



ASH Wednesday

March 5, 2025

6:30 pm



First Congregational Church, UCC
1201 Jefferson Street
Muskegon, MI

ASH WEDNESDAY
March 5, 2025

WELCOME

Lent is a time when we are reminded of two things:
God is God and we are not, thanks be to God!

SALUTATION AND OPENING PRAYER

In the name of God, our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.

Amen.

The grace, mercy and peace of God and of
Christ Jesus our Savior be with you all.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

**Almighty and merciful God,
you hate nothing that you have made
and forgive the sins of all who are penitent;
create in us new and contrite hearts,
so that when we turn to you and
confess our sins we may receive
your full and perfect forgiveness;
through Jesus Christ our Redeemer
who lives and reigns with you and the
Holy Spirit, one God now and forever.
Amen.**

FIRST READING

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near— a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness spread upon the mountains a great and powerful army comes; their like has never been from of old, nor will be again after them in ages to come. Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord, your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her canopy. Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep. Let them say, "Spare your people, O Lord, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"

RESPONSIVE READING

Psalm 51

Have mercy on 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.
For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgement.
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.

SECOND READING

II Corinthians 5:20b-6:10 NT p.181

So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you." See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!

GOSPEL READING

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21 NT p. 5

"Beware of practicing your piety before others
in order to be seen by them;
for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.
"So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you,
as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets,
so that they may be praised by others.

Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.

But when you give alms,
do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,
so that your alms may be done in secret;
and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites;
for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues
and at the street corners, so that they
may be seen by others.

Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.

But whenever you pray, go into your room and
shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret;
and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

INVITATION TO OBSERVE A HOLY LENT

BLESSING AND GIVING OF THE ASHES

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

ending with the Lord's Prayer:

God, who is gracious and merciful, does not desire the death of sinners but rather that they should turn from their sinful ways and live.

Let us pray that we may truly accept the reconciliation and new life that God offers to each of us.

Lord, hear our prayer.

In God's mercy is our hope.

Let us pray that we may learn to receive mercy and to extend it to others.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Change is the one constant of our lives, but not all change is progress.

Let us pray that we may encourage the changes in ourselves and in our community that will bring us closer to God's vision of shalom.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Whether for good or ill, it is often through those who bear the name of Christ that others form their opinion of God.

Let us pray that we may be a living sign of God's love

Lord hear our prayer.

Now let us join in the prayer that Jesus himself taught us,

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 debts as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power,

and the glory, forever.

Amen.

Those who wish may stand

CLOSING HYMN

Those who wish may stand

Just as I Am

1 Just as I am, with - out one plea
2 Just as I am, and wait - ing not
3 Just as I am, though tossed a - bout
4 Just as I am, thou wilt re - ceive,

but that thy blood was shed for me,
to rid my soul of one dark blot,
with man - y a con - flict, man - y a doubt,
wilt wel - come, par - don, cleanse, re - lieve;

and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
to thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
fight - ings and fears with - in, with - out,
be - cause thy prom - ise I be - lieve,

O Lamb of God, I come! I come!
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

BLESSING AND SENDING

Today's Service

Rev. Tim Vander Haar	Senior Minister
John Mattson	Organist
Mike Akhurst	Cantor
Michael Match	Audio and Video

All music reprinted by permission under ONELICENSE #A-727828

First Congregational Church, UCC is an Open and Affirming Community

"We, the people of First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, of Muskegon, care for the welfare of our community and welcome everyone, no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey. We welcome into our community people of every age, race, nationality, mental and physical ability, economic and social status, faith background, marital standing, family structure, gender identity and expression, and sexual orientation. We also invite you to share in the life, leadership, worship, fellowship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings, and joys of our congregation as we seek to grow together in faith and love."

Adopted by congregational vote 10/17/21