



Northlea United Church

In the community. For the community.

125 Brentcliffe Road, Toronto, ON, M4G 3Y7

www.northleaunited.ca ~ 416-425-5252



**ASH
WEDNESDAY**

February 22, 2023
Service of Ashes – 7:00 PM

At Northlea United Church,
we encourage one another as we:
Love God ~ Connect with others
Nurture the spirit ~ Serve the world

Thank you for joining us for service today whether in-person or online. If there is anything we can do to improve your experience, please let us know by calling the church office at 416 425 5252 or emailing us at office@northleaunited.ca. There are many ways to access online videos whether live streamed or pre-recorded. The Northlea United Facebook page or our website will have links to our services:

Facebook:

Simply sign on to Facebook and search for the Northlea United page. You will find links there.

www.northleaunited.ca:

Visit our website. Links will be posted to our homepage for easy access.

Thank you for helping with today's service:

Rev. Lee-Ann Ahlstrom - Presiding

David Jafelice – Organist & Music Director

Karen Davidson - Vocal Lead

Jo Dullard - Video Production, Donna Rutz - Social Media Support

Jackie Morris, Donna Rutz and David Jafelice- Readers

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Consider financially supporting Northlea United through Canada Helps (scan QR code) or by contacting the office to receive a Pre-Authorized Remittance form to set up automatic monthly donations or by mailing in your donation.



Please contact the church office if you would like more information.

416 425 5252 or office@northleaunited.ca

** Unless otherwise indicated: Prayers (various) are taken from “The United Church of Canada - Gathering - resources for worship planners” Lent Easter – 2023 Year A Worship, Music, and Spirituality ISSN-0823-1869 1.9M 10/22 220004 CH11183

Northlea United Church
Wednesday, February 22, 2023

Opening Scripture:

“Even now, “declares the Lord,
return to me with all our heart,
with fasting and weeping and mourning.”
Joel 2:12

Opening Prayer:

We gather to prepare ourselves for a new season, a time of turning to the heart of God who invites us into repentance and inner reflection. We do so because we are invited to be intentional about our discipleship. We are conscious of our need to face the truth of our separation from our Beloved who guides us toward the center of our being, to the restoration of our wholeness and holiness. We are conscious of the failings of humanity and the liberation promised through Jesus Christ. In the coming days and weeks, we are invited to journey to the sacred centre of our faith. We are entering the depths of our own hearts. At the centre of our faith, in the depth of our hearts, Jesus is waiting for us, reaching out to us, inviting us to leave ordinary time and to follow him along the journey that brought him to the Cross, and beyond. Listen in the silence, for Jesus is calling you.

Silence

Hymn: Led By the Spirit

Bob Hurd, see page 10

Prayer of Confession:

Donna Rutz

**O, God, when we pause to look back at our lives on this Ash Wednesday,
we realize that humanity has been weighed in the balance and found wanting.
We, as your children, have neglected to do good when it was in our power to do so.
We, as Christians, like believers of old,
have pulled down your altars and erected idols crafted in our own image.
We, entitled consumers, have turned our backs on the poor,
choosing instead to criminalize poverty.
We have ignored the cries of the motherless, the fatherless, the widow and the widower,
choosing instead to turn children and the elderly into the new poor.
We have bankrupted other peoples with our greed
and consumed more than our share of the world's riches.
Forgive us, O God, for turning sackcloth and ashes into a fashion statement
by pursuing form without substance.
Forgive us, O God, for the times we have neglected to provide our children**

**and our world an authentic example of Christianity.
As we begin the journey of these 40 days
Wash us, O God and we shall be clean
Cleanse us, O Lord, and we shall be made whole. Amen.**

Assurance of God's Love:

The truth is this: God's love and mercy are never-ending. God knows us in our inward being; God cleanses us from our sins and shortcomings and restores to us the joy of salvation.

Thanks be to God!

Time for Reflection:

Take a few moments to engage with your inner truth. Gaze tenderly upon your own being and ask yourself what is getting in the way of your soul finding its fullness of life. What thinking, beliefs, assumptions, feelings, conditions, habits, and behaviors are oppressing or suppressing your spiritual freedom and your open and compassionate response to life? What of these are you invited to surrender to God's transformative grace?

**Lenten God of truth and life, there is a wisdom in ashes,
that we need so much, but seldom hear.**

**It's the wisdom of grief, that reminds us of our mortality,
and that Life is more than this dust can contain.**

**It's the wisdom of confession, that brings our darkness out of hiding,
and opens the windows to Light.**

**It's the wisdom of repentance, that stops us in our tracks,
and charts the way to Love.**

**There's a wisdom in ashes, and we welcome it, Jesus,
thankful for the renewing gifts it brings. Amen.**

Hymn: Sunday's Palms are Wednesday's Ashes

Voices United 107, see page 11

Reading: Isaiah 58: 1-12

Jackie Morris

Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God.

“Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?” Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. Look, you fast only to

quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

Time for Reflection:

What word or phrase stands out for you in the Isaiah passage? How do you feel about Isaiah's words? Do they challenge or comfort? What does this passage call forth in you?

Psalm 51

Voices United p. 776 - Refrain I

Reading: Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-21

David Jafelice

“Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. “So, whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you...

“And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when

you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Time for Reflection:

What does piety mean to you? Do you have a personal and private practice that returns you to the heart of God?

Where is your treasure? Is it life giving for you or is it suffocating and de-spiriting?

The Letting Go:

We lay down what is past...

We lay down what is past and look to presence.

We take into our awareness signs of hope and healing, as those who are forgiven and forgiving. We gaze with kindness and curiosity, reaching within and then beyond ourselves to share the lives of others, and touch a wider world.

The Ashes:

Ash Wednesday invites us to come back to earth. To wonder at the gift of life, my life, our life with the earth, the shared body of our existence. These ashes were once trees and shrubs, full of life. Now they are black and grey. Dry. Lifeless. But mixed with the waters of our baptism they help the seeds of the gospel take deeper root in us and bring forth the fruits of justice, peace, and generosity. These are ashes worth wearing. May we accept this gift and be blessed. For from the burnt ashes will spring the green shoot of life rooted in God’s unending love.

Imposition of Ashes:

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Yet, out of death comes new life.

Benediction:

**May God, who has forgiven and fed us,
now make us strong for these days ahead.**

May Jesus lead us, and we be found faithful to follow.

**May the Spirit drive us into the wilderness,
burning away the chaff of our lives,**

and purifying our hearts for all to see and be blessed.

**And may the blessing of God, the Source of Love,
Jesus, Love Incarnate and the Holy Spirit,**

**Love's Power and Comfort
be with us and remain with us always! Amen.**

Sung Amen:

Christopher Walker

A - - - men, a - - - - - men.

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Music List

From page 4

Hymn: Led By the Spirit

Bob Hurd



1. Led_ by the Spir - it of our God, we_ go to fast_ and pray
2. Led_ by the Spir - it, we con - front temp - ta - tion face to face,
3. Led_ by the Spir - it, now draw near the_ wa - ters of_ re - birth
4. Led_ by the Spir - it, now sing praise to_ God the Trin - i - ty:



With Christ in - to the wil - der - ness; we_ join his pas - chal way.
And know full well we must re - ply on_ God's re - deem - ing grace.
With hearts that long to wor - ship God in_ spir - it and_ in truth.
The_ Source of Life, the Liv - ing Word made flesh to set_ us free,



“Rend not your gar - ments, rend your hearts. Turn back your lives to me.”
On_ bread a - lone_ we can - not live, but_ nour - ished by the Word.
“Who - ev - er drinks the drink I give shall ne - ver_ thirst a - gain.”
The Spir - it blow - ing where it will to_ make us_ friends of God:



Thus says our kind and gra - cious God, whose reign is lib - er - ty.
We_ seek the will of_ God to do: this is our drink and food.
Thus says the Lord who died for us, our_ Sav - ior, kin_ and friend.
This mys - t'ry far_ be - yond our reach, yet_ near in heal - ing love.

based on Joel 2:12-13; Matthew 4:1-4; Mark 1:12-15; John 4:5-42

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From page 5

Sunday's Palms are Wednesday's Ashes

(here below, all the verses are under the music.)

Voices United 107



1. Sun - day's palms are Wednes - day's ash - es as an - oth - er Lent be - gins;
2. We have failed to love our neigh - bours, their of - fen - ces to for - give,
3. We are has - ty to judge oth - ers, blind to proof of hu - man need;



thus we kneel be - fore our Ma - ker in con - tri - tion for our sins.
have not list - ened to their trou - bles, nor have cared just how they live;
and our lack of un - der - stand - ing dem - on - strates our in - ner greed;



We have marred bap - tis - mal pledg - es, in re - bel - lion gone a - stray;
we are jeal - ous, proud, im - pa - tient, lov - ing ov - er - much our things;
we have wast - ed earth's re - sourc - es; want and suf - f'ring we've ig - nored;



now, re - turn - ing, seek for - give - ness; grant us par - don, God, this day!
may the yield - ing of our fail - ings be our Len - ten of - fer - ing.
come and cleanse us, then re - store us; make new hearts with - in us, Lord!

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