

# ASH WEDNESDAY

FEBRUARY 18, 2026



FIRST CHRISTIAN UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

# Ash Wednesday

First Christian United Church of Christ, Burlington, NC  
6:00 pm Worship Service      February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2026

*Rev. Stephen Ball, OSL*

## **THE COMMUNITY GATHERS**

PRELUDE

OPENING PRAYER

*\*HYMN: "Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart"*

*The New Century Hymnal #290*

PRAYER OF CONFESSION Psalm 51:1-17

Leader: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions.

**People: Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.**

Leader: 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 judgement.

**People: 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.**

Leader: 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.

**People: 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.**

Leader: 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.

**People: Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.**

Leader: O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.

**People: The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 58:1-12

(MUSIC)

PRAYER/PRAYER OF OUR SAVIOR

Let us now offer our prayers to God, who calls us from dust to life.

Leader: Holy God, we pray for your holy universal church, for all who seek to follow Christ, and for those who minister in your name. May we, your people, truly loose the bonds of injustice, undo the thongs of the yoke, let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke. God, in your mercy...

**People: Hear our prayer, O God, and lead us from dust to life.**

Leader: We pray for the nations of the world, for leaders and all in authority, that may govern with wisdom, compassion, and a commitment to justice. May they be instruments of your peace, working to share bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into their houses. God, in your mercy...

**People: Hear our prayer, O God, and lead us from dust to life.**

Leader: We pray for all who suffer in body, mind, or spirit: for the sick, the grieving, the lonely, and the despairing. May they find comfort, healing, and hope in your loving presence, and may we be your hands and feet, cover the naked and not hiding ourselves from our own kin. God, in your mercy...

**People: Hear our prayer, O God, and lead us from dust to life.**

Leader: We pray for our local community, for our families, friends, and neighbors. Inspire us to be good stewards of your creation, to live in harmony with one another, and to be a beacon of your love and justice in this place. May our light break forth like the dawn, and our healing spring up quickly. God, in your mercy...

**People: Hear our prayer, O God, and lead us from dust to life.**

Leader: We give thanks for those who have gone before us in faith, whose lives bore witness to your transforming power. May their example inspire us to walk faithfully in your ways, until we too are gathered into your eternal embrace. God, in your mercy...

**People: Hear our prayer, O God, and lead us from dust to life.**

Leader: Gracious God, receive these prayers, and transform us by your Spirit, that our lives may reflect your glory and hasten the coming of your kingdom.

**People: Amen.**

Leader: Let us pray as our Savior has taught us:

**People: 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 trespasses,**

**As we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

## IMPOSITION OF ASHES

*Congregation members wishing to receive the ashen cross will proceed to the front and the pastor will mark their forehead.*

*\*HYMN: "Just As I Am"*

*The New Century Hymnal #207*

## CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

## POSTLUDE

