

ASH WEDNESDAY: SACRED TURNING

*Please stand in body or in spirit

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

UNISON WELCOME

“No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here”

CHIMING OF THE TRINITY

PRELUDE

*CALL TO WORSHIP

from The Work of Imagination

Beloved of Christ, let us enter into this holy space of worship and this holy time of Lent.

We come, turning and returning to God.

We gather knowing that God embraces our whole selves.

We come laughing or weeping, rejoicing or mourning, confident or doubting, carefree or burdened.

We begin in dust and in quiet, seeking courage to begin again.

We come, for God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

We take on the disciplines of Lent as acts of faithful resistance.

We come to dream of a world renewed. We imagine a world at peace. We lift our voices in praise.

*HYMN #169

“Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days”

*OPENING PRAYER

from The Work of Imagination

God of liberation, you call your people to faithfulness in this and every age not through extraordinary displays of religious devotion, but through ordinary things: praying, simple living, acts of generosity. By these gentle and subversive acts, turn us toward you, toward one another, and toward your vision for a just and liberated world, following the way of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

RESPONSIVE PRAYER OF CONFESSION

from The Work of Imagination

Siblings in Christ, let us confess our sins to God, laying down our burden of guilt into the grave of forgiven wrongs, where shame is conquered forever. Holy God, you created life from dirt, breathing air into our lungs, and entrusting us to live rightly. Today, as we remember our mortality with ashes and prayer, we confess our tendency to forget.

We have forgotten our Creator. We have forgotten that we came from dust and we shall return to dust.

Remind us of our fragile humanness, held delicately in the palm of your hand. Remind us to observe and appreciate creation – this incredible universe imagined for your glory and life’s flourishing.

Forgive us for living as if we are invincible. Forgive us for living as if we are powerless.

For you are both the great God of all living things and the precious Spirit that inhabits each of us.

Have mercy upon us, your children. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

from The Work of Imagination

Beloved, God knows we lose sight of our place in creation, falling into arrogance or misery, forgetting God’s mercy. Remember and receive God’s pardon and be at peace. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

Joel 2:12-14

Clyde Shiraki

ANTHEM

“Savior When in Tears and Dust”

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

MEDITATION

Rev. Caroline E. Saxton

LITANY OF ASHES

from The Work of Imagination

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, a time of discernment, reflection, and growth. We pause now to remember our mortality and the cycle of life: birth, death, and new life. In the same manner, may we also remember the cycle of prophetic imagination: critique, lament, imagine. We are called as God’s people into both of these cycles, providing renewal and hope.

As these ashes are placed on your forehead or hand, remember you were formed from the dust of the earth and given life by the breath of God. Remembering we are dust doesn’t diminish our worth or cleanliness; rather, it affirms our integral, connected place in this beautiful work of God’s love. We were made with love, and when we die, God will receive us with love.

Let us pause today to remember our mortality, thank God for this precious life, and commit ourselves to the work of imagination. **Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return.**

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE LORD’S PRAYER (DEBTS)

HOLY COMMUNION

(gathered around the altar)

UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

from The Work of Imagination

Gracious God, we thank you for these tangible gifts of bread and cup that feed our bodies and nourish our souls. May these blessings of grace be shared, not hoarded. Though we have been fed today at the table, may we still walk away hungry for justice, working for freedom and fullness for all of your creation. Amen.

INVITATION TO GIVING

OFFERTORY

*OFFERTORY RESPONSE

“When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” v. 4

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were a present far too small;
love so amazing, so divine
demands my soul, my life, my all.

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

from The Work of Imagination

Generous God, we bring our gifts before you and your church like tiny seeds from a dandelion. Send out these gifts on the mighty wind of your Spirit, bringing growth, bearing fruit, and nourishing both our faith community and our neighbors. May each gift of every size bloom with your holy imagination. Amen.

*HYMN #168

“I Take the Cross of Jesus Christ”

*CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

from The Work of Imagination

POSTLUDE (seated)

Please exit the sanctuary in silence

Lenten Series 2026 St. John’s UCC joins our partner churches in the Conococheague Mission Cooperative (CMC) for shared Wednesday evening Lenten services. The services will each be hosted by a different church. The theme of these services is “The Parables of Jesus in Holy Week.” All services will be at 7 pm.

The schedule for these services is as follows:

- ❖ Wednesday, February 25, Calvary UMC, CLM Susan Snyder preaching
- ❖ Wednesday, March 4, St. John’s UCC, Pastor Caroline Saxton preaching
- ❖ Wednesday, March 11, Fayetteville Otterbein Church, Pastor Bill Smith preaching
- ❖ Wednesday, March 18, Quincy UMC, CLM Loretta McClure preaching
- ❖ Wednesday, March 25, Calvary UMC, Pastor Nancy Hale preaching

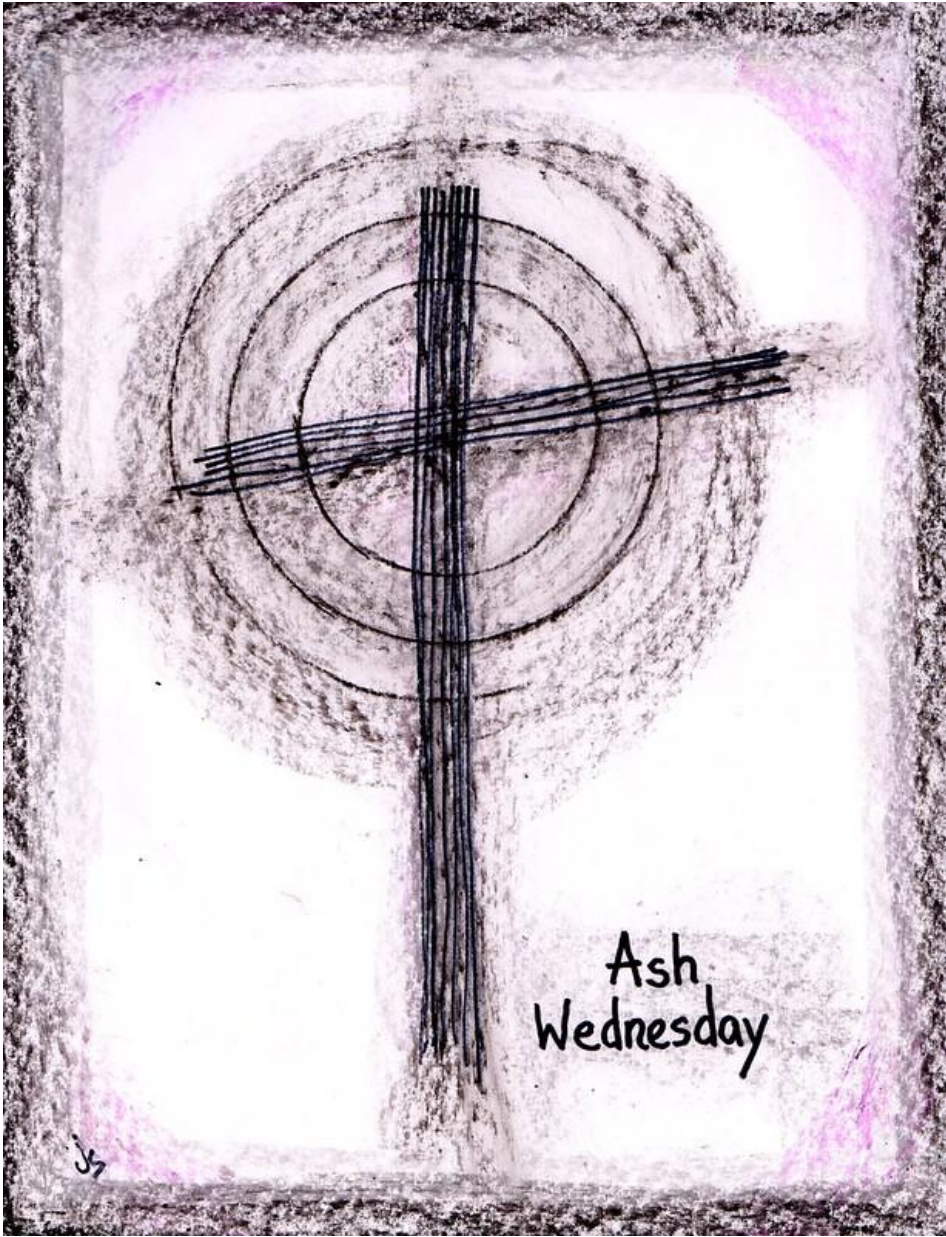
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St. John’s Vision

We are called to love, to learn, to worship and to witness in Christ
as a congregation that welcomes everyone,
and seeks service that will advance God’s realm on earth.

St. John’s Mission

To grow in love of God and neighbor



***St. John’s United Church of Christ
Chambersburg, PA
Service of Ashes and Communion
February 18, 2026 6:30 PM***