

CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
30 N. CLINTON ST.
IOWA CITY, IA 52245
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WORSHIP FOR FEBRUARY 24, 2023
A SERVICE FOR THE BEGINNING OF LENT

“Death is real, Ecclesiastes avers, and it reminds the church that its veracity is in no way undercut by the Resurrection...Life, even new life, cannot exist without death...In a provocative manner that the author of Ecclesiastes might have approved, Jesus in John’s Gospel reflects ethically on the necessity of death: ‘Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it...’”

William Brown

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

Out of the depths have I called to you, O Lord;
Lord, hear my voice;
let your ears consider well the voice of my supplication.

**If you, Lord, were to note what is done amiss,
O Lord, who could stand?**

For there is forgiveness with you;
therefore you shall be revered.

**I wait for you, O Lord; my soul waits for you;
in your word is my hope.**

OPENING PRAYER

God of grace, through love you have made us, and for love you call us to repentance and new life. Your forgiveness is fresh every day. Strengthen our prayers and our acts of tenderness. Help us to face our mortality, that we may reach with confidence for your mercy. Restore to us the joy of your salvation and give us your Holy Spirit that we may serve you with willing hearts, bearing witness to your abundant compassion in all the world. Amen.

*HYMN 298 “There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy”

OPENING WORDS

SCRIPTURE LESSON Ecclesiastes 1:2-9

PSALM 90:1-12

Lord, you have been our refuge
from one generation to another.

Before the mountains were brought forth,

**As it was without beginning,
So it lasts without an end;
To their children's children ever
Shall God's righteousness extend:**

**Bless your Maker, all you creatures,
Ever under God's control,
All throughout God's vast dominion;
Bless the Lord of all, my soul!**

TIME OF PRAYER

Prayers of the People

Silent Prayer

The Prayer of Our Savior

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE OPPORTUNITY AND JOY OF LENT

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Merciful God, whose care never ceases, we come to you as we are. We are tired from trying to do more than we can manage. We are anxious about problems which go unresolved. We are worried about events beyond our control.

For mistakes we cannot redeem, for tasks left undone, for uncertain goals, we need your forgiveness and ask for your understanding. For recovery of strength and enthusiasm, we pray for your Spirit. For fullness of life, generous hearts, and contented souls, we pray to be followers of Christ Jesus. In your mercy, restore us and lead us. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE (#85, vs. 1)

**What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul,
What wondrous love is this, O my soul!
What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss
To bear the heavy cross for my soul, for my soul,
To bear the heavy cross for my soul!**

*PASSING THE PEACE

As a sign of our reconciliation, let us greet one another. The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

RECEIVING ASHES

Those who wish may come forward to receive ashes. They will be placed on your forehead, or, if you prefer, extend your hand and the ashes will be placed on the top of your hand. The ashes are from palm branches used in last year's Palm Sunday worship, mixed with oil.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

We remember Jesus' compassionate searching for the outcasts of society, and pray for a similar compassion;

We remember Jesus' conflict with the powers of evil, and pray for the same courage to stand against what is wrong;

We remember Jesus' refusal to be bound by the past, and pray that we may use this freedom for ourselves and honor it in others;

We remember the way Jesus showed God's love for all creation, and pray that we may mediate his love and power in our own time. Amen.

* HYMN 261 "God of Compassion, in Mercy Befriend Us"

*BENEDICTION

Sisters and brothers, let us claim the freedom Christ gives us by his self-giving on the cross.

May Christ enable us to serve together in faith, hope, and love.

Go in peace and serve the Lord.

Go in peace and serve the people.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

POSTLUDE

Minister:	The Rev. Bill Lovin
Director of Children's Programs:	The Rev. Ann Molsberry
Organist:	Bill Crouch
Choir Director	Chris Nakielski
Office Manager	Jenn Harden

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IMPORTANT DATES IN LENT AND EASTER

- February 24—Service for the Beginning of Lent at 7:00 p.m.
- February 26—First Sunday in Lent
- March 5—Second Sunday in Lent; Communion Sunday
- April 2—Palm Sunday—Worship with Distribution of Palms; One Great Hour of Sharing Offering
- April 6 Maundy Thursday—Worship in the Sanctuary at 7:00 p.m.; Communion and Service of Tenebrae

- April 7, Good Friday—Worship in the Sanctuary at Noon
- April 9, Easter Sunday—Festival Easter Service in the Sanctuary at 10:15 a.m.
- April 30—Spring Choir Music Sunday
- Study of Ecclesiastes, each Wednesday: March 1, 8, 15, 22, & 29