

ASH WEDNESDAY

Wednesday, February 14

12:00 PM
Sanctuary

7:30 PM
Sanctuary and Livestreamed



EVANGELICAL REFORMED UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
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Elders of Evangelical Reformed United Church of Christ

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**EVANGELICAL REFORMED
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**
— An Open and Affirming Congregation —



*The numbered hymns are from The New Century Hymnal
All who are able may stand

ASH WEDNESDAY

PRELUDE

WELCOME

The Rev. Dr. Marvin L. Morgan

***CENTERING MUSIC** *Lord, I Want To Be a Christian*

**Lord, I want to be a Christian
in my heart, in my heart.
Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart.
In my heart, in my heart,
Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart.**

**Lord, I want to be like Jesus
in my heart, in my heart.
Lord, I want to be like Jesus in my heart.
In my heart, in my heart,
Lord, I want to be like Jesus in my heart.**

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

**Come, you who are toiling, you who are bound-up;
Come, Liberating God, hear our cries for mercy!
Come, you who are lost, lonely and hopeless;
Come, Redeeming Christ, turn us to your light!
Come, you who are angry, hurting, and confused;
Come, Cleansing Spirit, enter our hearts!
Come, for confession, for forgiveness, for restoration!
Come, O Holy One, free us, heal us and bless us!**

READING FROM THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

Isaiah 58:1-12

Reader 1: Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet!

Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgements, they delight to draw near to God.

Reader 2: '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.

Reader 1: 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?

Reader 2: 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. 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.

Reader 1: The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

Reader 2: Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

SILENT CONFESSION OF SINS

A PASTORAL PRAYER

THE GOSPEL READING

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

All who are able, please stand

Reader 3: ‘Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Parent in heaven.

‘So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Parent who sees in secret will reward you.

Reader 4: ‘And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your God who is in secret; and your God who sees in secret will reward you.

Reader 3: ‘And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your God who is in secret; and your God who sees in secret will reward you.

Reader 4: ‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Reader 3: The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

– IMPOSITION OF ASHES –

ANTHEM *To Dust*

– K. Marrolli
Senior Choir

SCRIPTURE READING

2 Corinthians 5:20b - 6:10

Reader 5: So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making God's appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake God made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For God says, 'At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.'

Reader 6: See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labours, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honour and dishonour, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

A LENTEN PRAYER

The Rev. Kirstin Shrom-Rhoads

***CLOSING HYMN** *Open My Eyes, That I May See*

Open my eyes, that I may see
glimpses of truth thou hast for me;
place in my hands the wonderful key
that shall unclasp and set me free.
Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!

**Open my ears, that I may hear
voices of truth thou sendest clear;
and while the wave notes fall on my ear,
everything false will disappear.
Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my ears, illumine me, Spirit divine!**

**Open my mouth, and let me bear
gladly the warm truth everywhere;
open my heart and let me prepare
love with thy children thus to share.
Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my heart, illumine me, Spirit divine!**

***BENEDICTION**

All are invited to end worship with two or three minutes of complete silence.



What is Lent?

The church year is divided into seasons. The church year begins on the first Sunday in Advent, which is the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day. After Advent we enter the season of Christmas, followed by the seasons of Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost.

Today marks the beginning of the season of Lent. The traditions of Lent are derived from the season's origin as a time when the church prepared candidates, or "catechumens," for their baptism into the Body of Christ. It eventually became a season of preparation not only for catechumens but also for the whole congregation. Self-examination, study, fasting, prayer and works of love are disciplines historically associated with Lent. Conversion—literally, the "turning around" or reorientation of our lives towards God—is the theme of Lent. Both as individuals and as a community, we look inward and reflect on our readiness to follow Jesus in his journey towards the cross. The forty days of Lent correspond to the forty-day temptation of Jesus in the wilderness and the forty-year journey of Israel from slavery to a new community.

On Ash Wednesday, ashes are placed on the foreheads of the congregation as a symbol that we have come from dust and one day will return to dust. It is one of many Lenten and Easter customs that remind us of our historical connection with Jewish tradition. With this sobering reminder of life's fragility, we begin a spiritual quest that continues to the celebration of the risen Christ at Easter.

Each season of the Church Year is symbolized with different colors. The colors express emotions and ideas that are associated with each of the seasons of the liturgical year. The cloths on the altar, lectern and pulpit – paraments – reflect these changing seasons. On Ash Wednesday through Good Friday, the purple or violet paraments will be present in the sanctuary. Violet is the ancient royal color and therefore a symbol of the sovereignty of Christ. Violet is also associated with repentance from sin.

God is still speaking,
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST



Lent 2024 at ERUCC

WANDERING HEART: FIGURING OUT FAITH WITH PETER

This Lent, we are focusing on the life and faith of one of Jesus' most famous disciples. In Peter, we see a person who is both steadfast and unsteady, a dear friend and a betrayer, a follower and a wanderer. In Peter, we often see ourselves. By following Peter's journey, we



watch the story of Jesus unfold through the eyes of a very normal human trying to figure it all out—just like us.

Like many of us, Peter has a wandering heart. His journey is not polished, or linear, or perfect, but he is always tethered to the love of God. When you look closely at Peter's story, you find Jesus at each step

along the way—offering him abundance, catching him when he begins to sink, challenging him when he stands in the way, washing his feet, predicting his betrayal, and offering him agapē love. This Lent, we're joining Peter in figuring out faith. We're not idolizing or vilifying him; instead, we're hoping to wander alongside him, open to what we might learn about Jesus (and ourselves) by stepping in his shoes.

In this series, we want to affirm that faith is a constant journey of steadfast pursuit, one that ebbs and flows. We want to affirm that wandering is exploration, not necessarily distance from God. We want to affirm the ways Peter keeps going: he drops his nets, he walks on water, he runs to the empty tomb, he swims to the shore to meet the risen Christ. He keeps searching and yearning and loving, even after missteps or mistakes. Ultimately, in Peter's story, we are reminded that God loves imperfect people—in fact, time and again, that's precisely who God claims and calls.

This Lent, we will look for ourselves in the stepping stones of Peter's story, reflecting on the stages of our faith journeys and who and what has shaped us along the way. As we wander, let us tune our hearts to sing God's grace. May we rest in streams of mercy, never ceasing.

Graphic Design by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

DAILY DEVOTIONAL CARDS

A collection of 62 daily devotional cards for Ash Wednesday through the second week of Easter. Each card has a weekly centering practice, a question for reflection, and a short prayer. Available in the rear of the Sanctuary.

MID-WEEK LENTEN SERVICE AND SOUP LUNCH

Wednesdays, February 21 – March 27 Sanctuary/Community Room 12:00 PM

We will have a brief service in the sanctuary at 12:00 PM each Wednesday during Lent followed by time for a soup lunch and reflection in the Community Room.

POETRY PRAYERS FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

Written by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | SanctifiedArt.org

Tune My Heart

Tune my heart.
Like an old violin,
like a worn down piano,
I have been left out in all manners of weather;
I have been left alone for far too long.
So like a concertmaster
with a steady hand,
tune me up.
Listen and learn
the cracked keys,
the broken strings.
Memorize the forgotten intervals
that even I did not know.
And then, when we're ready,
When this creaky heart is tuned,
teach me a new song.



Alignment

I have never tuned a piano, but I understand it takes hours. Small notes plucked repeatedly, like rain on a tin roof. Some things cannot be rushed. Some things require a steady hand, a listening ear, the intimacy of familiarity. Tuning an instrument and falling in love are both like that. Maybe that is why we pray to God, “Tune my heart,” because we are desperate to be pulled into alignment. We are desperate to add our voice to the song, to get lost in a dance, to be in harmony with the melody of the universe. I’ve never tuned a piano before, but still I pray: *Pull me into alignment. Show me the notes to sing.*

ART AND REFLECTION FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

River of Grace by Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity | SanctifiedArt.org

Read Luke 5:1-11

As we begin Lent, this desperate confession introduces us to Peter, the disciple whose story—and wandering heart—we will follow for the next 7 weeks. Peter was a commercial fisherman based in Galilee. He was most likely bilingual, speaking Aramaic and Greek, culturally influenced by both Judaism and Hellenism. His business would have been under oppressive control of the Roman government, which arbitrarily imposed harsh rental and harbor fees, fishing licenses, and taxes on domestic fishermen. He was likely a blue-collar worker daily constrained by tides and taxes.



With this backstory in mind, we may hear Peter's response to the abundant catch of fish with fresh ears. There are so many messages within his protest: "I'm not prepared. I'm not capable. I'm not deserving. I'm not faithful enough. I'm not smart enough. I'm not the type you're looking for." Have you ever found yourself saying these things in response to a new calling, or to an abundant gift of grace?

In this image, the bursting nets transform into a river of grace meandering through the composition of Peter's life. The river pours into Peter's hands, but he can't quite grasp the fullness of this gift and calling quite yet, and so most of it rushes right by. As you will see in my other pieces for this series, this river of grace will wander alongside Peter throughout his life. The river represents how his journey with Christ begins and ends: with an abundant catch of fish. It's a visible reminder of the ways God's grace bends and turns and rushes to find each of our wandering hearts.

Despite Peter's resistance, grace seeks him out. His right thumb gets caught in the net. He can't escape the fact that God's goodness and mercy will pursue him all the days of his life (Psalm 23:6). The river rushes in. The question for Peter—and for each of us—is will he follow where it leads?

