Throughout These Lenten Days and Nights 250

The United Church of Chester
An Open and Affirming Church

ASH WEDNESDAY

BLESSING THE DUST
For Ash Wednesday

All those days
you felt like dust,
like dirt,
as if all you had to do
was turn your face
toward the wind
and be scattered
to the four corners

or swept away
by the smallest breath
as insubstantial-

did you not know
what the Holy One
can do with dust?

This is the day
we freely say
we are scorched.

This is the hour
we are marked
by what has made it
through the burning.

This is the moment
we ask for the blessing
that lives within
the ancient ashes
that makes its home
inside the soil of
this sacred earth.

So let us be marked
not for sorrow.
And let us be marked
not for shame.
Let us be marked
not for false humility
or for thinking
we are less
than we are

but for claiming
what God can do
within the dust,
within the dirt,
within the stuff
of which the world
is made
and the stars that blaze
in our bones
and the galaxies that spiral
inside the smudge
we bear.

-Circle of Grace, *Jan Richardson*

The United Church of Chester
United Church of Christ
ASH WEDNESDAY
March 5, 2025

"No act of virtue can be great if it is not followed by advantage for others. So, no matter how much time you spend fasting, no matter how much you sleep on a hard floor and eat ashes and sigh continually, if you do no good to others, you do nothing great."

St. John Chrysostom, 349-407

PRELUDE *Elegy* F. Schubert

INTROIT *Come and Fill Our Hearts* Taize

CALL TO A HOLY LENT Book of Common Prayer, 1977

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CONFESSION OF SIN
The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. God will not always accuse, nor will God keep angry forever.
From dust have we come, to dust will we return.
God does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is God's steadfast love toward those who love God;
From dust have we come, to dust will we return.
As far as the east is from the west, so far God removes our transgressions from us.
From dust have we come, to dust will we return.
As parents have compassion for their children, so the Lord has compassion for those who show reverence. For we know how we were made; we remember that we are dust.
From dust have we come, to dust will we return.
As for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.
From dust have we come, to dust will we return.
But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who show reverence, and God's righteousness to every child, to those who keep the covenant and remember to live the commandments.
From dust have we come, to dust will we return.

INDIVIDUAL SILENT CONFESSION

SCRIPTURE LESSON Isaiah 58.3-9
Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?' Look, you serve your own interest on your fast-day, and oppress all your workers. Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?
Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rearguard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and God will say, Here I am.

ANTHEM *Amor Vincit Omnia* P. Choplin

MEDITATION *"Earth, Ashes, Dust"*

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

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*BENEDICTION

CHORAL BENEDICTION *My Peace* Taize