

**A SERVICE OF WORSHIP FOR ASH WEDNESDAY**  
**Pilmoor Memorial United Methodist Church**  
**February 25, 2009**

**ENTRANCE**

**Gathering**

**Greeting**

*Leader:* Deep echoes of the soul,

**All: Voices of silence,**

*Leader:* Inner nudges,

**All: Persistent longing.**

*Leader:* It is the call of God,

**All: The pull of Lent,**

*Leader:* The season of reflection,

**All: The yearning for springtime joy,**

*Leader:* The thirst for living water,

**All: The desire for new life.**

**Opening Prayer**

Most Merciful God,

by whose command we live or die: You have summoned us into your presence. You have the right to judge us, but you choose instead to appeal to us through your astonishing love. Come into our hearts; fill us with your power and peace, that we may learn to love as you have first loved us. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, **Amen.**

**Hymn 382**      *Have Thine Own Way, Lord*      ADELAIDE

**PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE**

**Gospel Lesson**      Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

**Meditation**      Scott

**Invitation to the Observance of Lenten Discipline**

**Silence**

**Thanksgiving over the Ashes**

**Imposition of Ashes**

*Worshippers are invited to come forward and kneel at the altar. The pastor will dip a thumb in the ashes and make a cross on the forehead of each person saying, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Worshippers are invited to remain at the altar in prayer as long as they desire.*

**Hymns (During the Imposition of Ashes)**

354      *I Surrender All*  
357      *Just As I Am, Without One Plea*  
351      *Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior*

**Confession and Pardon (in unison)**

Great and Merciful God: You created us in your own divine image, but we would rather make you over in our image, expecting and demanding far less of ourselves.

At the opening of this season of penitence, we pray for courage and honesty, that our self-examination may be searching and specific rather than safely general. Save us, holy Creator, from being satisfied with feeling sorry for the evil we have done -- or condoned, or ignored -- and for the good we have failed to do. Move us rather to explore what we can do to make amends: to undo harm we may have caused; to make up for whatever good we have left undone. May these ashes, symbols of penitence, remind us of the cost of true penitence, and a life of true piety. In the name of Jesus Christ, who was without sin, our compassionate Lord, we pray, Amen.

**The Peace**

Let us offer one another signs of reconciliation and love.

*The passing of the peace is a custom from the earliest church in which worshippers greet one another with the words "The Peace of Christ be with you," To which the response is "And also with you." This is a sign that the reconciliation offered to us in Christ, we offer to one another in love.*

## THANKSGIVING

### Prayer of Thanksgiving

Merciful God, this night we bow our heads before you, our brows marked with the ashes that betray our origins as creatures of dust.

We were destined by nature to return to dust, but now you have intervened on our behalf.

There are no words to thank you for such favor, or even to describe the force of love by which you call us from death to life at your side. Grant us the strength to live lives worthy of that calling. With the mark of the cross upon us, help us forgive others as you have forgiven us. Help us strive for the protection and redemption of all people even as you have protected and redeemed us. Help us to love one another as you have loved us. In the name of Christ, Amen.

### The Lord's Prayer

## SENDING FORTH

### Dismissal with Blessing

Go forth, bearing the **sign** of Jesus' cross on your brow, the **power** of Jesus' cross in your everyday life, and the **hope** of Jesus' cross in your heart. Amen.

### Going Forth

*Worshippers are encouraged to depart in silence.*

## A SERVICE OF WORSHIP

FOR

# ASH WEDNESDAY

*Ash Wednesday emphasizes a dual encounter: we confront our own mortality and confess our sin before God within the community of faith. The form and content of the service focus on the dual themes of sin and death in the light of God's redeeming love in Jesus Christ.*

*The use of ashes as a sign of mortality and repentance has a long history in Jewish and Christian worship, and the Imposition of Ashes can be a powerful nonverbal and experiential way of participating in the call to repentance and reconciliation. This practice is the historic focus of [the] Ash Wednesday observance and gave the day its name. It is traditional to save the palm branches from the previous Passion/Palm Sunday service and burn them ahead of time to produce the ashes for this service.*