



**WELCOME TO SHILOH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE
FEBRUARY 22, 2023
7:00 PM**

MEDITATION (From *Freedom of Simplicity* by Richard J. Foster)

When Arsenius, the Roman educator who gave up his status and wealth for the solitude of the desert, prayed, "Lord, lead me into the way of salvation," he heard a voice saying, "Be silent." Silence frees us from the need to control others. One reason we can hardly bear to remain silent is that it makes us feel so helpless. We are accustomed to relying upon words to manage and control others.... We want so desperately for them to agree with us, to see things our way. We evaluate people, judge people, condemn people. We devour people with our words. Silence is one of the deepest Disciples of the Spirit simply because it puts the stopper on that.

Silence

PRELUDE "Sinners Jesus Will Receive" Calkins

GREETING

Pastor: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

All: And also with you.

Pastor: Why have we gathered today?

All: We gather to confess our sins and bring a sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart to God, who forgives us and frees us for joyful obedience. Today, we join one another and Christ on the road to the cross and commit ourselves to the Lenten journey ahead of us.

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

Pastor: Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near —

All: Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people—the aged, the children, the bridegroom, the bride. Sanctify the congregation!

Pastor: Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep. Let them say,

Pastors present: *“Spare your people, O LORD, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’”*

All: Blow the trumpet in Zion! Gather the people! Sanctify the congregation!

Silence

***PRAYER OF INVOCATION**

One: Let us pray!

All: O God, passionately righteous and just, we are not always righteous and just.

Do not cast us away from your presence.

We bring to you broken and contrite hearts.

O God, steadfastly loving and merciful,

accept our worship and have mercy on us. In Jesus’ name we pray.

Amen.

***HYMN** *“On a Hill Far Away”* (The Old Rugged Cross) #195

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

We make a show of our faith and devotion on far too many occasions, Lord.

We pride ourselves in many eloquent yet insincere prayers.

We forget that you already know our needs long before we begin to pray.

We fail to see that we are storing up our treasure on earth, rather than in heaven.

O God, we earnestly seek your forgiveness.

Help us in our unbelief.

Return us to your secret place

of divine wisdom and holy mystery,

the place where you are always ready to meet us,

the inner chamber of our hearts

where we can worship you in spirit and truth.

In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen

Silence

WITNESS TO OUR SACRED STORY

First Lesson: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Second Lesson: Psalm 51:1-17

CHANCEL CHOIR

“My Hiding Place”

Fettke

Third Lesson: Matthew 6:19-21

MEDITATION

“A Time for Repentance”

***HYMN**

“Change My Heart O God”

Insert

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION AND THE LORD’S PRAYER

One: Let us pray for the needs of the world, saying, Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

One: Holy God, as the season now turns to Lent, we pray that you will guide us in the days ahead. As we journey with Jesus Christ, give us an abiding sense of your presence, an unguarded sense of ourselves, and an awareness of the needs of this world.

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

One: Loving God, as we are marked with the ashes of earth, we bring before you the frailty of our very human lives: the fragility of our health, the tenuousness of our accomplishments and plans, the changing nature of even our closest relationships.

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

One: Almighty God, grant us patience in suffering and healing from our ills. Give us in equal measure humility and hope in our pursuits. Bind us in covenantal love that is both constant yet able to change according to the needs and circumstances before us.

All: Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

One: Just God, you call us to loosen the bonds of injustice, to care for those in need, to lift the burdens that bind others. We ask you to increase our courage and our will to work for the freedom and peace you envision and demand. We pray for an end to warfare and conflict, accepting our calling to be peacemakers. We pray for an end to hunger and homelessness, knowing we are called to share our bread and to open our doors.

All: Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

One: Eternal God, we pray that your kingdom will come in fullness; that what is perishable will be raised imperishable; and that death itself will be swallowed up in victory; through Jesus Christ, our Savior who has taught us to pray saying:

All: 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 sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

PRESENTING OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS BEFORE GOD

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God. *Ephesians 5:2*

*OFFERTORY RESPONSE

“A Lenten Doxology”

**Praise God through-out these for-ty days.
Praise Christ, our Lord, whom God did raise.
And praise the Spir-it who imparts God’s love in
Christ in-to our hearts. Amen.**

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Great God, who created us and continues to sustain us in this world, we give you thanks and praise for the blessings we have received through your bountiful grace. Use our lives and the resources you have given us, so that we may glorify you in all we say and do. Unite us in our journey of faith, that we may strengthen and support one another as we minister to all in need in this world. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES

Those who desire may come forward where ashes will be imposed. You may receive ashes on your forehead or the back of your hand.

Pastor: Ashes are a symbol of purification. As a fire burns, it can separate what is valuable from what is valueless, just as an assayer’s fire can separate a base metal from one that is precious. In this same way, these ashes are pure. They are a symbol of the new space that is now present within us for a new life. Let us claim the new life Jesus offers us by praying to our God: **All: God of love and mercy, we come to you in prayer, seeking to change our hearts and minds. Burn away the power of old sins and old attachments in our lives. In place of old ways fill us with the new fire of your Holy Spirit. Open up new opportunities for us to follow Jesus in loving you and our neighbors. In Jesus Name. Amen.**

Pastor: Friends, receive the good news of our faith: in the name of Jesus, I announce that your sins are forgiven. The old has died. Behold, the new has come! **Amen.**

Pastor: Those who wish, now come forward and receive the mark of these ashes as a sign of your forgiveness and new life.

Pastor: The old has died. The new has come. **Amen.**
Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. **Amen.**

Pastor: Listen to the comforting assurance of the grace of God, promised in the

Gospel to all who repent and believe:

“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him”. – John 3:17

*CLOSING HYMN “*Savior, When in Tears and Dust*” #185

BENEDICTION

Go, now, marked as God’s beloved.
Look at the people you meet, and remember they are also God’s beloved.
Go, knowing your days on earth are numbered.
Make the most of each day you are given by showing kindness and love.
Go to embark on this Lenten journey.
Go where the Spirit leads you to do God’s work.
Amen.

POSTLUDE “*A Lenten Meditation*” Burger

In case of inclement weather for church and Sunday school, please check our **website, Facebook page, or your email for closings or delays.** We will also submit the information to **Fox 43 News and WGAL News 8.** If services are held, please use your best judgement as to whether you are able to attend.



GREETERS and **USHERS** this evening are Consistory Members

LITURGIST: Brad Jacobs



OFFERING: The Ash Wednesday loose offering and the special Lenten Offering envelopes will be used to support the Sunday School's Heifer International Project.

THE CHURCH STAFF

Pastor Rev. Melinda LaMontagne, Ph.D.
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Pastor Melinda office hours: Wednesday 9 AM-2 PM & 5-8 PM
Thursday 5-8 PM
Friday 9AM-2 PM

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