

Aldersgate United Methodist Church



7:00 p.m.

Videographer: Nancy Taylor
Usher/Greeter: Pat & Larry Ruth
Lector: Stacey Lienemann

February 14, 2024

Ministers: All of Aldersgate's Members
Pastor: Joseph Rafique
Director of Music: Julie Clopper-Smith
Keyboardist: Deanna Steward
Organist: Jan Malone
Digital Media Specialist: Nancy Taylor
Administrative Assistant: Stacey Lienemann
Custodian: Scott Hoyt

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*Worshippers are welcomed to use their own terminology for God.
If you are considering membership, please contact our pastor, 402-489-1510.*



February 14, 2024

Greeting and Announcements (*Joseph*)

PASTOR: The grace, mercy and peace from God the Creator, Jesus the Savior and Spirit the Comforter, be with you.

ALL: **And also with you.**

Music for Centering Prayer

“Longing to Lay Down My Striving in Your Presence, Jesus” — video
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Call to Worship

JOSEPH: It's time! It's time!

STACEY: *Gather all the people!*

ALL: **We are coming to worship.**

JOSEPH: Hurry! Hurry, this is important!

STACEY: *Why gather?*

ALL: **We are coming into the presence of God.**

JOSEPH: We are coming to say we are sorry.

STACEY: *We are coming to remember that God loves us.*

ALL: **We are coming to worship God.**

Opening Prayer (*Stacey*)

LEADER: Gracious and loving God, we gather together and offer our prayer of thanksgiving for your care and compassion in which you promise: “I do not take pleasure in the death of the wicked. Rather I wish the wicked to turn from their evil ways and live.” (Ezekiel 18:23)

ALL: **May we share that same care and compassion with one another, friends or strangers. Keep our hearts and minds on you so that as Christ-centered servants, we can make a difference in your world doing your work with our hands and voice. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**

Hymn #269 (red)

“Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days”

Ashes of Lament Confession and Words of Forgiveness (*Joseph*)

PASTOR: Father God, your knowledge of us is perfect — the situations we face, the decisions we make, our motives, our passions, our desires. We long to act justly, but so often sin stains our deeds, just as dust and ashes smear and discolor that which was clean. So, we pour out these ashes, watching them cover the bright clean surface beneath and we remember the ways in which we have failed to live by your standards.

ALL: **Your plan, obscured by our selfish motives. Your light, smothered by things we wish to hide. Your love, made fruitless by our inaction. Your world, tainted by our sin.** (pause)

PASTOR: We acknowledge and cry out in shame for our part in the wider issues that affect our world. With these ashes of lament, we remember.

ALL: **The world's poor, kept poor by our wasteful lifestyle. Creation's beauty, marred by our selfish carelessness. The innocent, caught in the middle of our unjust conflicts.**

PASTOR: In all these things, our personal, national and global failings, we call out to you to act, to forgive. To restore the brightness of your love, and the radiance of your glory. We receive your forgiveness that pours from the cross. We receive your empowering to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with you.

ALL: **Amen.**

(by Kieran Metcalfe)

Word of God Proclaimed (*Joseph*)

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Response to God's Word (*Joseph*)

PASTOR: In faith, let us respond to God's word together. We believe in God:

ALL: **therefore, we know we are not God.**

PASTOR: We believe in Jesus Christ. Therefore, we can see the difference between God made flesh

ALL: **and the reality of our own lives.**

PASTOR: We believe in the Holy Spirit. Therefore we know, all too well,

ALL: **the distance between ourselves and truth.**

Hymn #2152 (black)

"Change My Heart, O God"

Gospel Lesson (*Stacey*)

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

(The Word is among us. We will hold silence before its call to us.)

Response to God's Word (*Stacey*)

LEADER: Let us enter the time of Lent by looking at the cross, people who stand among others as truly human — no better, no worse, simply offered the grace of God as we go. We remember some moments of courage and faithfulness, the times when we cheered on the good of life, like the laying of palm branches for the journey of Jesus Christ to Jerusalem.

ALL: **Then we remember how we turned our faces away, in doubt and fear, in failure and weakness, and the palm branches of our better moments become as ashes.**

LEADER: As we enter the time of Lent, we will stay in humble silence with our own humanness. Let us name who we are before our God.

ALL: **We will stay this day with our own humanness, for we are born of the earth and will one day return to it. We know who we are. We are not God.**

Homily (*Joseph*)

"Come Back to Life"

Imposition of Ashes (*Joseph*)

(receiving the mark of our humanness)

PASTOR: We take the hurts, the pains, the sins of the past (lift the ashes) and this powerful symbol of God's healing (lift cross). God holds all we have done and heals it, giving it a new shape in love. God raises us up from the dirt and ashes of all that we seek to leave behind and gives us a new birth through forgiveness.

ALL: **Thanks be to God. Amen.**

PASTOR: Now, I invite those who wish to come forward to receive this symbol of our mortality on your forehead or back of your hand. The mark bears witness to your preparedness to own that you are an ordinary human being. Dust thou art and to dust thou shall return. You may also draw a symbol of God's grace such as a cross, heart, fish in the ashes on the table and you are invited to leave your offering in the plates provided.

Response to Receiving the Ashes (*Joseph*)

PASTOR: An ending and a beginning: the end of our old selves, and a new beginning in faith.

ALL: **In the dirt and ashes of my old life, a new life is born.**

PASTOR: An ending and a beginning: the end of living in the shadows, and a beginning to living within the light.

ALL: **In the dirt and ashes of my old life, a new life is born.**

PASTOR: An ending and a beginning: the end of a life that brings hurt, and a beginning to a life that offers healing.

ALL: **In the dirt and ashes of my old life, a new life is born.**

PASTOR: An ending and a beginning: the end of a journey going away from God, and a beginning of a journey to God.

ALL: **In the dirt and ashes of my old life, a new life is born.**

Prayer (*Joseph*)

PASTOR: Let us pray.

ALL: **Loving God, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, I return to you with all my heart. See, I have marked myself with a sign. I confess, I cling to my possessions as if they could save me and embrace my own customs and habits as if there were no other way. My faith is second-hand and my prayer life is narrow and unfocused. I settle for appearance rather than for substance, for looking good rather than for being good. Some days I want to change, to embrace a better way. But it is hard to adopt new patterns, risk renewal and commit myself to the One whose devotion led to a cross. Let your light break forth like the dawn, I pray, and your healing spring up quickly. Guide me, satisfy me, make me strong, in Jesus' name I ask. Amen.**

PASTOR: And let us remember in prayer the One through whom we pray: whose way is love, whose wisdom is justice, whose heart is compassion, whose promise and call is peace and who taught his disciples to pray saying:

ALL: **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, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

Hymn #357 (red)

“Just As I Am, Without One Plea”

Commissioning and Blessing (*Joseph*)

PASTOR: Let us move into this holy Lent in faith and truth, touching each other's lives as people of God, blessed and graced.

ALL: **We have considered what is ours to cling to and what we need to release.**

PASTOR: You have received a sign of your mortality and a sign of your faith.

ALL: **We go into this holy Lent as the people of God.**

PASTOR: Go, God's beloved, seek reconciliation, discover the promises of God and live into them. The grace, mercy and peace from God the Creator, Jesus the Savior and Spirit the Comforter, go with you.

ALL: **Amen. And also with you.**

PASTOR: Amen.

(You are invited to stay and listen or leave as you wish. Thank you to those who have participated in tonight's worship.)

Postlude

“What Wondrous Love Is This?” — arr. Mark Hayes