

**A Service for Ash Wednesday  
Friendship United Methodist Church  
Sherman, Texas  
March 5, 2025**

**Gathering  
Greetings and Announcements**

**Call to Worship** **UMH 269**

***“Lord Who Throughout These Forty Days”***

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

*As thou with Satan didst contend,  
and didst the victory win,  
O give us strength in thee to fight,  
in thee to conquer sin.*

*As thou didst hunger bear, and thirst,  
so teach us, gracious Lord,  
to die to self, and chiefly live  
by thy most holy word.*

*And through these days of penitence,  
and through thy passiontide,  
yea, evermore in life and death,  
Jesus, with us abide.*

*Abide with us, that so, this life  
of suffering over past,  
an Easter of unending joy  
we may attain at last.*

**\*Psalter**

***Psalm 146:5-10***

**L:** Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,  
whose hope is in the Lord their God,

**P:** *who made heaven and earth,  
the seas, and all that is in them;  
who keeps faith forever;*

**L:** who executes justice for the oppressed;

**P:** *who gives food to the hungry.*

**L:** The Lord sets the prisoners free;

**P:** *the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.*

**L:** The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;  
the Lord loves the righteous.

**P:** *The Lord watches over the strangers;  
he upholds the orphan and the widow,  
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.*

**L:** The Lord will reign forever,  
your God, O Zion, for all generations.

**P:** *Praise the Lord!*

**New Testament Lesson**

**Luke 9:57-62**

*As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” And Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” Another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” And Jesus said to him, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”*

**Homily**

**\*Hymn of Preparation**

**FWS 2138**

***“Sunday’s Palms Are Wednesday’s Ashes”***

*Sunday's palms are Wednesday's ashes as another Lent  
begins;*

*thus we kneel before our Maker in contrition for our sins.  
We have marred baptismal pledges, in rebellion gone astray;  
Now returning, seek forgiveness; grant us pardon, God, this  
day!*

*We have failed to love our neighbors, their offences to forgive;  
Have not listened to their troubles, nor have cared just how  
they live.*

*We are jealous, proud impatient, loving over-much our things;  
May the yielding of our failings be our Lenten offerings.*

*We are hasty to judge others, blind to proof of human need;  
and our lack of understanding demonstrates our inner greed;  
we have wasted earth's resources; want and suffering we've  
ignored;*

*come and cleanse us, then restore us; make new our hearts  
within us Lord!*

#### **Confession**

*O God,  
maker of everything and judge of all that you have made,  
from the dust of the earth you have formed us  
and from the ashes of death you would raise us up.  
By the redemptive power of the cross,  
create in us clean hearts  
and put within us a new spirit,  
that we may repent of our sins  
and lead lives worthy of your calling;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

#### **Thanksgiving Over the Ashes**

*Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the  
earth. Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our  
mortality and penitence,*

*so that we may remember that only by your gracious gift  
are we given everlasting life;  
through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen*

#### **Imposition of the Ashes**

*(Let the people approach the altar as the spirit leads to receive  
the ashes, then return to their pew for a time of quiet  
reflection.)*

#### **Absolution**

May the Almighty and Merciful God,  
who desires not the death of a sinner, but that we turn  
from wickedness and live,  
accept your repentance, forgive your sins,  
and restore you by the power of the Holy Spirit to newness  
of life.

***By the gift of Christ, we are forgiven!***

#### **\*Hymn of Dedication**

**UMH 142**

***"If Thou but Suffer God to Guide Thee"***

*If thou but suffer God to guide thee,  
and hope in God through all thy ways,  
God will give strength, whate'er betide thee,  
and bear thee through the evil days.  
Who trusts in God's unchanging love  
builds on the rock that naught can move.*

*Only be still, and wait God's leisure  
in cheerful hope, with heart content  
to take whate'er thy Maker's pleasure  
and all-discerning love hath sent;  
we know our inmost wants are known,  
for we are called to be God's own.*

*Sing, pray, and keep God's ways unswerving;  
so do thine own part faithfully,  
and trust God's word; though undeserving,*

*thou yet shalt find it true for thee.  
God never yet forsook at need  
the soul that trusted God indeed.*

Benediction

## A Word About the Service

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the forty-day season of Lent, a time of meditation, reflection and repentance for devout Christians. Throughout the history of God's people, ashes have signified repentance and the practice of putting ashes on one's body is a public display of a penitent heart as ancient as the Old Testament itself. In the Christian tradition, the ashes come from the palms of the previous year that were used in the processional of Palm Sunday. Symbolically, the use of these ashes points to the suffering of Jesus and the practice of putting ashes on the forehead began as a way to "mark" those who were willing to undertake the journey to the cross and suffer with Jesus.

Once a practice only observed by the Catholic Church, in recent years Protestants have also come to value this symbolic act as a way to prepare themselves for the devotion of the Lenten season. Just as our journey toward salvation begins when we recognize our sinfulness and are willing to make our confession, so the journey of Lent begins when we cultivate within us a penitent heart that is eager to move beyond our Sin. Thus, receiving the ashes in this observance marks us as disciples who desire to journey with Jesus to the cross, to endure the suffering and sacrifice of Christ in order that we may be raised with him to new life at Easter.

You are invited to share in this service as the first step in your Lenten journey. Yet, while the service is beneficial in and of itself, the full meaning of it will only be realized at the end of the journey: at the cross and empty tomb. Therefore, the invitation extends beyond merely sharing in this service of the ashes: you are invited to a time of daily devotion, of worship and meditation during the forty days of Lent and, ultimately, to share in the resurrection of Easter day. We pray God's richest blessings on you this day as you begin this journey.

