



Community UCC, 805 South 6th Street, Champaign, IL 61820

Ash Wednesday

Live Stream Service

February 17, 2021

Welcome and a Word About Worship

Rev. Leah Robberts-Mosser, Rev. David Robberts-Mosser

Welcome to Community United Church of Christ, Champaign, and Trinity UCC, Westville. Welcome to our joint Ash Wednesday service in this pandemic tide. On this sacred night on which our 40 day fast of Lent begins, we gather to remember that we are dust and to dust we shall return. Except, frankly, this year, that's the one thing of which we don't need to be reminded. We've had enough returning to dust to last us a long time. And, so, we come with that knowledge, that we are already very aware of our mortality. Tonight, then, perhaps we come to remember that God is holding our lives – in life, in death, in joy, and in sorrow – and, that we are God's beloved. Yes, we may be dust and to dust we shall return, but we are all made of stardust: ordinary as dust, as precious as stardust. That's the invitation to you tonight. For this worship service, you need a pen and paper and either ash or something to smudge on your forehead. Traditionally, the ash for tonight's service is made from last year's dried and burned Palm Sunday palms. Some of you have those ashes from church....but if you don't, that's ok. Potting soil works. Some crunched up pencil lead would work too. You just need something to smudge on your forehead later in worship. So, go get it, and know that you are welcome here. No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here, and we really mean it. Welcome to worship. Let's settle in, as we hear this prelude offered by Brian Clarke.

Prelude*The Earth Prelude*

Brian Clark

Ludovico Einaudi

Poem*Invited In*

Rev. David Robberts-Mosser

We begin worship tonight with a poem, "Invited," by the Rev. Sara Are:

I like to imagine that each year,
 God invites me to a party.
 God drops me a note that says,
 "No gifts, casual dress. Come just as you are."
 I like to imagine that I am brave enough to go.
 I like to imagine that I decide that I am worth it.
 This was no pity invite,
 There is no obligatory postage.
 God wants me there.
 So I get myself together,
 Smudged glasses, sensitive ego, wrinkled shirt, and all.
 I ring the doorbell a few minutes late on account of the fact that
 I lost my keys twice trying to get out the door,
 And I almost turn back to hide in my car,
 Afraid that I might embarrass myself over appetizers or small talk.
 But then God answers the door,
 And God says, "You're here!"
 And I smile, because I am.
 And with every step past that threshold,

I know that God is cheering me on.
It's the pride of a parent watching their child take their first step.
If I freeze, God is not disappointed.
If I fall, God is not mad.
But if I trust the invitation,
If I move closer,
I know, God celebrates.
Friends, you've got mail.
It's an invitation to dust off your shoes,
To go deeper,
To trust that you're worth it,
To lose your keys and your faith,
And then to find them both, along with your worth.
You are invited.
We are invited.
Again and again and again.
This invitation is for you.

Song

Only Grace

Megan Krejci, Stacey Krejci, Kathy Lee
Lyrics by Lenora Rand, Music by Hannah Rand
Convergence Music Project License #100002047

*Things are broken here.
Things are shared
Things are carried here
Hearts bow in prayer*

Chorus

*It is grace, only grace
That brings us here, holds us together here.
It is grace, only grace
That brings us here, holds us all together here.
All together here.*

*Things are dying here
Things are torn
Things are growing here
And burdens borne. (Chorus)*

Bridge

*Amazing grace hear the sound.
Here is where hope is found. (Chorus)*

Call to Worship

Rev. Leah Robberts-Mosser, Heather Kennedy, Megan Krejci

We are invited—

Into the story, Into this place, Into this hour of worship.

We are invited—

Into reflection, Into community, Into our own spiritual journeys.

We are invited—

The broken and bruised; The hopeful, the new; The faithful, the doubting; The wondering, the waiting.

We are invited—

Because God so loved;

So listen, trust the invitation, and bring your whole self.

All are invited here.

Call to Confession

Rev. Leah Robberts-Mosser, Rev. David Robberts-Mosser

Ash Wednesday is a special day because it marks the start of something new. We are standing at the door of a journey into deeper faith, and God is inviting us in. However, we know that we cannot grow deeper and be transformed without God's help. So as we begin this season, we confess together, asking for God's participation in this new beginning. We are asking God to hold open the door.

Prayer of Confession

Heather Kennedy, Megan Krejci

Let us pray: Holy God—We know that you are near, for you are always here, gathered among us, just a breath away. And despite knowing your nearness, we still stumble over ourselves, unsure of how to pray. So often we talk to you like a stranger, praying prayers of small talk about the weather and surface level concerns. We keep genuine fear and doubt tucked into corners, out of sight, out of mind.

Bring our hearts into the room, this room.

And so often we try to think our way to you, as if we could use logic or our minds alone to explain your great unknown. We forget what we knew as children; we forget how to feel our way to you.

Bring our hearts into the room, this room.

And too regularly, we limit our experience of you to one hour a Sunday, missing your constant invitation into the holiness all around us. Forgive us. Guide us.

Bring our hearts into the room, this room.

We are here, God. We want to begin again.

Bring our hearts into the room, this room. Amen.

Song

Lovely Needy People

Elena Negruta, Kathy Lee, David Willcox,
Stacey Krejci, CUCC Choir
Lyrics by Lenora Rand, Music by Gary Rand
Convergence Music Project License #100002047

Verse 1

Oh you prisoners in your cells

All you in private hells

All: Kyrie eleison

All you hungry and ignored

Who thirst for something more

All: Kyrie eleison

You who feel so lost but are afraid of being found

You who are in chains but are afraid to live unbound

All: Kyrie eleison, kyrie eleison.

Chorus

*For all us lovely needy people
Living in this world that's spinning
Round and round and round
Round and round and round
For all us lovely broken people
Living in this world that's spinning
Round and round and round
Round and round and round
Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy*

All: Kyrie eleison, kyrie eleison

Verse 2

*Oh you children ripped and torn
Battered, bruised and worn*

All: Kyrie eleison

*All who look hate in the face
Locked in hate's embrace*

All: Kyrie eleison

*You who've given up and can't see anywhere but down
You who've lost all hope and think it's nowhere to be found*

All: Kyrie eleison, kyrie eleison.

Chorus

Chant

**All: There is mercy enough, there is grace enough.
There is love enough for all of us.**

Words of Forgiveness

Rev. Leah Robberts-Mosser, Rev. David Robberts-Mosser,
Heather Kennedy, Megan Krejci

Friends, you lovely needy people, whether you are standing at the door of a deeper faith journey, unsure of what comes next, or running your way through that threshold, you are claimed, forgiven, and loved by God.

Again and again, there is mercy enough, we are forgiven. Again and again, there is grace enough, we are forgiven. Again and again, there is love enough, we are forgiven, and we are invited in.

Thanks be to God for a love like that. Amen.

Prayer for Illumination

Rev. David Robberts-Mosser

Creator God, there is a rumbling in us that won't let go. It stirs in us like the wind stirs leaves—inviting us to move, drawing us forth. When we're quiet, we know that rumble is the Holy Spirit, Dancing love awake in us. So we're here. And we're still. And we're quiet. And on this first day of Lent, we're asking you to draw near. As we hear your scripture read aloud, open the door for us to move. Invite us in. Rumble us awake. Gratefully we pray, Amen.

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.

²Yet 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 judgments,
they delight to draw near to God.

³“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.

⁴Look, 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.

⁵Is 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?

⁶Is 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?

⁷Is 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?

⁸Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator^[a] shall go before you,
the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

⁹Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,

¹⁰if 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.

¹¹The 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.

¹²Your 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.

Sacred reading from the Gospels

Mark 1:9-15

Megan Krejci

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved;^[a] with you I am well pleased."

¹²And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

Song

Forsaken

Elena Negruta, Kathy Lee, Stacey Krejci

Lyrics by Lenora Rand, Music by Gary and Hannah Rand
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*Why have you forsaken us?
Where have you gone?
Why have you forsaken us?
How can we go on?*

Verse 1

*There's a woman who has lost her child
And a man who's lost his way.
There's a boy who's keeping it inside
And a girl who cannot pray.*

Chorus

*Why have you forsaken us?
Where have you gone?
Why have you forsaken us?
How can we go on?*

*We search for your face
We search for your grace
We want to follow your way.*

*Why have you forsaken us?
Where have you gone?*

Verse 2

There's a man who says he cannot breathe

*And another with a gun
There's a family who's left everything
Just exiles on the run (Chorus)*

Bridge

*There's a man forsaken on a cross
Body broken in two
There's a God hanging on a cross
Who feels it all too*

*Crying with us; dying with us.
Praying with us. Holding us too. (repeat)*

*We search for your face
We search for your grace
We want to follow your way.
We want to follow your way.*

Message

Rev. Leah Robberts-Mosser, Rev. David Robberts-Mosser

Prayers of the People

Rev. Leah Robberts-Mosser, Rev. David Robberts-Mosser

On this night, though scattered, we are one body as we offer our prayers and petitions to God knowing that the Lamb of God who suffered with the world will grant us peace with love, in love, through love. In the next few moments, you are invited to list your prayer petitions in the chat or comments. After each one is read aloud, we will say, "Lamb of God," and you respond, "Grant us Peace." You are also invited to use this time to do some journaling. Some of you have a fancy journal page, but you don't need, really. You just need a pen and paper. On one side, write down what you'd like to lay down during this Lenten season – what is hard, heavy, and challenging? Write it down, and in doing so, lay it down --- give it over to God. On the other side, write down what you'd like to pick up – what is your intention for this season? Write it down, too. As we do this: the song: Lamb of God.

Song

Lamb of God

CUCC Choir

Music and Lyrics by Gary Rand, text adapted from the traditional Agnus Dei
Convergence Music Project License #100002047

*Lamb of God
With love poured out, you suffer with the world.
Have mercy, have mercy.*

*Lamb of God
who suffers with the world.
Grant us peace. Grant us peace.*

Affirmation of Faith

As we continue in a spirit of prayer, let us affirm our faith together:

**We believe in an inviting God
Who invites the poor and the sick,
The outcast and the lonely,
The immigrant and the refugee,
The awkward and the abrasive,
The young and the innocent.
We believe God invites the best and the worst—
In all of us.
We believe God invites us to:
A life of faith,
A crowded table,
A messy church,
A deeper truth,
A resilient joy,
A place to belong,
A family among strangers,
A world that is just,
And a love that knows no bounds.
We believe this invitation exists for all people.
We believe this invitation exists for us.
And when we miss the call or ignore the invite,
We believe that God invites us again.
Thanks be to God for that invitational Spirit. Amen.**

Ritual of Smudging ourselves with Palm Ash

Rev. Leah Robberts-Mosser, Rev. David Robberts-Mosser

If you have a bag of ashes from the church, or gathered some from your fireplace, or borrowed some soil from a friendly potted plant, or mixed together some spices....cinnamon and ground cloves will do well.... place them before you.

Smudging our foreheads with Ash is a very personal inward-seeking sacred moment. Usually, that's a moment that is shared, up close and personal between you and I. But today, as all of our fingers are stained with smudging ash, that burden is shared by all of us and it is even more personal. So, before you turn to yourself, take a deep breath.

First, let us breathe for the world, inhaling sorrows you know from the news and exhaling love and hope and blessing.

Now, take a-second-deep breath for those who are ill, in despair or fearful now, inhaling the painful stories you know are out there, then exhaling love and hope and blessing.

Next, take a third deep breath for those dear to you, inhaling their needs, losses, anxieties, and exhaling love, hope and blessing.

And, now, you are only yourself. Just you – and you are God’s beloved child. Know this deep in your bones. You may be dust and to dust you shall return, but you are also made of stardust – as ordinary as dust and as precious as stardust. Rest in this true thing about life and death, and all the beautiful, heartbreaking, magic-making moments in between.

Dip your finger in the ash. If you are alone, mark a cross on your forehead or the back of your hand, whichever you prefer, and say, “I am human dust, and the image of God. God loves me.” If you are with others – mark each other or offer the bowl so a person can mark themselves and say, “You are / I am human dust and the image of God. Always remember, God loves you/me.”

Let us pray:

God of open doors,
Open arms,
And open conversations,
We know
Deep in our souls
That you are forever inviting us in.
Again and again,
You invite us to take another step closer,
Another step deeper,
Another step further,
In this journey of faith.
So with your invitation in our hands,
We pray for strength and wisdom.
Show us the next right step in this journey.
We are here.
You are here.
This is holy ground.
May this holy Lenten journey begin
Once again.
Gratefully we pray,
Amen.

Song

Room for Us All

Ryan Garcia and Jenna Lindbo from Land of Sky UCC,
Kathy Lee, Stacey Krejci, CUCC Choir
Lyrics by Lenora Rand, Music by Hannah Rand
Convergence Music Project License #100002047

*They said no room
They said move on
They turned, turned you away.*

*We’ve been there too
Felt that alone
been hurt been hurt that way.*

Chorus

*Your light comes shining
Into this crying night,
Bringing hope, bringing healing,
Your love revealing.*

*Your light comes shining
into this crying night
To say it's ok,
there's room for all of us here.*

*Oh but it's hard
To open the door
Not lock, lock love away*

*We've been there too
Felt so afraid
To try, to try another way*

Chorus

Chant: We are on this earth to love

Chorus

Chant: We are on this earth to love

Sending

Go in peace. Amen.

Rev. Leah Robberts-Mosser, Rev. David Robberts-Mosser

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The CUCC Choir

Brian Clark

Stacey Krejci

Ryan Garcia, Jenna Lindbo from Land and Sky UCC

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