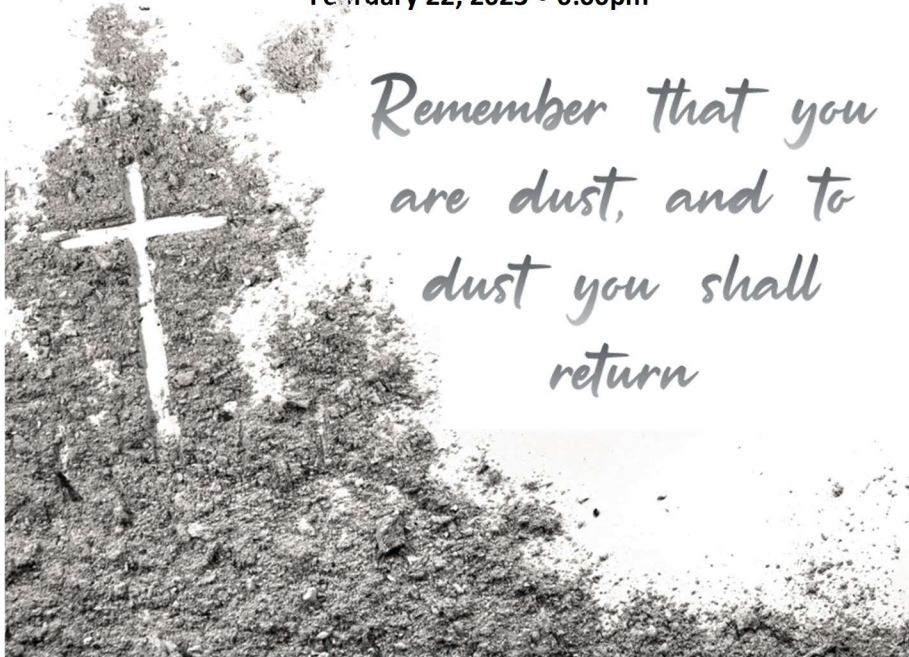


Central United Methodist Church
3700 Pacific Avenue, Stockton, CA 95204

Ash Wednesday

ORDER OF WORSHIP

February 22, 2023 • 6:00pm



PRELUDE

All My Trials
[arr. Phillip Keveren]

Monica Adams

INVITATION

Judy Avila

PART I: REPENTANCE

Pastor Lee

Ash Wednesday is the starting point of Lent. During Lent, we focus on **repentance and reconciliation**. Let us talk about **repentance** first. Repentance means turning around. We need to turn around. We were going in the world, and now turn around! Turn to God.

Many people would say that we were going in the right direction. We were law abiding citizens, God-fearing congregation, mission-oriented church, and welcoming congregation. It was Soeren Kierrkegaard, Danish philosopher, who defined an idol as something "good" that we love more than God.

Many people pray for the healing of their beloved ones. When the person restores his or her health, we all restore our faith again. Our faith becomes stronger. When the person dies, however, some lose their faith, and some keep their faith. If I died at the car accident site, would my wife praise God without reservation? It is not an easy question for us to answer right away! It is an opportunity for us to see whether we truly serve God or not. That is why we need to take time to meditate during Lent. Repentance brings us to the prayer that Jesus had at the Garden of Gethsemane. "Not my will, but Thy will be done!"

We love our family, but when we love our family more than God our family becomes an idol. It sounds strange but think about this. When we lose a family member how would you feel? Do you want to say like Job in the Bible? It is God who gave me a child and now it is God who takes my child away. May God's name be praised! If you can say that your family is not an idol. However, if you want to act like Job's wife, curse God and die, then your family is an idol.

When we talk about repentance, we talk about our priority. Do we worship God more than anything else? Lent is a time to meditate on that. We need to work hard for our businesses and jobs. But do I take Sunday off to worship God even when I have financial loss because of it? We need to take care of our family, but do I give my tithe to God even when my financial situation is challenging? Can I make an adjustment in my personal lifestyle to worship God? How much can I give up?

There is no right or wrong answer here. Lent is a good time for all of us to repent, to meditate on the values and priorities of our lives. What do I actually worship? Do I worship God or something else in God's name?

Sometimes I meet people who argue that religions are the root of wars. People kill other people in the name of God! I ask this question back to those people: "If we do not have religions, do we live peacefully? If we do not worship God, do we not invade other countries?"

People will have wars; people invade other countries to have what they want with or without God. Think about Putin in Russia and Xi in China. They do not worship God. Some just have done it in the name of God. Some just do it without God. People are using God's name in vain to satisfy their own desires. It has nothing to do with the teachings of religions. Root of wars is the evil in our minds. We are self-centered, self-righteous, and selfish. We focus on our survival first. We use all the means to secure our survival and use religions many times even against the teachings of religions. Do not blame God. Do not use God's name in vain, either. Let us meditate on the words of prophet Joel.

FIRST SCRIPTURE READING

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Joe Krider

SILENT MEDITATION

THANKSGIVING OVER THE ASHES

Pastor Lee

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence, so that we may remember that only by your gracious gift are we given everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Pastor Lee & Pastor Hou

All those who repent their sins and want to reconcile with God, please come and confess your mortality and experience God's Grace. **Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.**

HYMN

Breathe on Me, Breath of God

UMH #420

SECOND SCRIPTURE READING

Psalms 51:1-17

Julie Campero

SILENT MEDITATION

ANTHEM

Give Me Jesus
[arr. Mark Patterson]
(offering collected for local flood victims)

Chancel Choir
Patrick Langham, Saxophone

HYMN

Thy Holy Wings, O Savior

UMH #502

PART II: RECONCILIATION

Pastor Lee

Reconciliation means restoration of the relationship with God through Jesus Christ. When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior who died for us on the Cross, God allows us to have an intimate relationship with God again. That is reconciliation.

For reconciliation, we have to turn around like the prodigal son in Luke 15. Why am I here? In my Father's house,

