

Ash Wednesday

February 18, 2026

6:30 p.m.

+ Indicates those times when all who are able may stand.
Bold indicates congregational response.

Ringling of the Bell

Welcome & Announcements

Prelude "A Lenten Prayer" Calkins

Call to Worship (*Inspired by Isaiah 58:6-9 NRSVUE*)

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free and break every yoke?
Is it not sharing our bread with the hungry and bringing the homeless poor into our house when we see the naked, to cover them and not hide ourselves from our own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you; the glory of God shall be your rear guard.

Then we shall call, and HE will answer. We shall cry for help, and SHE will say, "Here I am."

Gathering Prayer

Let us pray:

Divine Maker, the One who crafted bodies both earthly and celestial, we attune to your presence. May the words spoken, the songs sung, and the prayers offered in this sacred space resonate with us and through us. May what we experience here cause us to break forth with a renewed sense of hope and joy. Amen.

First Reading of Scripture 2 Corinthians 6:1-10 NRSVue

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church...

Thanks be to God!

+ Opening Hymn No. 551 "As a Fire Is Meant for Burning"

Call to Confession

Prayer of Confession

Lifter of Our Heads, help us to turn away from hollow thoughts and empty rituals. Let nothing false be found in us. Sustain us in our desire to worship you in spirit and in truth. Help us to see the sacred all around us and in us and to treat each other like the Divine image bearers we are.

Words of Grace (*Inspired by Isaiah 58:11 NRSVUE*)

Beloved, rest assured that the Holy One will guide you continually and satisfy your needs in parched places and make your bones strong, and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water whose waters never fail.

Praise be to God! Amen.

Second Reading of Scripture Matthew 6:1-21 NRSVue

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church...

Thanks be to God!

Anthem "Savior Look Upon the Tears" arr. Weber
Chancel Choir + John Phillips, soprano saxophone

Reflection

Ritual of Breath and Ashes

In a beginning, Spirit formed the human body from dust and then breathed into that body, and the human became a living soul. The dust was pulled from the cosmos, the stars. Stars contain oxygen, carbon, hydrogen, and nitrogen, and so do we. We are alive because the Spirit animates us, and our spirits are clothed in flesh made from stars. Let us honor the words of Ecclesiastes 12:7 (MSG)

The body is put back in the same ground it came from.
The spirit returns to God, who first breathed it.
We give thanks for the closeness we have in you and with you O God.
You are always as close as our next breath.
We marvel at how intentional you were in our design.
You crafted us from stars and like stars, bid us to shine
We broke forth with you, shining in a beginning.
And we will return to you luminously, in the end.
Beloved, we gather in this solemn moment, to pause and to reflect.
We remember.

+ Imposition of Ashes

Pastoral 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.

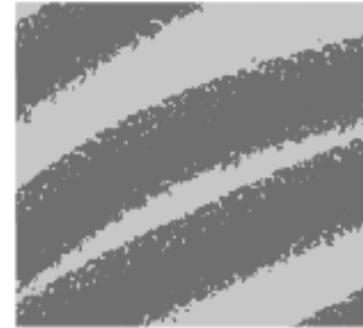
+ Closing Hymn No. 465 *“Lord, Be Glorified”*

+ Benediction

+ Postlude *“Ever in the Faith”* Broughton

Break Forth: Service Prayers for Ash Wednesday Year A was written by Rev. Teña T. Nock, who serves as the Associate Pastor of Digital Ministry, First United Church of Tampa, United Church of Christ. Mystic in the making.

Rev. Nicholas Knoblauch, Pastor
Brenda Herring, Organist + Karen Stafford, Music Director
David Bean, Sound/Video Tech + Maxine Harrison, Connie Thompson, Ushers



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Zion United Church of Christ
Union, Missouri