



*"I close my eyes, only for a moment and the moment's gone. All my dreams, pass before my eyes, a curiosity. Dust in the wind, all they are is dust in the wind."*  
[Dust in the Wind" by Kansas, 1978]

As a Christian I don't share the hollow despair of "Dust in the Wind," yet I am moved by its profound statement of what life without hope would be like. "Dust in the Wind" doesn't proclaim the Christian gospel, but it does sum up the bad news that prepares us to hear the good news of what God has done in Christ. Apart from Jesus, "all we are is dust in the wind."

On **ASH WEDNESDAY** we remember that we are dust [Psalm 103:14]. Of course we also remember that we are far more than merely dust. But Ash Wednesday gives us a chance to focus on our "dustiness," if you will. It's a day to remember the bad news of who we are apart from Christ so that we can begin to prepare for the great news of Good Friday and Easter.

Ash Wednesday is a Christian holiday (holy day) that is not required in Scripture. So it's nothing that all Christians must recognize. However, the day has been set apart by Christians for over a thousand years. It is the first day of Lent, a forty-day season of preparation for Holy Week and Easter. For centuries Christians have had ashes placed on their foreheads in the shape of a cross. The ashes remind us of our mortality. As they are being "imposed" on our foreheads we hear the bad news from Genesis 3:19: "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return." Yet, because the ashes are imposed in the shape of the cross, they also suggest the hope of Easter that is yet to come, that which will deliver us from eternal death.

Some church members complain that Ash Wednesday service is "a real downer." To be sure it is not joyous in the way most worship services are. Yet Ash Wednesday is our recognition that apart from God we are indeed "dust in the wind." Yet into this dust God breathed, not only the breath of earthly life, but also the breath of his Spirit. Thus Ash Wednesday's vivid reminder of our mortality leads us, not to despair, but to hope. It points not to defeat, but to the coming victory of Easter. Ash Wednesday is the beginning, not the end.

The ashes that are used are prepared by burning the palm leaves kept from the previous year's Palm Sunday celebrations and mixing them with olive oil as a fixative. As the first day of Lent, it comes the day after Shrove Tuesday or Mardi Gras, the last day of the Carnival season. The word "Carnival" is in fact derived from Latin *carne vale*: "farewell, meat".

# Ash Wednesday Service



# Ash Wednesday Service

February 22, 2012

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**Prelude** “March to the Cross”

*Dee McCallister, Organist*

Rev. Steve Gedon

**Call to Worship**

**Opening Prayer**

**Opening Hymn** “I Am Thine, O Lord” [#419]

**Old Testament**, Micah 6:1-8 Rev. Elizabeth Campbell

**Psalter 103:8-14**

The LORD is compassionate and gracious,  
**slow to anger, abounding in love.**

He will not always accuse,  
**nor will he harbor his anger forever;**

He does not treat us as our sins deserve  
**or repay us according to our iniquities.**

For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
**so great is his love for those who fear him;**

as far as the east is from the west,  
**so far has he removed our transgressions from us.**

As a father has compassion on his children,  
**so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;**

for he knows how we are formed,  
**he remembers that we are dust.**

**Special Music** “Roses and Thorns”

*FUMC Sanctuary Choir*

**Prayer of Confession** Rev. Ed Lowe

**Lord’s Prayer**

**Offering of Thanksgiving**

Offertory

Blessing of the Gifts

“Lenten Offering”

**Voice of the Prophets** Ezekiel 37:1-10

**Meditation** Rev. Steve Gedon

**Blessing of the Ashes** Rev. Diane Kenaston

**Imposition of Ashes**

The ashes are a seal upon the forehead or hand with the following words...

*“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”*

**Responsive Reading** (Psalm 51)

**Closing Hymn** “Take My Life, and Let it Be” #399

**Benediction**

*Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to him from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus forever and ever. Amen*

**Postlude** “Lamb of Glory”

