

Ash Wednesday February 17, 2021

The Session and members of First Presbyterian Church, Fargo extend a sincere welcome to you. We are grateful for your presence today! We welcome all persons regardless of race, nationality, disability, gender, or sexual orientation. This includes an open invitation to membership, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, marriage, funerals, memorial services, and to serve as an officer of the church.

We Gather in Christ

Prayer of the Day

God of Righteousness, you see the secret acts of our devotion and know the hidden motives of our hearts. Confirm in us a spirit of humble obedience, that without regard to earthly honor we may live as your faithful children and receive the treasure of eternal life with Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prelude

Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ!, BWV 639
Dillon Swanson, guest organist

J.S. Bach

Welcome

Call to Worship

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm upon the holy mountain!
Let everyone tremble, for the day of the Lord is near.

Let us Worship God!

Hymn 166

Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days

**Lord, who throughout these forty days
for us did fast and pray,
teach us with you to mourn our sins
and close by you to stay.**

**As you with Satan did contend
and did the victory win,
O give us strength to persevere,
in you to conquer sin.**

**And through these days of penitence,
and through this Passiontide,
yes, evermore, in life and death,
O Lord, with us abide.**

**Abide with us, till when this life
of suffering shall be past,
an Easter of unending joy
we may attain at last.**

Call to Confession

The prophet Joel cried out:
Return to the Lord with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
rend your hearts and not your clothing.
For God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.
Let us confess our sins and repent of all unrighteousness.

Prayer of Confession

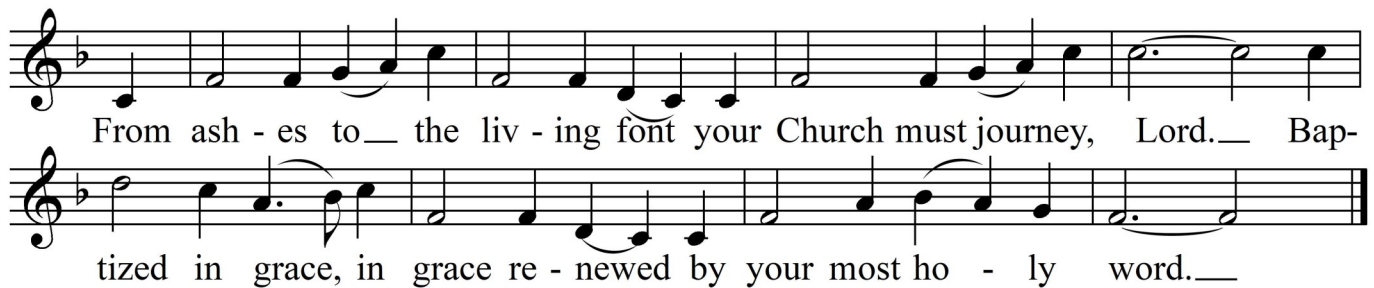
Merciful God, we confess that we have been a rebellious people. We have broken your covenant, and we have tolerated injustice in our land. We have not shared our food with the hungry, we have not sheltered the homeless, and we have not aided the destitute. We quarrel and fight among ourselves, and we use religion to cover our deceit. We have become a mockery of our heritage; the world looks at us and asks, Where is their God? Forgive us, O God. Subdue our rebellious hearts and restore in us the light of salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Assurance of God's Forgiveness

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. In the name of Jesus Christ, know that we are forgiven and rejoice.
Thanks be to God.

Response

From Ashes to the Living Font



From ash - es to the liv - ing font your Church must journey, Lord. Bap-
tized in grace, in grace re - newed by your most ho - ly word.

Anthem

Create in me a clean heart, O God
Chamber Choir

arr. Mueller

The Word

Prayer for Illumination

By the illumination of your Holy Spirit, O God,
open our hearts that we may hear your Word and amend our lives;
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Lesson

Psalms 51:1-17

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgement.
Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.

You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if I were to give a burnt-offering, you would not be pleased.
The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

The Word of our Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon

The Rev. Mary Jo E. Holtey

Affirmation of Faith

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Offering

***Prayer of Dedication**

Responding to the Word

***Hymn 182**

I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto me and rest;
lay down, O weary one, lay down
your head upon my breast."
I came to Jesus as I was,
so weary, worn, and sad;
I found him in a resting place,
and he has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
“Behold, I freely give
the living water, thirsty one;
stoop down and drink and live.”
I came to Jesus, and I drank
of that life-giving stream;
my thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
and now I live in him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
“I am this dark world’s light;
look unto me, your morn shall rise,
and all your day be bright.”
I looked to Jesus, and I found
in him my star, my sun;
and in that light of life I’ll walk
till traveling days are done.

Invitation to the Observance of the Lenten Discipline

Friends in Christ, every year at the time of the Christian Passover we celebrate our redemption through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Lent is a time to prepare for this celebration and to renew our life in the paschal mystery. We begin this holy season by acknowledging our need for repentance, and for the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We begin our journey to Easter with the sign of ashes. This ancient sign speaks of the frailty and uncertainty of human life, and marks the penitence of this community.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of Christ, to observe a holy Lent by self-examination and penitence, by prayer and fasting, by works of love, and by reading and meditating on the Word of God. Let us bow before God, our Creator and Redeemer, and confess our sin.

Litany of Penitence

Holy and merciful God, we confess to you and to one another, and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth, that we have sinned by our own fault in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven.

Have mercy on us, O God.

We have not listened to your call to serve as Christ served us. We have not been true to the mind of Christ. We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

Have mercy on us, O God.

We confess to you, O God, all our past unfaithfulness: The pride, hypocrisy, and impatience in our lives,

we confess to you, O God.

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways and our exploitation of other people,

we confess to you, O God.

Our anger at our own frustration and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves,

we confess to you, O God.

Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts, and our dishonesty in daily life and work,

we confess to you, O God.

Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to commend the faith that is in us,

we confess to you, O God.

Accept our repentance, O God, for the wrongs we have done. For our neglect of human need and suffering and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,

accept our repentance, O God.

For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and for our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us,

accept our repentance, O God.

For our waste and pollution of your creation and our lack of concern for those who come after us,

accept our repentance, O God.

Restore us, O God, and let your anger depart from us.

Favorably hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.

Imposition of Ashes

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. May these ashes be for us a sign of our mortality and penitence, and a reminder that only by your gracious gift are we given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen....**

Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation,

That we may show forth your glory in the world.

By the cross and passion of our Savior,

bring us with all your saints to the joy of Christ's resurrection.

God of compassion, through your Son, Jesus Christ, you reconciled your people to yourself. Following his example of prayer and fasting, may we obey you with willing hearts and serve one another in holy love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Bearing the Word into the World

Hymn 435

There's a Wideness in God's Mercy

**There's a wideness in God's mercy,
like the wideness of the sea.**

**There's a kindness in God's justice,
which is more than liberty.**

**There is no place where earth's sorrows
are more felt than up in heaven.**

**There is no place where earth's failings
have such kindly judgment given.**

**For the love of God is broader
than the measures of the mind.**

**And the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.**

**If our love were but more faithful,
we would gladly trust God's Word,
and our lives reflect thanksgiving
for the goodness of our Lord.**

***Benediction**