



UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA MELFORT ETHELTON PASTORAL CHARGE

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Today's Greeter:

Scripture Readers:

ORDER OF WORSHIP

**Wednesday, February 26, 2020
Ash Wednesday Year A
After Bagged Lunch Service**

WE GATHER AS A COMMUNITY OF GOD'S PEOPLE

As we gather for worship today we acknowledge that the land on which we gather is Treaty 6 Territory. We honour the Cree and Métis people for whom this place has been a homeland for thousands of years. We respect the sacredness of our home and the ground on which we walk and we are grateful to gather here in peace and hope.

CALL TO WORSHIP:

We come to worship God as the Lenten season begins, aware of our frailty and our failings.

**We come seeking God's mercy,
acknowledging our mortality.**

Having received the waters of baptism, we are marked now with ashes.

**The treasures of this earth do not last;
our treasure is in heaven,
our heart's true home.**

HYMN (VU 559) *"Come, o fount of every blessing"*

OPENING PRAYER *(in unison)*

God of our salvation,
we long to be reconciled to you.
Help us to clear away any obstacle
that prevents us from accepting the grace of Christ.
No matter what we face in this life,
increase in us knowledge and patience,
kindness and holiness of spirit,
genuine love and truthful speech,
so that, by the power of God at work in us,
we may live even as we are dying
and rejoice even in our sorrows.
Though it may seem that we have nothing,
if we are reconciled to you,
we possess everything,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

HYMN (MV 79) *“Spirit, open my heart”*

PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE: *(in unison)*

Have mercy, O God, have mercy on us.
We have many treasures on earth that
we hold too dearly;
that we withhold from others in need.
When we sin against neighbour;
condone injustice,
and quarrel with one another,
we sin against you.
Forgive us, we pray, for we are broken in spirit.
Do not see us for our faults,
and do not go away from us.
Keep us always in your presence
so that we may be restored to the joy of your salvation.
Sustain in us a willing spirit to treasure what you desire;
then our hearts will be opened in joy and gladness.
In Jesus Christ, our Treasure, we pray. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE:

According to God's steadfast love,
according to God's abundant mercy,
God does not pass judgment on us
the judgment we deserve.

**God creates in us clean hearts
and gives us a new and right spirit.
In the grace of Jesus Christ,
we return to God forgiven.
Praise God for our salvation!**

PRAYER RESPONSE (MV 115)

"Behold, behold, I make all things new"

SCRIPTURE READINGS:

Let us prepare ourselves to be touched by the witness of scripture.
Our hearts and minds are open.

RESPONSORIAL READING:

PSALM 51:1-17 (VU pp.776-777):

Create in me a new heart.

HEBREW READING:

ISAIAH 58:1-12:

A fast that is acceptable to God.

EPISTLE READING:

2 CORINTHIANS 5:20b-6:10:

We are ambassadors for Christ.

GOSPEL READING:

MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-21:

Give alms and fast in secret.

REFLECTION:

OUR RESPONSE

OFFERING INVITATION:

Let us invest our treasures in the realm of the Sovereign One,
seeking through these gifts to do God's will on earth. May we give,
not so much from a sense of duty, but in celebration of the
privilege of sharing.

OFFERING:

OFFERTORY HYMN (MV #191) *“What Can I Do?”*

PRAYER OF DEDICATION: *(in unison)*

Thank you, God, for the joy of giving.

It feels good to invest in the program and outreach of the church. We ask that many will come to know the richness of your grace through these gifts.

Continue, we pray, your re-creative work in our midst and among the least and the greatest of our sisters and brothers. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:

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

Holy God, as the Ordinary 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.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

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. 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.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

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. We pray for an end to false righteousness, evil speech, and shallow piety in our lives, in the church, in our national life, and among all the nations.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Forever 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 Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

IMPOSITION OF ASHES:

In Biblical times, ashes were a symbol of mourning or sadness; they drew attention so people knew that something was sad or wrong. Prophets often wore sackcloth and sprinkled themselves with ashes to get the people's attention and help them see that things were not as God wanted them to be.

Ashes also symbolize our mortality – reminding us that we do not know how long our lives will be. So on Ash Wednesday, Christians come to be marked with ashes as a sign that we too can see that our world and our lives are not completely loving – are not fully what God intends, and that we want to make fresh choices following God's way. The ashes are placed on our foreheads in the form of a cross reminding us that God forgives us for what is past and that we have Jesus' example of how to live as truly loving people.

We use ashes made from the palms of last Palm Sunday to remind us of how the crowds cheered Jesus on Palm Sunday and then, within a few days, had turned to shout "Crucify him." Like them, we too have at times turned away from God.

We mix the ashes with salt. Salt reminds us that we are the salt to add flavor to the world. The cross marked on our forehead reminds us of our baptism and our choice to follow Jesus.

PRAYER: *(in unison)*

**Loving and merciful God, you have created us
and you love everything that you have made.**

**Grant that these ashes might be a reminder of
our mortality and our need for you in our lives.**

**May they be an outward sign of our repentance
and commitment to a new way of life in Jesus
Christ. Amen.**

INVITATION:

I invite you now as you are ready,
to come forward and receive this ash cross on

your forehead or if you prefer on the back of your hand, as a sign and symbol of your discipleship and your desire to open yourself fully to the leading of God's Spirit through the Season of Lent.

(Imposition of ashes:

“Repent and believe in the Good News of Jesus Christ”)

SENDING FORTH

HYMN (VU 651) *“Guide me, O thou great Jehovah”*

COMMISSIONING & BENEDICTION:

Practice your piety not before others,
but before God.

Give generously, but quietly;
pray constantly, but confidently;
fast with gratitude to God;
and store up that which is in your heart;
for it cannot be taken from you.

The blessing of God, who hears when you call;
the grace of Christ, who reconciles you;
the power of the Holy Spirit, who sustains you;
remain with you in these Lenten Days
and for all your days, and forevermore.

CHORAL BLESSING (MV 212) *“Sent out in Jesus’ name”*

PRAYER RESOURCES:

**Feasting on the Word, Liturgies for, Year A, Volume 1
Advent through Pentecost Worship Companion; 2012
Ash Wednesday Worship Service, The United Church
of Canada Worship for All Seasons II, Selections from
Gathering – Year A, and Lent-Easter 2020 Year A
Gathering Resources for Worship Planners.*

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