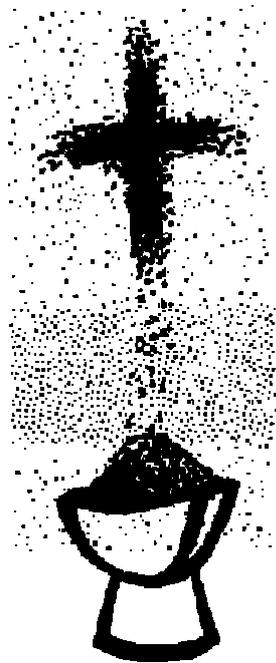




The North Bedford Church Partnership

Putnoe Heights &
St Mark's Church



Ash Wednesday The Imposition of Ashes & Holy Communion

Return to the LORD your God,
for he is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and abounding in love,
Joel 2:13

This service is taken from Methodist Worship

THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Minister: "The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart he will not despise."

Grace and peace to you
from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

A HYMN may be sung

Minister: Sisters and brothers in Christ, since early days Christians have observed with great devotion the time of our Lord's passion, death and resurrection. It is the custom of the Church to prepare for this by a season of penitence and self-denial.

At first, this season of Lent was observed by those being prepared for Baptism at Easter and by those seeking restoration to the Church's fellowship. In the course of time, all Christians were invited to keep these days carefully, to take to heart the call to repentance, to receive the assurance of forgiveness proclaimed in the Gospel, and so to grow in faith and devotion to our Lord.

In the name of Christ, therefore, I invite you to observe this holy season of Lent, by prayer, self-denial and charitable giving; by self-examination and repentance; and by reading and meditating on God's word.

SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD

Minister: Jesus, Saviour of the world, come to us in your mercy:

All: we look to you to save and help us.

Minister: By your cross and your life laid down
you set your people free:

All: we look to you to save and help us.

Minister: When they were ready to perish you saved your
disciples:

All: we look to you to come to our help.

Minister: In the greatness of your mercy
loose us from our chains:

All: forgive the sins of all your people.

Minister: Make yourself known
as our saviour and mighty deliverer:

All: save us and help us that we may praise you.

Minister: Come now and dwell with us Lord Christ Jesus:

All: hear our prayer and be with us always.

Minister: And when you come in your glory:

**All: make us to be one with you
and to share the life of your kingdom.**

THE COLLECT FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

**All: 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 Lord. Amen.**

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Readings for Ash Wednesday Joel 2:1-2 & 12-17, Isaiah 58:1-12; Psalm 51 1-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Psalm 51 (*said by all*)

Have mercy on me, O God,
in your constant love;
in the fullness of your mercy
blot out my offences.
Wash away all my guilt,
and cleanse me from my sin.
create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
Give me the joy of your help again
and strengthen me with a willing spirit.

Old Testament and / or Epistle:

after the reading:

Reader: This is the word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God

A HYMN *may be sung*

All stand

A reading from the Gospel according to

Reader: Hear the Gospel of Christ:

All: **Glory to Christ our Saviour.**

The Gospel is read.

Reader: This is the Gospel of Christ:

All: **Praise to Christ our Lord.**

SERMON

The Ten Commandments

Hear the commandments which God has given to his people:

- 1 I am the Lord your God;
you shall have no other gods besides me.
- 2 You shall not idolize anything God has made.
- 3 You shall not dishonour the name of the Lord your God.
- 4 Remember the Lord's Day and keep it holy.

Lord have mercy on us:

and turn our hearts to delight in your law.

- 5 Honour your father and your mother.
- 6 You shall not murder.
- 7 You shall not commit adultery.
- 8 You shall not steal.
- 9 You shall not give false evidence.
- 10 You shall not set your heart
on anything that is your neighbour's.

Lord, have mercy on us:

and turn our hearts to delight in your law.

THE ACT OF PENITENCE

Minister: Let us pray.

**All: Holy and merciful God,
we confess to you,
and to one another,
in communion with all the saints,
that we have sinned through our own fault
in thought, and word, and deed;
in what we have done
and in what we have failed to do.**

Minister: We have not loved you with all our heart,
soul, mind and strength.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
We have not loved one another
as Christ has loved us.
We have not forgiven others
as we have been forgiven.
We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

Lord, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Minister: We confess to you, O God, all our past unfaithfulness: the
pride, hypocrisy and impatience of our lives, our self-
indulgence and our exploitation of other people.

Lord, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Minister: We confess our preoccupation with worldly goods and
comforts, and our envy of others.

Lord, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Minister: We confess our blindness to human need and suffering, our indifference to injustice and cruelty, our misuse and pollution of creation, and our lack of concern for the generations to come.

Lord, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Minister: We confess our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to commend the faith that is in us.

Lord, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Minister: As a sign of the spirit of penitence with which we shall keep this season of preparation for Easter, I invite you to receive on your head in ash the sign of the cross, the symbol of our salvation.

**All: Almighty God,
you create us from the dust of the earth.
Let these ashes be for us
a sign of our repentance
and a symbol of our mortality.
May we always remember
that by your grace alone
we are given eternal life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Minister: In the name of Christ, I invite you to receive on your forehead the sign of the cross

Those who wish to receive the imposition of ashes now come forward. At each signing the words are said

Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return

Turn away from your sin and be faithful to Christ

The ashes are made from the blessed palms used in the Palm Sunday celebration of the previous year. The ashes symbolize penance and contrition, and they a reminder that God is gracious and merciful to those who call on Him with repentant hearts. The ceremony is also a sign of mortality to remind us of our death

INTERCESSIONS

After each section

Leader: Lord, hear us.

All: **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Leader: Eternal God,
through the sacrifice of your Son
you have filled our suffering with your presence;
help us in our trials
and strengthen us in our weakness;
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: **Amen.**

As our Saviour has taught us, so we sing:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are yours,
now and for ever, Amen.**

THE PEACE

Minister: In Christ, God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

Minister: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

All: **And also with you.**

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Bread and wine are brought to the table or if already on the table are uncovered. The president takes bread and wine and prepares them for use.

THE THANKSGIVING

Minister: The Lord be with you.

All: **And also with you.**

Minister: Lift up your hearts.

All: **We lift them to the Lord.**

Minister: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Blessing and praise belong to you, gracious and eternal God. Through your living Word you created all things, the majesty of the heavens and the glory of the earth. In your wisdom and goodness you have made the human family in your own image.

Therefore with saints and angels and with all creation we lift up our voices to proclaim the glory of your name.

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Holy and gracious God, we give you thanks and praise that in the

fullness of time you gave your only Son to be tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin; to set his face steadfastly towards Jerusalem and to be lifted high upon the cross, that he might draw all creation to himself.

When the hour of his glory came, having loved his own to the end, he sat with them at supper, took bread and, after giving thanks to you, he broke it and gave it to his disciples saying, 'Take, eat; this is my body which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.'

In the same way he took the cup after supper, saying, 'Drink from this, all of you; this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.'

We proclaim before you the mystery of our faith:

**Dying you destroyed our death,
rising you restored our life.
Lord Jesus, come in glory.**

In obedience to his command we recall his suffering and death, his resurrection and ascension, and we look for his coming in glory. With these holy gifts we offer ourselves a single, holy and living sacrifice.

Send your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts of bread and wine that they may be for us the body and blood of Christ.

Unite us in love and peace with all your people until, in your new creation, we are brought with the whole company of heaven into the presence of your eternal glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord,

**by whom, in whom, and with whom,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours,
almighty Father, now and for ever. Amen.**

The bread we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.

Christ is the Bread of Life.

The cup we take is a sharing in his blood.

Christ is the true Vine.

The following may be sung (or said)

**Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.
Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.
Jesus, redeemer of the world,
grant us your peace.**

Minister: Come to this table, not because you must but because you may; come not to testify that you are righteous, but that you sincerely love our Lord Jesus Christ, and desire to be his true disciples; come, not because you are strong, but because you are weak; not because you have any claim on heaven's rewards, but because in your frailty and sin you stand in constant need of heaven's mercy and help.

Instructions for Communion

1. *Communion is now received and you will be invited forward. If you would like communion brought to you, please remain in your seat and inform the communion steward.*
2. *You are welcome to receive the bread and wine, but if for any reason you do not wish to receive, then please bring this order of service with you and hold it in your hand. The minister will then know not to offer the sacrament to you and will say a prayer of blessing instead.*
3. *If you wish to partake only of the bread, take the chalice or glass as it is presented and then give it back without drinking.*
4. *You may intinct if you prefer, holding the wafer and dipping it into the chalice, however please be especially careful to ensure that only the tip of the wafer is placed into the wine, do not dip your finger into the wine.*
5. *Gluten free wafers are available, please advise the minister.*
6. *At the distribution the minister will say words of administration to which the communicant may reply, **AMEN.***

Prayers and Dismissal

All: Gracious God,
we thank you that you have nourished us
with the bread of life
and with the cup of salvation.
May we who have received this sacrament
be strengthened in your service;
we who have sung your praises
live in your glory;
and we who have known
the greatness of your love
see you face to face in your kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A HYMN may be sung

THE BLESSING

Minister: The God of all grace,
who has called you to eternal glory in Christ,
make you perfect,
confirming and strengthening you;
and to him be the power for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Minister: The almighty and merciful Lord,
the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,
bless and keep you, now and always.

All: Amen.

Minister: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All: In the name of Christ. Amen.

ASHES AND PERSPECTIVE

Welcome to this special service of Holy Communion with the Imposition of Ashes. Lent begins with ashes, because ashes can put things into perspective. On Ash Wednesday, we acknowledge our mortality, that all things will pass. (Genesis 3:19).

Lent is a time to reflect on matters that we might not reflect on at other times of the year. It is a time for putting things back into perspective, for taking a good look at ourselves, at what we have become, and at what we are doing with our lives.

Ashes provide us with a perspective about what counts and what doesn't. Ashes also inform us that our time is limited and that we should take advantage of the time we have left to continue our spiritual development. We welcome Lent, therefore, with ashes for the opportunities it will afford us to clear our vision and reset our sights. We have much to do before we turn to dust.

Lent is a time for tough questions. Where are you going in life? What are you doing with yourself? What kind of priorities do you live by? What changes should you need to make to ensure a more worthwhile life for yourself? What should you become more serious about? Less serious about? Are you preoccupied and overly concerned with trivia? Do you get angry over petty things? Do you lose sleep over matters that have little lasting import? Do you need to push yourself more on worthwhile projects? Do you need to slow down? Think in terms of ashes and see if it doesn't change your perspective.

Through this commitment we have access to spiritual growth and healing. Lent is a time to be penitent and to seek God's will for our life as surely as Jesus sought God's direction in the wilderness. We live our lives under the shadow of the cross and this is a good time to consider what the implications of that are. It is a time to say teach me afresh, where am I going wrong, how do you want me to change.

In the Old Testament ashes were a sign of sorrow at having let God down they were a demonstration of looking for the new direction and being sorry for what was in the past. They were a sign of repentance and looking forward. The Christian response is of course to see the new direction for us all in the cross and we make the ashes into the sign of the cross. That is where we come to find God's forgiveness and direction for our lives.