

A SERVICE OF LENTEN PREPARATION

Streaming from First Congregational Church

7:00 p.m. February 17, 2021

Ash Wednesday

Gathering Music: "Come, Holy Spirit"

Come as a wisdom to children; come as new sight to the blind;
Come, Lord, as strength to my weakness; take me, soul, body and mind.

Come, Holy Spirit, I need you. Come, sweet Spirit, I pray.
Come in your strength and your power. Come in your own gentle way.

Come like a spring in the desert; come to the withered of soul.
Lord, let your sweet healing power; touch me and make me whole

Come, Holy Spirit, I need you. Come, sweet Spirit, I pray.
Come in your strength and your power. Come in your own gentle way.

Welcome and Opening Prayer

A Reading from the Psalms: Psalm 51:1-17

One: Have mercy, O God! In your boundless love,
wipe out all of my wrongdoing.

**All: Wash me! Cleanse me! I know my wrongs;
I stare at my sin all day long.**

One: I have done what is evil in your sight, O God,
Your judgment is blameless, your sentence is just.

**All: The roots of my guilt are too deep to be traced;
it was there when I took my first breath.**

One: But you long to see the truth growing within me.
Teach me your wisdom, enlighten my heart.

**All: Bathe me in sacred herbs; make me pure.
Wash my soul and make it shine.**

One: Let me hear sounds of joy and gladness;
teach these crushed bones to rejoice.

**All: Cover your eyes; turn away from my sins
and blot out my wrongdoing.**

One: Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new, upright spirit within me.

**All: O, do not cast me away from your presence;
do not take your holy spirit from me.**

One: Give me again the joy of your salvation;
keep my spirit willing within me.

**All: Then I will teach wrongdoers your ways,
and sinners will come back to you.**

One: Rescue me from violence, O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

**All: Open my lips, O sovereign God,
and my mouth will declare your praise!**

One: Superficial gifts bring you no delight;
sacrifice of things will not please you.

**All: The sacrifice acceptable to you, O God,
is the gift of my troubled spirit.
A broken heart, sorry and ready to be changed,
O God, you will never despise.**

*Hymn: "Be Still, My Soul"

Be still, my soul, The Lord is on thy side
Bear patiently, the cross of grief or pain

Leave to thy God, to order and provide
In every change, He faithful will remain
Be still, my soul, thy best thy heavenly friend
Through thorny ways, leads to a joyful end

A Hasidic Story

Naming our Burdens

Hymn: "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy"
There's a wideness in God's mercy, like the wideness of the sea.
There's a kindness in God's justice, which is more than liberty.
There's no place where earthly sorrows are more felt than in God's heaven.
There's no place where earthly failings have such kindly judgment given.

A Reading from the Prophets: Isaiah 58:5-9a

Hymn: "The Servant Song"
Brother, sister, let me serve you; let me be as Christ to you;
Pray that I might have the grace to let you be my servant, too.

We are pilgrims on a journey; we're together on this road;
We are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load.
I will hold the Christ-light for you in the nighttime of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear.
When we sing to God in Heaven we shall find such harmony,
Born of all we've known together of Christ's love and agony.
Brother, sister, let me serve you; let me be as Christ to you;
Pray that I might have the grace to let you be my servant, too.

A Reading from the Epistles: 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, 11-13

Special Music

A Reading from the Gospel: Matthew 11:28-30

Invitation and Prayers: **Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Laying Burdens Down

God, you have shown us abundant loving-kindness; you've always been willing to forgive us. Even now, you reach out to break the bonds of sin in us, so we can choose in freedom to obey you. Here in the stillness, surrounded by your love, we open our broken hearts to you. We accept your judgment; we grieve our sins; and we celebrate the wideness of your mercy, revealed to us in the flesh and blood of Jesus, in whose abundant life we are bold to pray. Amen.

*Hymn "Wherever He Leads I'll Go"
"Take up thy cross and follow Me," I heard my Master say;
"I gave My life to ransom thee, surrender your all today."
Wherever He leads I'll go. Wherever He leads I'll go.
I'll follow my Christ who loves me so, wherever He leads I'll go.
It may be thro' the shadows dim, or o'er the stormy sea;
I take my cross and follow Him, wherever He leadeth me.
Wherever He leads I'll go. Wherever He leads I'll go.
I'll follow my Christ who loves me so, wherever He leads I'll go.

Benediction

Sending Music