

DOWNTOWN UNITED +

Fredericton, N.B.

March 5th, 2025

Ash Wednesday

5:30 PM

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional unceded territory of the Wolastoqiyik Peoples. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which Wolastoqiyik, Mi'kmaq, and Passamaquoddy Peoples first signed with the British Crown in 1726. The treaties did not deal with surrender of lands and resources but in fact recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations.

PRELUDE: What Wonderous Love

~ Hayes

WELCOME

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

INTROIT: *Take, O Take Me As I Am*

MV 85

*Take, O take me as I am;
summon out what I shall be;
Set your seal upon my heart
and live in me. R*

CALL TO WORSHIP: *(Responsive)* ¹

The days are drawing near
it is time to choose
to set our faces to Christ's way
and not turn aside from it.

OPENING PRAYER

HYMN: *Sunday's Palms Are Wednesday's Ashes*

VU 107

*Sunday's palms are Wednesday's ashes
as another Lent begins;
thus we kneel before our Maker
in contrition for our sins.*

*We have marred baptismal pledges,
in rebellion gone astray;
now, returning, seek forgiveness;
grant us pardon, God, this day!*

*We have failed to love our neighbours,
their offences to forgive,
have not listened to their troubles,
nor have cared just how they live;
we are jealous, proud, impatient,
loving overmuch our things;
may the yielding of our failings
be our Lenten offering.*

*We are hasty to judge others,
blind to proof of human need;
and our lack of understanding
demonstrates our inner greed;*

*we have wasted earth's resources;
want and suffering we've ignored;
come and cleanse us, then restore us;
make new hearts within us, Lord!*

PRAYER OF CONFESSION *(Responsive)* ¹

You are determined to fulfil your purpose, God.

You created, you promised,
you redeem and sustain,
you are present.

You pour yourself out in love for your world,
that all may come to live in your kingdom.

Lord, **have mercy upon us.**

We confess that we hear your invitation,
but we are not sure how to take it up.

We have so many competing loyalties,
so many options and opportunities,
we hardly know how to discern your voice.

Lord, **have mercy upon us.**

We confess we are easily distracted,
investing ourselves in fights old and new,
allowing outrage to drain our energy,
looking for relief to numb us when there's simply too much.

We have tried to have one foot in every camp, a finger in every pie,
and our attention is scattered,
so we no longer know for sure exactly what is ours to do.

Lord, **have mercy upon us.**

We confess we like the promise of your power,
though we are not good at using it.

Sometimes we are too timid,
believing we can't possibly do the things you have called us to do,
so we remain silent, keep our faith private, come up with excuses.

Other times we are over the top,
calling for you to destroy those who offend us,
thinking we need to protect you.

Lord, **have mercy upon us.**

We confess we like the idea of your way more than the reality of it.

You ask if we know what we're getting into
and the truth is we don't.

We find it hard to love our neighbors,
and even harder to love our enemies.

Welcoming the stranger feels naive and impossible.

We don't want to let go of our comfort and control.

Lord, **have mercy upon us.**

Even now your kingdom is breaking in among us,
urgently re-orienting us to your way, truth, and life.

Set our faces in the same direction as yours,

make us the kind of people who bring life to this broken world.

In this holy time,

turn and re-turn us to follow you more faithfully,
that we may take up our part in fulfilling your purpose.

Lord, **have mercy upon us.**

Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE ²

In God's heart, we always find a loving, forgiving welcome. Jesus came to tell us that there is nothing that can separate us from God. Know that you are already forgiven. Know that you are deeply loved.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION ³

THE STORY BEFORE THE STORY

RESPONSIVE PSALM: Psalm 51:1-12

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;

**according to your abundant mercy,
blot out my transgressions.**

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.

**For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.**

Against you, you alone, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,

**so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgment.**

Indeed, I was born guilty,

a sinner when my mother conceived me.

**You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.**

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

**Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.**

Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

**Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.**

Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.

**Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.**

SCRIPTURE: Luke 9:51-62

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION

*Now quit your care and anxious fear and worry,
for schemes are vain and fretting brings no gain.*

*Lent calls to prayer, to trust and dedication;
God brings new beauty nigh;
reply, reply, reply with love to love most high;
reply, reply, reply with love to love most high.*

*To bow the head in sackcloth and in ashes,
or rend the soul, such grief is not Lent's goal;
but to be led where heaven's glory flashes,
God's beauty to come near.*

*Make clear, make clear, make clear where truth and light appear;
make clear, make clear, make clear where truth and light appear.*

*"For is not this the fast that I have chosen,"
the prophet spoke, "to shatter every yoke,
of wickedness the grievous bonds to loosen,
oppression put to flight,
to fight, to fight, to fight till every wrong's set right,
to fight, to fight, to fight till every wrong's set right."*

*For righteousness and peace will show their faces
to those who feed the hungry in their need,
and wrongs redress, who build the old waste places,
and in the darkness shine.*

*Divine, divine, divine it is when all combine;
Divine, divine, divine it is when all combine!*

*Then shall your light break forth as does the morning;
your health shall spring, the friends you make shall bring
God's glory bright, your way through life adorning;
and love shall be the prize.*

*Arise, arise, arise! and make a paradise;
Arise, arise, arise! and make a paradise!*

RITUAL OF ASHES

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION:

Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

THE LORD'S PRAYER: (In Unison)

(You are invited to pray the Lord's Prayer in the language of your heart, and the words that ring deep in your soul.)

HYMN: To God be the Glory

*To God be the glory, who great things has done!
God so loved the world! freely sending the Son,
who yielded his life an atonement for sin,
and opened the lifegate that all may go in.*

Refrain:

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let the earth hear God's voice!

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let the people rejoice!

Oh come to the Father through Jesus the Son,

Oh perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,

to every believer the promise of God,

that when the offender, repenting, believes,

through Jesus' atonement, full pardon receives! R

Great things God has taught us, Great things God has done

and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son,

but purer and higher and greater will be

our wonder, our gladness, when Jesus we see! R

COMMISSIONING: *(Responsive)*

We are marked by the cross of Christ.

We bear that cross to remember whose we are.

We have committed to discipleship in love.

We live that love by the power of the Spirit.

We carry God's blessings as forgiveness and as faith.

Let us go and proclaim, in word and in deed, the gospel of courageous love.

BLESSING ²

POSTLUDE: Our Father in Heaven Who Art

~ Bach

¹ Teri Peterson, *BibleWorm Liturgy, Ash Wednesday, 2025*

² Gord Dunbar, *God's Invitation: An Ash Wednesday Service, GatheringWorship.ca*

³ The Presbyterian Church in Canada, *Worship Planner, Ash Wednesday, 2025*

Thank you to our Volunteers today!



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