

Faith United Church of Christ

“An inclusive spiritual family shaping a better you for creating a better world.

A place to make a difference.”

We are delighted that you are here this evening! We hope you will find us an affirming, uplifting, and committed family of faith. Here we work to make everyone, without any exceptions, to feel accepted, inspired, and encouraged in their spiritual journey. In dialogue, we seek to understand. In encouragement, we seek to heal. In all things we yearn to live by love, for peace, with joy. This is a place where your intellect will be challenged, your heart will be nurtured, and your spirit refreshed. Varying beliefs are expressed openly and freely, and your doubts will not be suppressed. We trust that we are all, every person and part of creation, continuing to be blessed by God’s grace; and that in community we can help each other to see this grace alive in our lives and relationships. We hope to share our gifts with you, even as we pray that you will want to share your gifts with us. Whoever you are and wherever you may be in your life’s journey, we invite you to be a part of our lives and our spiritual home. Welcome!

Ash Wednesday: The Beginning of Lent

February 14, 2018 at 7 ^{PM}

Prelude

Introduction to a Season of Introspection & Discernment

***Centering Our Souls**

Jesus came to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the year of God’s favor.

As disciples of Christ, we are called to struggle against everything that leads us away from the love of God and neighbor. Repentance, fasting, prayer, forgiveness, mercy, generosity, gratitude, study of sacred texts, and habitual works of kindness, justice, compassion, non-violence, and peace help us to return to that love.

***Song of Intention**

“Again We Keep This Solemn Fast”

#187; vss. 1, 3, 4

Prayer of Confession

Read in Unison

O God who suffers at our spiritual and ethical failings, and rejoices at the turning to virtue of our hearts and spirits: We confess that we have gone astray by our thoughts, words, and deeds. We have been irresponsible by what we have done, as well as what we have left undone. We have diverted our attention away from your call to serve others as Christ served. We have ignored your encouragements to be more loving and forgiving. We have abandoned the way of peace when we confronted with

fears. We have placed prudence above integrity, and self-interest over honor. We have valued acknowledgment more than duty, and pride more than reverence. We have hypocritically judged others while maintaining that others should not judge us. We have been impatient when we were unwilling to be persistent.

We have been apathetic in our privilege, and insincere in our advocacy. We have blindly indulged our appetites at the expense of others. We have developed life-styles that are bent on having more than enough, and attitudes that are self-justifying of our excesses. We have exploited other people and your creation both directly and indirectly. We have let envy infiltrate our minds, rather than being glad about the good fortunes of others. We have prejudiced ourselves against others by evaluating their worth based on what they do rather than how you created them. We have let our frustrations turn into anger, and our annoyances into condescension. We have been dishonest to ourselves, and consequently to others and you.

We have been negligent in studying sacred texts, in listening to you, in being present in worship, and in allowing ourselves the time to do your will rather than our own. We have been indifferent to human needs and the sufferings of other parts of your creation. We have counted our own life-enhancing wants above the life-requiring needs of others. We have allowed cruelty to animals in order to serve our own desires. We have been silent at the injustices of others by faithlessly assuming that our own words and actions will not matter. We have let waste and pollution defile the beauty and dignity of your creation by our tacit approval of a culture of consumerism. We have become voyeurs of the private lives of others and have emotionally applauded the downfalls of those we have come to despise. We have been credulous in assuming the worst about others rather than seeking to understand with the intent to encourage.

Forgive us for all our failings that we may be restored to the loving and compassionate beings that you created us to be. May the image we project in our lives be one and the same as that in which you developed in our souls at our birth — the image of goodness and loving-kindness. May it be so.

Silent Meditation and Writing Out Our Commitment Cards

Imposition of Ashes

“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you will return.”--- Genesis 3.19

“Repent, and believe in the good news.”--- Mark 1.15

*All who wish to do so may come forward, forming a line,
to receive the ashes and oil on your forehead.*

Assurance of Pardon and New Life

Response of Repentance

Read in Unison

Holy God of mercy and justice, we have offered up our sins to you in penitence. We know that you do not delight in humility for the sake of humility, so encourage us to fast for the right reasons and in the right ways. We accept your forgiveness for our past sins, and look forward to the new life you offer to us.

Let us go forth in a spiritual fast that will turn our hearts and souls from cynicism to faithfulness...from judgment to compassion...from defeatism to hopefulness...from self-pity to righteous action...from resentment to forgiveness...from gossip to praise...from jealousy to trust...from despair to assurance...from annoyance to respect...from ingratitude to thankfulness...from self-interest to service...from fear to courage...from hostility to kindness...from scorn to caring concern...from condescension to justice. Purge the darkness of our spirits with the light of your salvation. May it be so.

Hymn of Community and Belonging

“In All Our Living”

#499

Lights on the Christian Way: Virtues to Live By

There are many Christian virtues enumerated and alluded to in the Biblical texts. But some are referred to with enough regularity to warrant them as central to our understanding and practice of discipleship in following Christ’s own example. Though many others are worthy of our cultivation and habituation than are listed here, perfecting the following virtues would naturally lead us to acquire the others.

HUMBLENESS/HUMILITY

FAITHFULNESS/FORTITUDE

THANKFULNESS/GRATITUDE

KINDNESS/GENTLENESS

PEACE/JUSTICE

COMPASSION/MERCY

LOVE

Homily

Worship through Tithes and Offerings

The offerings we collect this evening will go to support the Pastor's Discretionary Fund, used to help those in need in our community.

Hymn for Living by Love

sung during Offertory

“Take Time to be Loving”

Tune: Holiness 65.65D

Music: George C. Stebbins, 1890; Words: Bret Stuart Myers, 7/12/2007

Verse 1

Take time to be loving, do more than just pray;

Make kindness to others your habit each day.

Touch those who are suffering with actions that heal;

By word and by conduct, your love they will feel.

Verse 2

Take time to be loving with wisdom above;

Will they think they're blessed by how you seek to love?
Love shared is most gracious when we understand;
They want not our pity, just our caring hands.

Verse 3

Take time to be loving, to family and foe;
Think only of strangers as friends you don't know.
Love knows no exclusion, nor fences its field;
Life lived by inclusion reaps a greater yield!

Verse 4

Take time to be loving, the wronged do defend
Pass not the afflicted, to them you are sent
No injury is God's will; no suffering deserved
When we act with mercy, then justice is served.

Encouragement on the Journey

Postlude

This service was written by Rev. Bret S. Myers. All rights reserved. ©

Thank you for sharing sacred fellowship with us.

Faith UCC is an open and affirming church, embracing diversity in our congregation and community, and affirming the dignity and worth of every person. We are an inclusive community of faith that celebrates God's presence through worship and the sharing of God's word. We welcome all persons into the full life and ministry of the church, regardless of race, ethnic background, gender identity, sexual orientation, capability, or circumstance of life.

Our Ministry

Ministers — All the Congregation

Interim Pastor — Rev. Bret Myers

Church Staff

Custodian — Scott Luzier

Church School Coordinator — Barbara Chellman

Organist—Mark Ferraguto

Choir Director – Mike Dolan

Administrative Assistant — Jeff Stormer

The liturgies for this morning's worship, along with the Song of Dedication, were written by Rev. Bret S. Myers except where otherwise noted.

Prayers for healing and wholeness:

Family of Lois Bair, Carlton Miller, Don Asendorf, Bob Ritzman, the family of June Brown, Lisa B. (JoAnn's daughter), Brandon G., Lisa Neidigh, Bunnie Hartswick, Katelynn Wilson, Darlene Ripka, April S., Randy Brown (Aimee's Dad), the Piggot family, Robert Zupp (Eileen Pfaff's nephew), the Snook family.

Get In Touch with Us!

Faith United Church of Christ 300 E. College Avenue State College, PA 16801
Tel: (814) 237-3904 Websites: www.faihucc.info facebook.com/SCFaithUCC
Church Office Email: faithucc@comcast.net Pastor's Email: revbmyers@yahoo.com

Church Office Hours: 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Tuesdays, **Thursdays**, & Fridays

Pastor Bret's Office Hours: Tuesday 5-8 p.m., Wednesday 11 a.m.-2 p.m.,

Thursday 2-4 p.m.

or other hours by appointment.

Appointments are recommended so as to give you the time you need without interruptions. You may call the church office, or his cell at 608-370-9472, or email him at revbmyers@yahoo.com.



Welcome to all first-time (and returning) guests to Faith UCC!

We would like to get to know you and for you to get to know us.

Join us after worship for coffee and **conversation**.

There is free parking on Sundays at the meters and at the McAllister & Pugh Street parking garages – so, we hope you'll worship with us again next Sunday!

Electronic Giving Options: During the offering time in the service, you may place your offerings on the plates the ushers will bring around. If you prefer to give electronically simply **scan the QR code** with your smartphone to be directed to our online donation page.



February Special Offering

[Mid-Penn Legal Services](http://www.midpenn.org) (<http://www.midpenn.org>)

MidPenn Legal Services is a non-profit, public-interest law firm dedicated to providing equal access to justice and high quality civil legal services to low-income residents and survivors of domestic violence in 18 counties in Central Pennsylvania.

Make checks payable to Faith UCC with "MidPenn" noted in the memo line or on the envelope.



- February 18 1st Sunday in Lent
- February 19 Consistory, 5:30 PM
- February 25 2nd Sunday in Lent

The Meaning of Lent

The word Lent comes from the Anglo-Saxon word, “lincten,” meaning spring, and the German word, “Leng,” meaning the times when the days are lengthening. Spring is coming and our spirits are rising. To reflect this natural occurrence of the transition from winter to summer spiritually and religiously, Lent foreshadows Christ’s resurrection even as flowers and plants will also be “rising.” Even as the days are lengthening and becoming sunnier, so may our souls when we penitently look within ourselves to see how we can, through God’s grace, become more faithful in loving, forgiving, and making peace in our lives and in the world.

Now from Ash Wednesday to Easter Eve we observe Lent 40 days. The 40 days, excluding Sundays (since every Sunday is a celebration of Easter Day) are symbolic of other important Biblical periods of spiritual reckoning, development, and revelation: the 40 day deluge in Noah’s time, Moses’ stay on Mt. Sinai while receiving God’s Commandments, the 40 years the Israelites spent wandering in the wilderness, Elijah’s 40 day fast, and the 40 days of Jesus’ temptation and his 40 hours in the tomb. Each of these events were times of spiritual preparation for receiving and implementing the abundance of new life God promised to them as they came to a fuller understanding of God’s will and purpose for their lives.

Lent is a season of preparation: preparation for Easter -- a time of joy and victory. Joy is always most exultant, and victory is always sweetest, when they follow on the heels of humility and awareness of sin. Therefore, Lent is a time of self-examination and penitence that is necessary to transform us from a seed to a flower...from the death of the spirit revealed in aimlessness, meaninglessness, and emptiness of purpose to life abundant. In order to prepare ourselves to spiritually celebrate the glory of Easter, we must look at our readiness to celebrate. Therefore, time must be spent in preparing our hearts, minds, bodies, and souls through spiritual disciplines.

Although it may be initially difficult to take time out of our secular schedules, and easy to justify by various excuses why we don’t take time in nurturing the spiritual disciplines, we each need to spend time connecting to and developing the sacred

within us if we are to reap the spiritual rewards. We need to take time in prayer...time in meditation...time for fasting and 'self'-denial...time for introspection and repentance...time to recognize our need to forgive and to be forgiven...time for Bible study...time for listening to God's plan for our lives...time in service to others...etc.

The decision to spiritually prepare for Easter lies in you alone. God will not force you to prepare and neither will anyone else. But God does offer you a promise – the promise is that if you are preparing to celebrate Easter, you will know, as you have never known before, what it means to be resurrected with Christ.

--- Bret S. Myers, revised 2/25/2004