

HOLY VESSELS



A LENTEN SEASON OF RECOVERY

www.worshipdesignstudio.com/vessels

Ash Wednesday February 17, 2021 Shattered

GUESTS, Welcome to worship. To learn more about us, please visit our website at www.unionucc.org or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/unionneffs. If you would like us to follow up with you contact Pastor Kris at 610-767-6961, pastorkris@unionucc.org

NEW MEMBERS: For more information email Pastor Kris. pastorkris@unionucc.org or call the church office to speak to her.

We believe in extravagant welcome. We believe in God's inclusive love. We start worship with a greeting that reflects that welcome and love.

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey and
faith's journey
You are welcome here.

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Prelude

Jesus Paid It All

Elvina M. Hall, John T. Grape

Welcome and Announcements

HOLY COMMUNION

Directions for Communion: Everyone is welcome to this meal of love and grace.

Since we are worshipping virtually, we invite you to take communion virtually.

Please find a cracker, piece of bread or something to represent the body of Christ. And please find some juice, wine or water to represent the blood of Christ. When we get to that part of the service, the pastors will bless the elements and bless us as we share in this meal together.

Opening Threshold

SUNG (SOLO):

**Vessels, holy and whole
Broken, needing the One
Open, body and soul
Healer, come.**

L Ash Wednesday is a time of naming brokenness. As we enter the season of Lent, we commit to enter also into a season of healing and recovery that requires the naming of what has been shattered as a first step. We take “the yoke” of responsibility as disciples of Jesus to be the Body of Christ—a body of those who need healing and offer healing in the world. The promise of Jesus is that he is with us in our weariness and burdens.

SUNG:

Vessels, holy and whole

**Broken, needing the One
Open, body and soul
Healer, come.**

Prayer of Confession

LWe will be living with stories of Jesus' healing in the Gospel of Matthew in this Lent season. We will see how Jesus encouraged people to open up about their lives as part of the healing process—no matter how broken. Ash Wednesday developed as a doorway to speaking the truth of our lives, a time to lay the brokenness of life before God. Let us pray:

**ALL: Merciful God,
we have lived a year of Lent.
In the midst of it all we have seen love shine through at times but as we look back in this moment,
it feels like a year of shattered dreams and shattered peace. We are discouraged. Even though so much feels out of our control,
we also see the ways our own faults and failures to love each other fully, to care for the least, to honor your creation, to stand for what is right and good, have contributed to the shattering.**

**And so we come to you in pieces.
Fragments, broken shells of our past selves.
As we walk along the shores of Uncertainty and Pain,
we ask that you meet us here.**

**Help us, Healer.
Show us our strength.
Forgive our inertia.
Move us to move
one step at a time toward greater care.**

In this silence, we sense and acknowledge our yearning for wholeness.

SUNG:

**Vessels, holy and whole
Broken, needing the One
Open, body and soul
Healer, come.**

Assurance

L Throughout the season of Lent, we will be contemplating the symbol of broken glass—sea (or beach) glass to be specific. An unknown author has said this about the glass fragments that are collected on various shores:

“Ordinary pieces of tableware or beer or soda bottles are flung into the ocean. Years pass, or decades, and then one day, there it is upon the shore: a small shard from one of those long ago discarded objects. Shifting currents have rounded its edges; abrasion has polished its surface; exposure to the sun has altered its hue. And so, when we happen upon it, here amidst the shells and seaweed, we can’t help but laugh with joy at what seems a miracle: this ordinary fragment of silica that time and adversity have transformed into something beautiful.”

Time and adversity... making something beautiful out of that which, once seen as ordinary and broken, is now considered a transformed and precious piece. This is the journey we undertake.

Jesus attended to those considered ordinary, broken, even those deemed unworthy. No matter what, Jesus *is* the lover of our souls.

HYMN #107 Amazing Grace

Hymns for the Family of God (Gold Hymnal)

**Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now I am found
Was blind, but now I see**

**Through many dangers, toils and snares
We have already come**

**'Twas grace has brought us safe thus far
And grace will lead us home**

A Contemporary Word

If you cannot speak of your brokenness, your brokenness will speak for you.

— **Peter Rollins**

What if the deeper you know our own brokenness,
the deeper you can experience your own belovedness?

— **Anne Voskamp**

Beautiful are those whose brokenness gives birth to
transformation and wisdom.

— **John Mark Green**

Our life is full of brokenness—broken relationships, broken
promises, broken expectations. How can we live with that
brokenness without becoming bitter and resentful except by
returning again and again to God's faithful presence in our lives.

— **Henri Nouwen**

Until we learn to love others as ourselves, it's difficult to blame
broken people who desperately try to affirm themselves when
no one else will.

— **Richard Rohr**

An Ancient Word

Matthew 11: 28-30

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy
burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and
learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will
find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is
light.

Song of Preparation

Make us Holy, Make Us Whole

Song Select #3315976

SUNG:

**In your love, make us whole.
May we rest in your compassion.
Calm the lost, weary soul
in the warmth of your love.
May your peace fill our hearts.
May we know the love of Jesus.
By your grace, you console.
Make us holy, make us whole.**

Prayers of the People

1 Lover of our souls,
You who weeps, bleeds, cries, waits...
for us and because of us,
we come before you to make our petitions known.
Hear our cries for healing of body, mind, and spirit.
We know that already you are at work among us,
showing us the way to recovery from the toxicities and grief
of our time.

We pray for those who are shattered by the violence of
circumstances,
tumbled by the forces of life,
and washed up on shores, distant from all that feels whole.

We pray this day for...

Prayer of Jesus

**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.**

SUNG:

In your love, make us whole.

May we rest in your compassion.

**Calm the lost, weary soul
in the warmth of your love.**

May your peace fill our hearts.

May we know the love of Jesus.

By your grace, you console.

Make us holy, make us whole.

Ritual Action

🕒 Ash Wednesday, as the beginning of Lent, developed in the 5th - 6th centuries, and was mandated in the 11th century. Although Protestants did not maintain this ritual for the most part, it has come back during the 20th century liturgical movement as an important time for reflection in which we reclaimed this symbol and ritual of our spiritual ancestors. It plays an important role in helping us make meaning in the brokenness of our lives. This year, indeed, we are aware of the fragility of life. Even though we cannot share ashes in the ways we have become accustomed, let us engage in a ritual that draws us close to the elements of creation—earth, fire, air, and water. Let it remind us that we are a part of creation, in all its beauty and its brokenness.

EARTH - The sand upon which our symbol of beach glass washes is, interestingly, the origins of glass-making. Glass is liquified, heated sand. In a way, the shards of beach glass are the epitome of “dust to dust”... or in this case, “sand to liquified sand.” To take it back even further, sand is created by the erosion of mountains and rocks over thousands or millions of years. So whether what you have on hand today is dirt or sand, we are witnessing the brokenness and erosion and weathering of the earth itself. All things become broken. All things transform. And every form we take is holy, whole, and beautiful. I invite you to touch the sand or dirt you have with you in this moment. Feel its grains, it's decomposed nature, as we pray:

Holy Creator God... as we feel this elemental part of who we are, we remember that we ourselves were made from the dust of the earth. To experience brokenness is the way of creation, it is not something to be ashamed of... it is the order of things. Transform us, O God. Help us recover the beauty of who we are and see the goodness in transformation.

FIRE - Glass can only be created when the sand is met with the heat of fire. No wonder the scriptures and poets throughout the ages have spoken of a “refining fire.” The heat of fire is always destructive, but with intention and care and tending, what transpires from the destruction of fire can be a new form with purposes that are good, useful, and beautiful. I invite you to light your candle, if it is not already lit. Gaze upon the colors of the flame which may be white or gold or red or blue, as we pray:

Holy Refining Fire of the Spirit... as we feel this elemental part of who we are, we remember that you invite us to fuel the flames of passionate love for you and for each other. Do not allow the flame of our spirits to lie dormant. Offer us your light and life. Transform us, O God. Help us recover the beauty of who we are and see the goodness in transformation.

AIR - The scriptures depict the creation of human beings as having Holy Breath blown to animate our being. Glass vessels gained a new technique around the time of Jesus. In the first century BCE, glass blowing was invented, offering a way for molten glass to be shaped by blowing through a tube, creating an air bubble, a glass vessel, ready to for practical or artistic purposes. Breath is part of the creation of our Holy Vessels. Breath is with us in our very first cry and will be the final song as we exit this realm. I invite you to close

your eyes, if this is comfortable for you, and become aware of your breath as we pray:

Holy Giver of Breath and Life... as we feel this elemental part of who we are, we remember that this ongoing, life-giving, usually-automatic, moment-to-moment function can be an act of gratitude for our very origins. And this is the core of our relationship with the creation—sharing and existing within this atmosphere. Just as our breath offers us opportunity to let go of that which we do not need in order to take in the fresh air we need, transform us, O God. Help us recover the beauty of who we are and see the goodness in transformation.

WATER - As the water meets the sand and earth at the shoreline, we also are invited to a journey of meeting the Living Water that Christ offers us. Ancient peoples made wet soil in many forms as healing balms. Skin moistened, blood flow increased to the area, muscles relaxed. This still is practiced today in many places. Our Lent series about healing, then, gives us an opportunity to use this as our Ash Wednesday ritual of anointing. I invite you to mix a little water with the dirt or sand that you have with you and create a wet mixture. Then place some in your palm—the same palm used in greeting other palms, signifying interdependent relationship. Gently rub it, making the sign of the cross, as we pray:

**Healing Presence... as we feel this elemental part of who we are, we remember you created us, shaped us from dust in the palm of your hand.
Some day we will return to dust,
return to the palm of your hand once again, held and loved forever.
We lament in this moment the grittiness of life,
the need for healing, the difficult and necessary process of transformation.**

Mark us as your own, remold us again and again as your people. Let the recognition of our own need break us open yet again for the sake of others, for the sake of the world.

And all the people say, "Amen."

Order for Holy Communion

Invitation

Directions for Communion: Everyone is welcome to this meal of love and grace.

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Please find a cracker, piece of bread or something to represent the body of Christ. And please find some juice, wine or water to represent the blood of Christ. When we get to that part of the service, the pastors will bless the elements and bless us as we share in this meal together.

Leader: Our God is with you!

ALL: And also with you!

Leader: Lift up your hearts

ALL: We lift them up to our God.

Leader: Let us give thanks to our Sovereign God

ALL: It is right to give our God thanks and praise.

L It is right, and a good and joyful thing,
always and everywhere to give thanks to you,
In the beginning you breathed life into raw materials,
creating and animating containers of beauty and goodness.
We, your Holy Vessels, were fired in the kiln of love
until we shined with your light.
Susceptible to shattering, we find ourselves broken,
unable at times to remember your promise of repair.
You remind us time and again that, though broken,
we are held in your presence
and made whole by your grace.

And so,
with your people on earth
and all the company of heaven
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Response - Holy, Holy, Holy

The musical score is written for a single voice part on a treble clef staff. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The melody is simple and hymn-like, with lyrics written below the notes. The lyrics are: "Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly, God of the heav-en-ly host; Heav-en and earth are full, are full of the maj-es-ty of your glo - ry, Ho - san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est! Bless-ed the one who comes in the name of our God, Ho - san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est!"

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly, God of the heav-en-ly host;
Heav-en and earth are full, are full of the maj-es-ty of your glo - ry,
Ho - san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est!
Bless-ed the one who comes in the name of our God,
Ho - san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est!

Leader: Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ, Holy Vessel of Divine Presence on earth. Your Spirit anointed him as a container of grace in the form of preaching good news to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives recovering of sight to the blind, setting at liberty those who are oppressed, and announcing that the time had come when you would save your people. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with those considered too broken for company. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to the path of healing and recovery,

delivered us from our despair and isolation,
and made with us a new covenant by water and the
Spirit.

When Jesus ascended, he promised to be with us
always. In the power of your Word and Holy Spirit,
we are not alone.

Leader: On the night in which he gave himself up for us,
he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread,
gave it to his disciples, and said:

“Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.”

When the supper was over, he took the cup,
gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:

“Drink from this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
poured out for you and for many
for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it,
in remembrance of me.”

Leader: And so, in remembrance of the healing,
life-transforming acts in Jesus Christ,
we offer ourselves as a holy and living sacrifice,
in union with Christ’s offering for us,
as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

**ALL: Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will
come again.**

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here,
and on these gifts of bread and wine.
Make them be for us your Healing Spirit through Christ,
so that we may be for the world the body of Christ,
healing agents in a broken world,

offering the life-blood of hope.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ,
one with each other,
and one in ministry to all the world,
until Christ comes in final victory
and we feast at his heavenly banquet.
Amen.

Sharing the Bread and the Cup

L Take and eat, take and drink.

***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

L God of all that is too deep for words,
we give you thanks that, at this table of grace,
you offer your holiness, your steadfast love.
Open us often to your *Selah*, your pause,
to hear the needs of your people.
We pray this in the name of the Host of this Table,
Jesus the Christ. Amen.

BLESSING

Leader: Now go with confidence that,
though shattered, we are held.
Begin the journey of recovering your depth of love for all
and your joy of living in this world.

May the words of Jesus ring in your ears:
“I will give you rest.”

And may the Spirit hover, move, and deliver
salve to your soul
and a spring in your step.
Amen.

Threshold Into the World

SUNG: ALL

**Vessels, holy and whole
Broken, needing the One
Open, body and soul
Healer, come.**

Postlude

Have Thine Own Way, Lord George C. Stebbins

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February Mission-

Blanket Sunday and Souper Bowl Sunday: Check donations may be made through the special envelope in the February newsletter or in any envelope. Checks made to "Union UCC" and please mark them "Blanket Sunday" (to help those facing emergencies) or "Souper Bowl Sunday" (to support the Lehigh Conference of Churches with housing and food needs) and mail to the church. Cans of soup can be dropped at the church on Saturdays or Sundays and will go to the Northern Lehigh Food Bank.

Easter Mission-

Lehigh Conference of Church and the Parkland Cares Food Pantry: Check donations may be made through the "Easter Mission" envelope in your envelope pack or in any envelope marked Easter Mission. Checks to "Union UCC" and mail them to church.

Give online at <http://www.unionucc.org/resources/giving-and-sponsorship/ways-to-give/> for Easter Mission.

OFFERING ENVELOPES you can mail your envelopes to the church. The church address is on one side, just add a stamp.

ELECTRONIC GIVING **This is a great time to try e-giving!** Choose a weekly, semi-monthly or monthly donation to be transferred electronically. Fill out the form at <http://www.unionucc.org/egive.pdf> and return it to the church office. financialmanager@unionucc.org

DONATE ONLINE with your Credit or Debit Card

Go to <http://www.unionucc.org/resources/giving-and-sponsorship/ways-to-give/> and click **GIVE ONLINE**.

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