

# ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH

Fredericton, N.B.

*190 Years of Glorifying God through Worship, Proclaiming the Gospel of Christ and Serving others in Christ's name*

February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023

Ash Wednesday

7 pm

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## GATHERING:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**And also with you.**

Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins.

**God's mercy endures for ever.**

## LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE:

### CALL TO REPENTANCE: Psalm 51

VU 776

Have mercy on me, O God, in your great kindness,

**in the fullness of your mercy blot out my offences.**

Wash away all my guilt, and cleanse me from my sin.

**For I acknowledge my faults, and my sin is always before me.**

Against you, you only, have I sinned, and done evil in your sight,

**so that you are justified in your sentence,**

**and blameless in your judgement.**

Guilty I have been from my birth,

a sinner from the time of my conception.

**But you desire truth in our inward being,**

**therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.**

Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean,

**wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.**

Let me hear the sounds of joy and gladness,

**let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.**

Turn away your face from my sins,

**and blot out all my iniquities.**

Put a new heart in me, O God,

**and give me again a constant spirit.**

Do not cast me away from your presence,

**do not take your holy spirit from me.**

Restore to me the joy of your salvation,

and strengthen me with a willing spirit.

**Then I will teach transgressors your ways,**

**and sinners will return to you.**

O God, open my lips,

**and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.**

You desire no sacrifice, or I would give it;

**you take no delight in burnt offerings.**

The sacrifice you accept, O God, is a broken spirit;

**a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**

*Sunday's palms are Wednesday's ashes  
as another Lent begins;  
thus we kneel before our Maker  
in contrition for our sins.  
We have marred baptismal pledges,  
in rebellion gone astray;  
now, returning, seek forgiveness;  
grant us pardon, God, this day!*

*We have failed to love our neighbours,  
their offences to forgive,  
have not listened to their troubles,  
nor have cared just how they live;  
we are jealous, proud, impatient,  
loving overmuch our things;  
may the yielding of our failings  
be our Lenten offering.*

*We are hasty to judge others,  
blind to proof of human need;  
and our lack of understanding  
demonstrates our inner greed;  
we have wasted earth's resources;  
want and suffering we've ignored;  
come and cleanse us, then restore us;  
make new hearts within us, Lord!*

**SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 146:7-10

**FIRST PRAYER OF CONFESSION:**

**RESPONSE:** God of Mercy, **Forgive Us**

Merciful and generous God,  
we come before you, conscious of our sins.  
We are ashamed and sorry for the wrong we have done  
and the good we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves;  
we have not even loved ourselves very well.  
God of mercy, **forgive us.**

We know that your beautiful world  
suffers from greed and injustice:  
children have only tears for food,  
and the forests groan in distress.  
And we know that our comfort, our standard of living,  
depends on the suffering of others and the rape of the planet.

These things disturb us,  
yet, we confess that we have not protested as we ought,  
or rushed to combat these evils as we should.  
Make us braver, Lord, to speak out and act.  
God of mercy, **forgive us.**

Loving God, you call us to be your church,  
a witness to the power of love in the world,  
but even here, we have not been faithful:  
we have not known how to work out our differences  
without painful conflict,  
and we have held on to our anger and hurt far too long.  
Set us free from these old wounds  
and draw us together into one community,  
dedicated to your purpose.  
God of mercy, **forgive us.**

Now, merciful God, we come to you in silence:  
you already know the wrong that weighs us down,  
the guilt we cannot shake.  
We ask you to take them from us now  
and set us free to begin a new life.  
(time of silence)

God of mercy, **forgive us.**

**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 18:1-9

This is the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ  
**Praise be you, O Christ.**

**REFLECTION:**

**SECOND PRAYER OF CONFESSION:**

From lack of reverence for truth and beauty;  
from a calculating or sentimental mind;  
from going along with mean and ugly things;

**Holy One, deliver us.**

From cowardice that dares not face truth;  
laziness content with half-truth;  
or arrogance that purports to know it all;

**Holy One, deliver us.**

From artificial life and worship;  
from all that is hollow or insincere;  
from trite ideals and cheap pleasures;  
from mistaking vulgarity for humour;

**Holy One, deliver us.**

From being pompous, or rude;  
from cynicism about others;  
from intolerance or cruel indifference;

**Holy One, deliver us.**

From being satisfied with things as they are,  
in the church or in the world;  
from failing to share your outrage about injustice;

**Holy One, deliver us.**

From selfishness,  
self-indulgence,  
or self-pity;

**Holy One, deliver us.**

From token concern for the poor,  
for lonely or loveless people;  
from confusing faith with good feeling,  
or love with wanting to be loved;

**Holy One, deliver us.**

For everything in us that may hide your light;

**Holy One, light of life, forgive us. Amen.**

**HYMN: *Just As I Am***

**VU 508**

*Just as I am, without one plea,  
but that thy blood was shed for me,  
and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

*Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;  
sight, riches, healing of the mind,  
yea, all I need, in thee to find,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

*Just as I am, though tossed about  
with many a conflict, many a doubt,  
fightings and fears within, without,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

*Just as I am, thy love unknown  
has broken every barrier down;  
now to be thine, yea, thine alone,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

**THIRD PRAYER OF CONFESSION:**

*You are invited to take a piece of paper and write your own prayer of confession. These prayers are between you and God.*

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sins of the world,  
grant us your peace.**

### **QUENCHING OF THE ASHES WITH BAPTISMAL WATER:**

These ashes remind us of our frailty  
and our mortality.

This water proclaims the grace of God.

The mark we bear calls us  
to walk the way of the cross.

**God our creator,  
you have formed us out of the dust of the earth.  
May these ashes be to us  
a sign of our mortality and penitence,  
so that we may remember  
that only by your gracious gift  
are we given everlasting life;  
through Jesus Christ our saviour. Amen.**

### **THE MARK OF ASHES:**

Remember you are dust,  
and to dust you shall return.  
you are part of God's holy earth:  
one with God in brokenness and blessing.

**AMEN**

### **PRAYER OF PARDON:**

#### **LORD'S PRAYER:**

**Our Father who Art in heaven  
hallowed be thy name  
Thy kingdom come thy will be done  
on Earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom  
the power and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen**

### **HYMN: *Come, O Fount of Every Blessing***

**VU 559**

*Come, O Fount of every blessing,  
tune my heart to sing your grace;  
streams of mercy, never ceasing  
call for songs of endless praise.  
Teach me some melodious sonnet,  
sung by flaming tongues above.  
Praise the mount; I'm fixed upon it,  
mount of God's unfailing love.*

*Here I pause in my sojourning,  
giving thanks for having come,  
come to trust, at every turning,  
God will guide me safely home.  
Jesus sought me when a stranger,  
wandering from the fold of God,  
came to rescue me from danger,  
precious presence, precious blood.*

*O, to grace how great a debt  
or daily I am drawn anew!  
Let that grace now, like a fetter,  
bind my wandering heart to you.  
Prone to wander, I can feel it,  
wander from the love I've known:  
here's my heart, O, take and seal it,  
seal it for your very own.*

**SENDING FORTH:**

Anyone in Christ becomes a new person altogether,  
the past is finished and gone,  
everything becomes fresh and new.

**Glory to God, whose power working in us  
can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine!  
Glory to God from generation to generation  
in the world, in the church, and in our lives!**

**BLESSING:**

May the grace of Christ, the love of God,  
and the sustaining power of the Holy Spirit  
continue to bless your Lenten journey.

**Thanks be to God! Amen.**

**CHORAL CLOSING: *Through These Lenten Days and Nights***

**VU 108 vs 1**

*Throughout these Lenten days and nights  
We turn to walk the inward way,  
Weather, meeting Christ our guide and light  
We live in hope till Easter Day.*

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*\* Adapted from Celebrate God's Presence, Ash Wednesday Service A, pg 139*

**Scripture Readers:** Narrator – Brad Webb, Disciple – Debbie Allison, Jesus – Alanna Palmer  
**Greeter:** Erin & Brad Webb **Audio Visual:** John Davis

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### CONTACT INFORMATION

224 York St., Fredericton, NB E3B 3P1

Web: [www.stpaulsunityed.ca](http://www.stpaulsunityed.ca) | Tel: 506-458-1183 | Email: [stpaulsoffice224@gmail.com](mailto:stpaulsoffice224@gmail.com)

**Minister:** Rev. Michelle Armstrong | **Organists:** Dr. Sharon Pond & Alexis Ervin

**Church Administrator:** Meghan Roebuck | **Custodian:** Rusty Blakely