

Joint Ash Wednesday Taize Worship 2021

Hilltop, Hiram, and Mantua Center Christian Churches

6:30pm

At the Windows? Tune your radio dial to 105.5FM

Looking for YouTube Live? Go to www.youtube.com/mantuacentercc

Taize music performed by the London Fox Taize Choir. Jesus Remember Me - Taize Songs ©

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Call to Worship - Chad

Yet even now, says the Holy One, return to me with all your heart,

With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;

Rend your hearts and not your clothing.

Return to the Lord, your God, who is gracious and merciful,

Slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,

And relents from punishment (Joel 2:12-13)

Welcome & Purpose - Chad

Welcome everyone to our Ash Wednesday service. Welcome to those at the windows and to those who are at home on YouTube Live. We're glad you are here. We join together with our siblings from Hilltop and Hiram Christian Churches. Joining me tonight in voice are Rev. Matt Kluchar from Hilltop and Pastor Sarah Smith from Mantua Center. Rev. Chris McCreight (from Hiram Christian) and I will be leading you from the windows. I'm grateful for this shared witness and our ministry together.

Tonight I would invite you to follow along in your bulletin and to recognize that there will be times of response, silence, and music.

The music this evening comes from the ecumenical Taize tradition and may be unique for some of you. The songs are written to be meditative prayers. They repeat so we can sink deeper into prayer and to fellowship with God's presence.

Friends in Christ, we begin today a 40-day journey walking with Christ to Holy Week. . We enter the Lenten season to prepare ourselves to welcome Christ into our lives anew. On Ash Wednesday we are invited to assume a posture of self-examination, confession, and penitence. To not *dwell* on our faults, but to acknowledge them and grow from them. To be mindful and find in God's forgiveness strength to keep striving, seeking, and sharing God's love in the world. To be individuals, a church, a community that more deeply reflects the love of Christ.

Let us sing and pray together...

1 - Hymn - O Lord Hear my Prayer

*O Lord, hear my prayer. O Lord, hear my prayer
When I call, answer me.*

*O Lord, hear my prayer. O Lord, hear my prayer.
Come and Listen to me*

2 - Prayer - Rev. Matt Kluchar (add to or re-write as you see fit!)

Almighty and everlasting God,

You hate nothing that you have made and forgiven the sins of all those who are penitent.
Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that, lamenting our sins and
acknowledging our wretchedness we may receive from you, the God of all Mercy, perfect
forgiveness and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

First Scripture Reading: Isaiah 58:1-12 - Rev. Matt Kluchar

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.

² Yet day after day they seek me
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that practised righteousness
and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;
they ask of me righteous judgements,
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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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?

⁶ 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?

⁷ 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?

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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,

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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.

¹² 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.

SILENCE

Gospel Reading: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21 - Rev. Matt Kluchar

¹ Beware of practising your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

² '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. ³But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁵ '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. ⁶But 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.

6 '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. ¹⁷But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so 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. ¹⁹'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

SILENCE

3 - Reading - "We Lay Bare all that We Are" by Howard Thurman - Sarah (If Sarah, feel free to find another reading you like)

Faithful God, we turn to Thee in the quietness of this meditation period. It is but natural that we expose to Thee the things in us that seem most worthy and good that we may delight Thy Spirit and joy Thy Heart. The unworthy and the ugly things in us we almost instinctively seek to hide, to cover up, that we may seem pleasing in Thy Sight. But deep within us we know that this is not enough. We know that somehow we must be totally exposed to Thee, holding back nothing, seeking refuge behind no protecting screen or darkening shadows. We do not keep back the unsightly from Thee because we cannot trust Thee, dare not run the risk, but because we cannot deny the urge to offer in prayer the best that is in us. Teach us to know that Thy love is so whole and so healing that nothing less than all of us can rise to meet Thine all-encompassing care. Teach us to share with Thee the good and the bad in us, the ugly and the beautiful, the clean and the sordid, the success and the failure—all, everything complete in every part. With penitence for fumbings, failures, ignorances and sins; with thanksgiving for directness, successes, knowledge and rightness, we lay bare all that we are to Thy love and Thy understanding, O God our Love and Light.

SILENCE

Blessing of the Ashes - Rev. Chris McCreight

From ancient times, Christians have utilized the season of Lent to intentionally search their hearts, repent, and seek forgiveness for their sin. Together we seek reconciliation with God and with one another for the ways we have hurt one another and the creation.

For many centuries, Christians have received ashes marked on their foreheads as a sign of sin's disfigurement and recognition of their own mortality. While we long for ritual such as this and while we long to be in proximity to one another - where we may gather in reach of one another; we have given of ourselves again, and re-made the ritual and symbol of Ash Wednesday this year.

Tonight, you were given a bag with a small burlap swatch on it. With Ashes, a cross has been imposed upon it. Take this as a symbol of our individual and shared repentance. As you receive and look upon it tonight and through this season, remember...we are human and we all have sin in our lives and need to repent. Remember, it is from dust that we have come, and to dust that we will return.

Let us pray:

Almighty God,
May these ashes remind us that you have created us out of the dust of the earth, May these ashes be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence. As we mourn the hurts we have caused as individuals and as community remind us that there is always new life in you; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

4 - Prayerful Music - Stay with Me (Instrumental)

*Stay with Me, Remain Here with me
Watch and Pray. Watch and Pray*

Prayer of Penitence - Rev. Chris McCreight (re-write as you see fit)

When I say "In your Mercy"...you may respond with "Lord, Hear our Prayer..."

God of Light, In the shadows of night you call to us; beckon us on, seek us out, call us to peace, to quietness, to wholeness..... In your Mercy....**Lord, hear our prayer**

The world is dark around us, filled with coldness, terror and restlessness. It is a darkness of your creation: Greed, hatred, envy: brokenness. Racism, gender-based violence, economic disparity. Individual actions and entire systems of injustice. We confess our own part.... And we confess our ignorance of the ways we have brought harm to the earth and your beloved Children. In your Mercy....**Lord, hear our prayer**

God of Wholeness, Take us and heal us of every evil within ourselves and our community. Bring us back into the comfort and closeness of your embrace, O God. Your cleansing love, O God, purifies and restores: Warm, comforting, restful. In your Mercy....**Lord, hear our prayer**

In the night we hear you call, offering love and strength and forgiveness. With you the darkness brings comfort not fear, love not hatred, righteousness not punishment. Help us walk through the darkness...but not be taken in by it. Be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. In your Mercy....**Lord, hear our prayer**

SILENCE

Declaration of God's Mercy - Rev. Chris McCreight

Hear the good news of God's reconciling love toward all, and believe: Through Christ God reconciles the whole creation, making peace and reconciling all. There is nothing that cannot be reconciled; there is no one who cannot be reconciled; this is the power and the grace of God's love - let us hold fast to this good news.

5 - Hymn - In the Lord

*In the Lord I'll be ever thankful. In the Lord, I will rejoice
Look to God, do not be afraid.
Lift up your voices, the Lord is near.
Lift up your voices, the Lord is near.*

Benediction - Rev. Chad Delaney

ONE: The End is God's. The Beginning is God's.

ALL: The Storm is God's. The Peace is God's.

ONE: The Depths are God's. The Heights are God's

ALL: The Dark is God's. The Light is God's.

ONE: For all times, all things and all ALL belong to God.

ALL: Travel with God to the end from the beginning.

ONE: Walk with the Lord of your salvation.

ALL: Continue with God during the storm as well as the peace.

ONE: Walk with the God of your deliverance.

ALL: Journey with God through the depths and the heights.

ONE: Walk with the Lord of your restoration.

ALL: Tarry with God in the dark and the light.

ONE: Walk with the Lord of your assurance;

ALL: For all times, all things and all ALL belong to God.

Litany by Lisa Frenz