



LENT

CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
30 N. CLINTON ST.
IOWA CITY, IA 52245
319-337-4301

WORSHIP FOR FEBRUARY 14, 2024
A SERVICE FOR THE BEGINNING OF LENT

“The cross...is the sign of Christ’s victory over death. It might be good stoicism to receive a mere reminder of our condemnation to die, but it is not Christianity.”

Thomas Merton

PRELUDE “Wondrous Love” Setting by John Carter

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

Return to God who is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

**For God will comfort the people,
and will have compassion on those who suffer.**

*HYMN 261 “God of Compassion, in Mercy Befriend Us” (vs. 1 & 2)

**God of compassion, in mercy befriend us;
Giver of grace for our needs all availing,
Wisdom and strength for each day do Thou send us,
Patience untiring and courage unfailing.**

**Wandering and lost, Thou hast sought us and found us,
Stilled our rude hearts with Thy Word of consoling;
Wrap now Thy peace, like a mantle, around us,
Guarding our thoughts and our passions controlling.**

*OPENING PRAYER

God of grace, through love you have made us, and for love you call us to turn toward new life. Your forgiveness is fresh every day. Strengthen our prayers and our acts of tenderness. Help us to face our mortality, that we may reach with confidence for your mercy. Restore to us the joy of your salvation and give us your Holy Spirit that we may serve you with willing hearts, bearing witness to your abundant compassion in all the world. Amen.

OPENING WORDS

SCRIPTURE LESSON Malachi 3:6-8

PSALM 130

Out of the depths have I called to you, O Lord;
Lord, hear my voice;
let your ears consider well the voice of my supplication.

**If you, Lord, were to note what is done amiss,
O Lord, who could stand?**

For there is forgiveness with you;
therefore you shall be revered.

**I wait for you, O Lord; my soul waits for you;
in your word is my hope.**

My soul waits for the Lord,
more than those who watch by night long for the morning,
more than those who watch by night long for the morning.

**Wait in hope for the Lord,
for with the Lord there is mercy;**

[Unison]

**there is ample redemption with the Lord,
who shall redeem you from all your sins.**

SCRIPTURE LESSON Mark 1:14-15

SOLO "Create in Me a Clean Heart" Carl Mueller
Chris Nakielski, soloist

SERMON "Turning and Returning"

*HYMN "'Tis the Gift to Be Simple"

**'Tis the gift to be simple,
'tis the gift to be free,
'tis the gift to come down
where we ought to be,
and when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'twill be in the valley of love and delight.
When true simplicity is gained
to bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed,**

**to turn, turn, will be our delight
till by turning, turning we come round right.**

TIME OF PRAYER

Prayers of the People

Silent Prayer

The Prayer of Our Savior

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.

INVITATION TO THE OPPORTUNITY AND JOY OF LENT

*CALL TO CONFESSION

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Merciful God, whose care never ceases, we come to you as we are. We are tired from trying to do more than we can manage. We are anxious about problems which go unresolved. We are worried about events beyond our control.

For mistakes we cannot redeem, for tasks left undone, for uncertain goals, we need your forgiveness and ask for your understanding. For recovery of strength and enthusiasm, we pray for your Spirit. For fullness of life, generous hearts, and contented souls, we pray to be followers of Christ Jesus. In your mercy, restore us and lead us. Amen.

*ASSURANCE OF PARDON

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE (#85, vs. 1)

**What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul,
What wondrous love is this, O my soul!
What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss
To bear the heavy cross for my soul, for my soul,
To bear the heavy cross for my soul!**

*PASSING THE PEACE

As a sign of our reconciliation, let us greet one another. The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

RECEIVING ASHES

Those who wish may come forward to receive ashes. They will be placed on your forehead, or, if you prefer, extend your hand and the ashes will be placed on the top of your hand. The ashes are from palm branches used in last year's Palm Sunday worship, mixed with oil.

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

We remember Jesus' compassionate searching for the outcasts of society, and pray for a similar compassion;

We remember Jesus' conflict with the powers of evil, and pray for the same courage to stand against what is wrong;

We remember Jesus' refusal to be bound by the past, and pray that we may use this freedom for ourselves and honor it in others;

We remember the way Jesus showed God's love for all creation, and pray that we may mediate his love and power in our own time. Amen.

*HYMN 223 "O My Soul, Bless Your Redeemer" (vs. 1, 2, & 4)

**O my soul, bless your Redeemer;
All within me, bless God's Name;
Bless the Savior, and forget not
All God's mercies to proclaim;**

**God forgives all your transgressions,
All diseases gently heals;
God redeems you from destruction,
And with you so kindly deals.**

**As it was without beginning,
So it lasts without an end;
To their children's children ever
Shall God's righteousness extend.**

*BENEDICTION

Sisters and brothers, let us claim the freedom Christ gives us
by his self-giving on the cross.

May Christ enable us to serve together in faith, hope, and love.

Go in peace and serve the Lord.

Go in peace and serve the people.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

POSTLUDE "Wondrous Love" Setting by John Carter

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|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Minister: | The Rev. Bill Lovin |
| Director of Children's Programs: | The Rev. Ann Molsberry |
| Organist: | Bill Crouch |
| Choir Director | Chris Nakielski |
| Office Manager | Jenn Harden |

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IMPORTANT DATES IN LENT AND EASTER

February 14—Ash Wednesday

Pancake Supper from 6:00-7:00

Worship Service at 7:00 p.m.

February 18—First Sunday in Lent

March 3—Third Sunday in Lent; Communion Sunday

March 24—Palm Sunday

One Great Hour of Sharing Offering

March 28—Maundy Thursday

Communion and Service of Tenebrae at 7:00 p.m.

March 29—Good Friday

Worship at Noon

March 31—Easter Sunday

Sunrise Service at 7:30 a.m.; Breakfast in Rockwood Hall; Festival Easter Service at 10:15 a.m.