning with hope and trust in you.  
In haste you come to meet us, and home rejoicing bring,  
In gladness there to greet us with calf and robe and ring.

O God of all the living, both banished and restored,  
Compassionate, forgiving, our peace and hope assure.  
Grant now that our transgressing, our faithlessness may cease.  
Stretch out your hand in blessing, in pardon, and in peace.

BENEDICTION