

CC, SB, Merlin, TS, and TQ Pastoral Charges

Ash Wednesday – March 5th, 2025

at St. Andrew's United Church at 10 am.

Prelude:

Welcome & Announcements:

A few announcements about upcoming Easter Services:

- Faith Talk – Wednesday Mornings at 10 am at the Kitchen in Charing Cross
- Maundy Thursday – Charing Cross United Church at 7 pm.
- Good Friday – Talbot Street United Church at 10:30 am. Come at 10 am for coffee and hot cross buns.
- Easter SONRise Service: Pardoville at 6:30 am. Park in “Pardovilla’s” Parking Lot.
- Easter SONRise Breakfast: St. Luke’s at 7:30 am. Freewill Offering with the proceeds offered to Mission & Service.
- Easter Service: March 31st, with communion.

Continue to share our websites; at southbuxton.ca, and talbotstreet.ca . Also check out Charing Cross’ Face Book page for their services and announcements.

Lighting of the Christ Candle:

Introduction to Ash Wednesday:

Ash Wednesday begins our Lenten journey, and it can be – needs to be – both an individual and a corporate experience. Today there will be space for quiet reflection. The Ash Wednesday service allows you to contemplate the state of your soul and your continuing walk with Christ.

As you Lenten journey begins, we offer some questions to reflect upon:

- Am I moving forward on my discipleship journey?
- Am I prioritizing the things that will bring me healing and wholeness?
- Am I paying attention to the relationships that come with my faith, with God and neighbor?

You may consider Lent a time for repentance, for making a catalog of personal sins as a way of asking for forgiveness and leaving behind old behaviors and priorities. Confession and repentance are central to the Season of Lent and especially to this Ash Wednesday Service. But dwelling on sin and sinful behaviors without considering what might replace or transform these behaviors doesn’t bring the changes that you are seeking. What spiritual disciplines might we offer today that helps us to begin that work? What hope do you require so that year after year you do not find yourself in the same place in your faith walk?

Transformation is found in the work of the wider community. Together we can encourage and keep one another accountable as we seek to grow as disciples. In worship, we can practice this as we sing together and pray together. We accompany one another to receive the imposition of ashes. While this may seem like a private and individual act of worship, it is done in public, and the sign of our mortality and need of a savior is visible to all. The difference here is that there are those around us, who also bear that sign. We seek the comfort of fellow travelers on the journey, pilgrims making their way with us to that embrace of holiness we call sanctification or, in Wesleyan terms, Christian perfection or perfection in love. Love is about relationship, about binding hearts together for mutual support and to multiply acts of service.

Today we will use songs to be a spark for individual and corporate contemplation.

Recorded Song: “Fix You” by Coldplay

The song talks about the individual experience of missing the mark and the relational promise to work together for healing. Ash Wednesday may not be about being “fixed”, but it is certainly an acknowledgement of the need to continue the journey toward being a disciple of Jesus Christ. Let us come together in Worship.

Call To Worship:

Eric: We come, aware of our sin, of all the ways we miss the mark. God welcomes you with compassion.

People: **We come, longing for restoration, to be made new.**

Eric: God surrounds you with grace and forgiveness, reconciling you to God and one another.

People: **We come, thirsting for reconciliation, to draw close to God and one another.**

Eric: God embraces you with love, reuniting us with God and one another.

People: **Sustain in us, O God, a willing spirit to return to the joy of our salvation as we journey together through the season of Lent.**

Hymn: VU 108 “Sunday’s Palms are...”

- 1 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!
- 3 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!

Video: Annette burning the palms into ashes

Opening Prayer:

Gracious God, out of your love and mercy you breathed into dust the breath of life, creating us to serve you and our neighbors. Call forth our prayers and acts of kindness, and strengthen us to face our mortality with confidence in the mercy of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Liturgy:

(Begin with a blast from a shofar)

Eric: Get ready; get ready to return to God.

People: Place your trust in God and God alone!

(Shofar is played again.)

Eric: Return to the Lord!

People: It is not always easy to return to God; we have had our way for so long.

Eric: Blow the trumpet. *(Shofar is played again.)* Sound the alarm. Call the young and the old; tell everyone that the Lord is coming.

People: It is not easy to talk about the Lord to people who have heard our preaching so many times.

Eric: Call for a fast.

People: Fasting is not easy; we hunger for so many things.

Eric: Nobody said it would be easy. But we must return to the Lord. The Coming of the Lord is near!

People: We commit to turn from our old ways.

Eric: Nobody said it would be easy.

People: We will turn our lives over to the One who makes a way.

Eric: Nobody said it would be easy.

People: Nobody said it would be easy, but we must return to the LORD!

Prayer of Confession: *(inspired by Psalm 51)*

People: On this first day of Lent we pause, look within, and examine our consciousness. Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love.

Where we have neglected prayer, been apathetic in worship, found reasons to avoid generosity, or lacked compassion: Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love.

Where we have colluded in the oppression of those who become invisible in their suffering, and ignored on the streets: Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love.

Where anxiety has eroded the gift of Your peace, and where we have cared too much about what others think: Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love.

Words of Assurance:

Eric: As Lent begins, know that God understands how we struggle to stay open and compassionate. The invitation is not to focus on our inadequacies, but on God's gift of grace and love which

transforms our hearts and minds. That gift is given to us again, here and now.
Be encouraged.

People: Amen.

Liturgy of the Ashes:

Eric: When we burn away all that we are and all that we have, when we burn away all that we think and feel, when we burn away all attachment and ego, we are reduced to this (*indicate ashes*).

People: Carbon, dust, ash. It has no form and very little substance. It is virtually nothing. And yet, out of the ashes can come new life. Will you let it all fall away? Will you let it burn?

Eric: When we burn away all we have done, that we ought not to have done, when we burn away all we have not done that we ought to have done, when we burn away all that is not love, our hearts are ready to return to God.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 6: 1 - 6

When you do good deeds, don't try to show off. Your Father knows what is done in secret, and he will reward you. When you pray, don't be like those show-offs who love to stand up and pray in the meeting places and on the street corners. They do this just to look good. I can assure you that they already have their reward. When you pray, go into a room alone and close the door. Pray to your Father in private. He knows what is done in private, and he will reward you. When you go without eating, don't try to look gloomy as those show-offs do when they go without eating. I can assure you that they already have their reward. Instead, comb your hair and wash your face. Then others won't know that you are going without eating. But your Father sees what is done in private, and he will reward you. Your heart will always be where your treasure is.

Eric: We invite you to come forward and dip your fingers into the water in the Baptismal Fount and make a sign of the cross in the palm of your other hand. The water reminds us of our baptism, and in baptism we are forgiven.

Eric: Then come to the ashes, where we will mark the "sign of the cross", either on the back of your hand or on your forehead. As you come forward, we will hear the music of The Wesley Covenant – "I Am Yours".

Recorded Song: "I am Yours" by The Wesley Covenant

Eric: We begin this journey of our return to God marked with a symbol of great humility – ashes to ashes and dust to dust, from dust we have come and to dust we shall return. We start our journey by returning to our rightful place in the grand scheme of things. We are invited on this journey to become one in relationship with God and God's Creation. We begin this journey with humility and confidence.

Epistle Reading: 2 Corinthians 5: 20 - 24

We were sent to speak for Christ, and God is begging you to listen to our message. We speak for Christ and sincerely ask you to make peace with God. Christ never sinned! But God treated him as a sinner, so that Christ could make us acceptable to God. We work together with God, and we beg you to make good use of God's kindness to you. In the Scriptures God says, "When the time came, I listened to you, and when you needed help, I came to save you." That time has come. This is the day for you to be saved.

Recorded Music: “Oh, The Deep, Deep Love of Jesus” by TG4

Blessing:

Eric: Created from dust, held together by God’s extravagant love, we turn away from sin, and leave today embracing God’s love.

Postlude: