

Ash Wednesday Prayer Service

adapted/created by Reverend Kathleen C. Rolenz
West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church
Rocky River, OH

WORDS of Welcome and Invocation
SONG: "Gathered Here"
FIRST Reading: Isaiah 58:1-12

PSALM 51 (*Responsively*)

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.

Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.

The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

PRAYER of Confession.

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 neighbors as ourselves; we have not even loved ourselves very well. God of mercy, forgive us.

Lord have mercy.

We know that your beautiful world suffers from greed and injustice: Children go hungry, with 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 ruin of the planet. These things disturb us, yet, we confess we have not protested as we ought, or rushed to combat these evils as we should. Make us braver, dear God, to speak out and act. God of mercy, forgive us.

Lord have mercy.

Loving God, you call us to be your church, a witness to the transforming power of love in the world. But even here, we have not been faithful. We have held on to our anger and hurt for too long, we have not known how to work out our differences without painful conflict. Set us free from all our old wounds. Draw us together in community dedicated to your purpose in all that we do. God of mercy, forgive us.

Lord have mercy.

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

(Silent meditation and reflection).

God of mercy, forgive us.

Lord have mercy.

SONG: "Wade in the Water"

SECOND Reading: Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-21

Prayer *(responsively)*

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 humor;

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 and the world;
From failing to share your outrage about injustice;

Holy One, deliver us.

From token concern for the poor;
From lack of sympathy for lonely or loveless people;
From confusing faith with feeling good;
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.

REFLECTION

THE PRAYER OF JESUS

SONG: "Ubi Caritas"

SENDING Forth *(Responsively)*

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.
BENEDICTION