

Gaithersburg Presbyterian Church – February 17, 2021
Ash Wednesday
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Welcome and Opening Music

"Change My Heart, O God"
Becky Herron Mayo, voice

Call to Worship and Opening Prayer

Scripture

Joel 2:1–2, 12–17

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near – a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness spread upon the mountains a great and powerful army comes; their like has never been from of old, nor will be again after them in ages to come. Yet even now, says the LORD, 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, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD, your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her canopy. Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep. Let them say, "Spare your people, O LORD, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"

Call to Confession

Prayer of Confession [*together*]

**Almighty and merciful God,
you hate nothing that you have made
and forgive the sins of all who are penitent;
create in us new and contrite hearts,
so that when we turn to you and confess our sins
we may receive your full and perfect forgiveness;
through Jesus Christ our Redeemer
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God now and forever.**

We confess to you, O God, the places where we benefit from the labor of others, and are enriched by their oppression. We claim things that do not belong to us, and fail to see the connections all around us.

[Silence for confession]

We confess to you, O God, that we see the shadows of the world, and pass by, letting go of work we could do, and letting evil stay in place.

[Silence for confession]

We confess to you, O God, the places where we are in bondage to our possessions, or to our position.

[Silence for confession]

We confess to you, O God, the places where we are selfish when we could be generous, and where we are judgmental where we could be compassionate.

[Silence for confession]

We confess to you, O God, the places where we choose the flashy over the true, and the quick over the lasting.

[Silence for confession]

We confess to you, O God, the places where our sins are too comfortable to change. We repeat our mistakes and fail to make the effort to change.

[Silence for confession]

We confess to you, O God, the places where we neglect your image inside us, and sell ourselves short. We fail to speak the truth, and lack the courage of your Spirit.

[Silence for confession]

Imposition of Ashes

Dust we are, and to dust we shall return. In between, we are God's beloved people. Created from dust, we are held together by extravagant love. Turn away from sin, live faithfully, embracing the Spirit of God within yourself and others.

If you have ashes at home, we invite you to place them on your forehead, or to share them with family members. If you don't have ashes, we invite you to mark your forehead with water, as you remember your baptism. Make the sign of the cross with the ashes or the water.

Assurance of Pardon

Our God does not desire the death of sinners, but rather that we may turn from our transgressions, and turn toward life. Therefore we implore God to grant us true repentance, that those things which we do this day may be pleasing to God, that the rest of our lives may be lived faithfully, and that at the last we may come to God's eternal joy; through Jesus the Christ.

Hymn "Lord, Who Throughout These 40 Days" Glory to God, #166

Scripture **Mark 1:9-15**

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And 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. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

Closing Prayer *[together]*

**God of our salvation,
we embark this day on a journey that we have made before,
a journey that will once again sweep us into unexpected places,
always in pursuit of the path of your obedient Son.
Send your Holy Spirit to open our lips
that our mouths may declare your praise
and we may be guided on this path
of penitence, prayer, and preparation. Amen.**

Invitation to Lenten Observance

Music for Reflection "I Zoi en Tafo"
Wade Meyers, soloist

Participating in the service:
Mr. Wade Meyers, Director of Music and Worship Arts
Rev. Michael McNamara, Pastor, Rockville Presbyterian Church
Rev. Mary Beth Lawrence, Gaithersburg Presbyterian Church
Rev. Mary Austin, Gaithersburg Presbyterian Church

The Assurance of Pardon is adapted from the worship resources of the UCC.

The Closing Music, *I Zoi en Tafo*, meaning “Life inside the grave” is an ancient hymn of the Orthodox church. The music is a lament for Christ, and is traditionally used on Good Friday. We use it here to open the season of Lent, knowing that these forty days will end with our lament for Jesus’ death. We must enter the grave and weep before we come to the joy of Easter morning.