

**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin**

Ash Wednesday

March 5, 2025

6:30 pm



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN**

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WELCOME AND GREETING

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Earth to earth,

P: Ashes to ashes,

L: From dust we were created,

P: And to dust we shall return.

L: From the dust and ashes of our lives,

P: Create again, O Lord.

L: Create in us clean hearts, O God,

P: And renew your spirit within us.

L: Come, let us worship.

***OPENING HYMN**

Again We Keep this Solemn Fast

Black #187

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

L: In the presence of God and one another, let us confess our sin.

Holy and merciful God:

We confess to you and to one another that we have sinned.

P: We have sinned in thought, word, and deed; by what we have done and by what we have left undone.

L: We confess our past unfaithfulness;

P: Our pride, hypocrisy, and impatience;

L: Our times of thinking only of ourselves, not of our neighbors;

P: Our envy of those more fortunate than we are;

L: Our willingness to turn away from your children in need, silently thinking someone else should take care of them;

P: Our negligence in worship, prayer, and service.

L: We confess that our actions and our silences have hurt other people.

P: We confess that too often we see the environment as our servant, not as a precious gift we need to protect.

L: Accept our repentance, O God.

P: Restore our lives. Restore our relationships. Restore our ears that we might hear your call.

L: Hear us, O God, and grant us your mercy.

All: Amen.

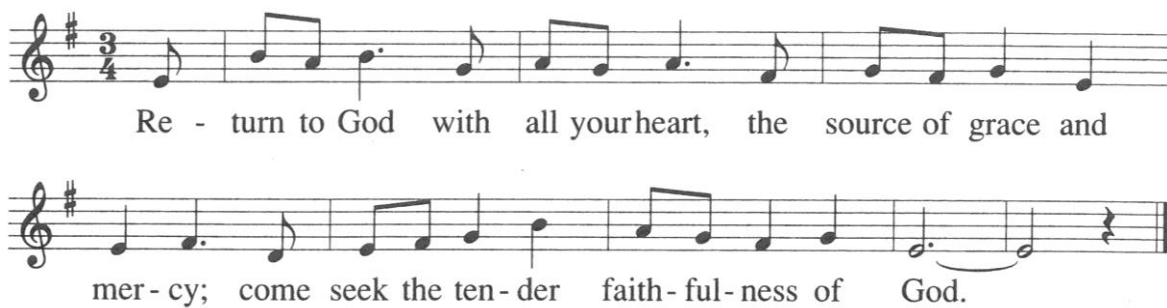
SCRIPTURE LESSON

Isaiah 58:1-12

RESPONSE

Return to God

(Sung twice)



IMPOSITION OF ASHES

L: I invite you to observe a Holy Lent.
Observe in your own heart—the wounds and prejudice you carry deep in its recesses.
Observe a practice of worship, prayer, reflection, and scripture reading.
Observe the world's pain and do not shrink away from what you see.
Observe the creative power of love and welcome and extend it to others.

P: Be with us, God, be with us.

(Please be seated until it is your turn to come forward to receive ashes.
You may receive ashes on your forehead or on your hand.)

HYMN

All Things of Dust to Dust Return

1. All things of dust to dust re - turn On
 2. Lord, mark with dust and ash my brow So
 3. Lord, mark up - on my brow this sign: A

earth and in the sky. The hot - test, bright - est
 I may com - pre - hend That ev - 'ry mo - ment
 stark and bar - ren cross Re - mind - ing me that

suns that burn In time grow dim and die. The
 here and now Links me to that same end I
 though di - vine You know my pain and loss, And

fish that leap, the birds that soar, The
 share with all that breathe and burn, That
 at the touch of dust and ash A -

new - born young that play, The leaves that fill the
 flare and fade and tire Yet by their wan - ing
 wake my heart to view How death it - self is

for - est floor Re - vert to dust and clay.
 light dis - cern Your own un - dy - ing fire.
 but a flash That dies a - way in You.

HYMN

The God of Second Chances

1. Come now, O God of sec - ond
 2. Come now, O God, re - lease our
 3. Come now, O God, and still our
 4. Come now, O God, shake our re -
 5. Come now, O God, and grant com -
 6. Come now, O God of sec - ond

chanc - es; o - pen our lives to heal.
 de - mons; o - pen our eyes to see
 an - ger; o - pen our minds to peace.
 sent - ment; o - pen our way to choose
 pas - sion; o - pen our hearts to love.
 chanc - es; may we for - give our - selves,

Re - move our hate, and melt our rage.
 the shame with - in, our guilt and pain.
 Em - brace our fear, and hold us close.
 the way of love o - ver re - venge.
 May we let go of all our hurt.
 may we be - come your liv - ing sign:

Save us from our - selves.
 Mend us; make us whole.
 Calm the storm with - in.
 Show us a new way.
 Help us to move on.
 Chil - dren of God's love.

HYMN

Where Your Treasure Is

Where your treas - ure is, there your
 heart shall be. All that you pos - sess will nev - er set you
 free. Seek the things that last; come and
 learn from me. Where your
 treas - ure is, your heart shall be.

*SERMON HYMN

Ashes

1. We rise a - gain from ash - es, from the
 2. We of - fer you our fail - ures, we
 3. Then rise a - gain from ash - es, let
 4. ♪ Thanks be to the Fa - ther, who



good we've failed to do. We rise a - gain from
 of - fer you at - tempts, The gifts not ful - ly
 heal - ing come to pain, Though spring has turned to
 made us like him - self. Thanks be to the



ash - es, to cre - ate our - selves a - new. If
 giv - en, the dreams not ful - ly dreamt. Give our
 win - ter, and sun - shine turned to rain. The
 Son, who saved us by his death.



all our world is ash - es, then
 stum - bl - ings di - rec - tion, give our
 rain we'll use for grow - ing, and cre -
 Thanks be to the Spir - it, who cre -



must our lives be true, An of - fer - ing of
 vi - sions wid - er view, An of - fer - ing of
 ate the world a - new From an of - fer - ing of
 ates the world a - new From an of - fer - ing of



ash - es, an of - fer - ing to you.
 ash - es, an of - fer - ing to you.
 ash - es, an of - fer - ing to you.
 ash - es, an of - fer - ing to you.

PRAYERS AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

L: God, remember us in your love, and teach us to pray:

P: **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.**

Your Kingdom come: your will be done on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.

For the Kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

HYMN

The Lord is My Light

(Sung twice)



THE COMMUNION

All Christians are welcome at the table of our Lord. The bread is gluten-free. Red wine and white grape juice are offered. Those choosing not to commune may receive a blessing from the servers.

The Invitation to the Supper

L: The prophet Isaiah spoke a word of critique against the people.

P: **They offered empty fasts, they gave lip service to righteousness.**

Isaiah called them back to God.

L: At this table, we too are called back to God. Our empty fasts have left us hungry in our souls.

P: **Our broken relationships leave us hurting in our hearts.**

L: "Return to the Lord," said Isaiah. Return to God's table.

The Lord will guide us and satisfy the parched and troubled places in our hearts and souls. Here we will be fed. Bring all of who you are to this table.

The Great Thanksgiving

L: The Lord be with you.

P: **And also with you.**

L: Lift up your hearts.

P: **We lift them up to the Lord.**

L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

P: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

L: We offer you praise and our hearts are lifted high...

The Words of Institution


L: We rejoice in this holy meal as we together proclaim the mystery of faith:

All: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Distribution of the Elements

Bread for the Journey

7




1,5 Give us bread for the jour - ney give us bread. Give us
2 Guide our way as we trav - el guide our way. Guide our
3 Make us one with each oth - er make us one. Make us
4 Lead us home to the gar - den, lead us home. Lead us

7



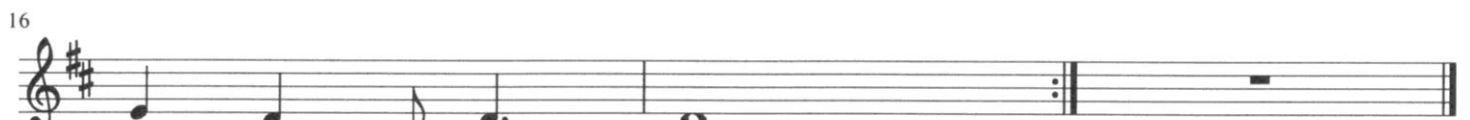
bread for the jour - ney give us bread. When our legs are get - ting
way as we trav - el guide our way. With so ma - ny roads be -
one with each oth - er make us one. All the walls we've built a -
home to the gar - den, lead us home; where we'll live with all cre -

12



heav - y, and we're hang - ing down our heads, give us bread for the
fore us where to go is hard to say. Guide our way as we
round us: may we learn to tear them down. Make us one with each
a - tion find our place and nev - er roam. Lead us home to the

16



jour - ney, give us bread.
trav - el guide our way.
oth - er, make us one.
gar - den, lead us home.

One Bread, One Body

Congregation join on refrain

***One bread, one body, one Lord of all,
one cup of blessing which we bless.***

***And we, though many, throughout the earth,
we are one body in this one Lord.***

Be Still and Know



Prayer of Thanksgiving

- L: The body and blood of Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in God's grace. Let us pray.
- P: **We give you thanks, Almighty God, that you have refreshed us at your table by granting us the presence of Jesus Christ. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and send us forth into the world in courage and peace, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

***HYMN**

Standing in the Need of Prayer

Black #519

***BLESSING AND DISMISSAL**

- L: May our hearts be torn open so that we no longer protect ourselves from the world's pain.
May our hearts be torn open so that we can release the prejudice and sorrow we hide deep in our hearts.
May our hearts be torn open so that we will know God's love, God's Spirit, God's healing.
Go with open-hearted peace to love and serve the Lord.
- P: **Amen. Thanks be to God!**

POSTLUDE

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Broken Vessel, Lauren Wright Pittman. Used with permission from the artist.

Please join us each Wednesday in Lent for food and worship. Worship will be in the Fellowship Hall with the Prayer Around the Cross Service. Our Wednesday schedule will be:

Wednesday Schedule

- 3:45 – 5:15 pm Wednesday School
- 5:15 – 6:00 pm Family Meals (sign up!)
- 5:45 – 6:30 pm Bell Practice
- 6:30 – 7:00 pm Lenten Worship: Prayer Around the Cross
- 7:00 – 7:30 pm Confirmation/Interns/Youth Group
- 7:00 – 8:15 pm Choir Practice

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Isaiah 58:1-12

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. '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. 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? 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 he 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. 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. 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.

GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

‘Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father 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 Father who sees in secret will reward you.

‘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 Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

‘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 Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

‘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.