

Quispamsis United Church

March 2nd, 2022 - Ash Wednesday

Liturgical Colour: Purple

Presider: Rev. Richard Bowley

Centering Passage: *Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me.*

-Psalm 23:4

Acknowledgement of Territories

Introduction and Lighting of Christ Candle

Hymn:

Abide with me VU 436

**Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
the darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide;
when other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
help of the helpless, O abide with me.**

**Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
change and decay in all around I see:
O Christ, who changes not, abide with me.**

**I need your presence every passing hour;
what but your grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who like yourself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.**

**I have no fear with you at hand to bless;
ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness;
where is death's sting? Where, grave, your victory?
I triumph still, if you abide with me.**

**Hold now your cross before my closing eyes;
shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies;
heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
in life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.**

Opening Prayer:

God of love and mercy, as we begin the discipline of Lent, make this day holy by our self-denial and prayer. Lead us onward through these forty days from darkness, sin, and death to the new land of light, freedom, and life which your Son has won for us. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our reconciliation and our peace, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. AMEN.

Sung Prayer of Illumination:

Tree of Life

VU 121 (vs 4) QUC Recording

**Gentle Jesus, mighty Spirit,
come inflame our hearts anew,
we may all your joy inherit
if we bear the cross for you,**

if we bear the cross for you.

Scripture:

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near— a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness spread upon the mountains a great and powerful army comes; their like has never been from of old, nor will be again after them in ages to come.

Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain-offering and a drink-offering for the Lord, your God?

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her canopy.

Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep. Let them say, 'Spare your people, O Lord, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, "Where is their God?"'

Herein is Wisdom.

Thanks be to God.

Message

Opportunities

Call to a Change of Heart:

We have come here to recall who we are - a people baptized into Jesus Christ, but a people who have not lived up to our calling, our promises. And so we are here to be called again by the all-powerful Word of God to a change of heart and a willingness to live out the demands of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To hear that call more clearly, let us examine our lives in the light of the gospel.

Litany of Repentance (Responsive):

Jesus, we have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength and so we cry out to you:

Lord, have mercy.

Jesus, we have not seen and loved you in our brothers and sisters, but have been blind to human need and suffering, indifferent to injustice and corruption and so we cry out to you:

Christ, have mercy.

Jesus, we have made idols of money, property, education, position and have tended to put our trust in these rather than in you, and so we cry out to you:

Lord, have mercy.

Blessing of the Ashes:

Merciful God, we acknowledge our need to change our hearts and turn to you again. We were buried with Christ in Baptism, dying to sin, rising with him to new life. Yet the power of your love is still not fully revealed in us and in our world.

Holy One, bless these ashes and bless us who receive them. May this signing with ashes mark a new commitment of ourselves to you.

At the end of Lent, may we be ready to celebrate Christ's passion with joy, and on the day of resurrection to rejoice with him forever. Through him may your name be blessed and praised, now and forever.

Distribution of the Ashes (Responsive):

Remember, you are dust and to dust you will return.

Amen.

Prayer of the Faithful (Responsive):

Let us pray to our divine parent that we may open our hearts to hear the call of Jesus to repentance. With confidence we pray:

Lord, make us your faithful people.

That we may welcome LENT as an acceptable time of salvation through our works of fasting, prayer, and sharing: we pray:

Lord, make us your faithful people.

That the Word of God may inspire us to have a change of heart, to turn away from sin and to choose to do good, we pray:

Lord, make us your faithful people.

That those who continue to engage in exploiting others, drug trafficking, corruption and violence may hear the voice of God calling them to repent and change their lives.

Lord, make us your faithful people.

That those who think they are better than others may join the rest of God's people in asking God's mercy and forgiveness.

Lord, make us your faithful people.

Compassionate God, may this season of repentance bring us your forgiveness and lead us to the joy of Christ's victory over sin and death. We ask this through the same Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

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!**

Blessing and Sending Forth:

Our service this time has ended. Our service beyond this moment has just begun. Go and keep holy this Season of Lent through penance and prayer.

And may God the Three in One bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

Choral Closing:

Tree of Life VU 121 (vs 5)
**Christ, you lead and we shall follow,
stumbling though our steps may be,
one with you in joy and sorrow,
we the river, you the sea,
we the river, you the sea.**