



“My house shall be a house of prayer for all people.”

February 6, 2008

Welcome

on

Ash Wednesday

We are so pleased that you're able to join us today in worship and celebration at MCC Toronto.

We are a joyful, spiritual community of people committed to being an inclusive, affirmative, caring church.

At the ❖ symbol, you are asked to rise in body or in spirit.

About tonight's service:

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of the season of Lent.

At MCC Toronto, we celebrate Lent as a time when we prepare both as individuals and as a community for the triumph of Easter.

This time of preparation is an opportunity for each of us to examine where and when we are pulled away from God's love, the ways we “unplug” from spiritual life and community.

Tonight we impose ashes on our foreheads as a sign that we have released our burdens, and that we can embrace ourselves as new creations.

Time of Centering

As you enter this space, we invite you to take a few moments to relax, reflect and prepare for tonight's service.

Call to Worship

One: God of the wilderness, may we dare to seek you in this place, that our emptiness may be filled with your presence and our longings be satisfied by your mercy.

All: God of mystery and mercy, grant us new life with you as we draw near with repentant hearts.

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Opening Song ❖

Open Our Eyes, God

Open our eyes, God, we want to see Jesus
To reach out and touch him, and say that we love him.

Open our ears, God, and help us to listen
Open our eyes, God, we want to see Jesus.

Open our eyes, God, we want to see Jesus
To reach out and touch him, and say that we love him.

Open our ears, God, and help us to listen
Open our eyes, God, we want to see Jesus.

Reflection

Song of Response

Return to God

Return to God with all your heart, the source of grace and mercy;
Come seek the tender faithfulness of God.

Return to God with all your heart, the source of grace and mercy;
Come seek the tender faithfulness of God.

Now the time of grace has come, the day of salvation;
Come and learn now the way of our God. [R]

I will take your heart of stone and place a heart within you,
A heart of compassion and love. [R]

If you break the chains of oppression,
If you set the pris'ner free;
If you share your bread with the hungry,
Give protection to the lost;
Give shelter to the homeless,
Clothe the naked in your midst,
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn. [R]

Call to Offertory

Offertory

Be Still and Know That I Am God, Pride & Joy

Reflection

Litany of Confession

One: We hear today the call of God, "Return to me with all your heart."

Many: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

One: We pray for our world, where violence, poverty and despair destroy lives day after day. For our complicity, our silence, our disinterest, we pray to you, O Holy One,

Many: Create in us clean hearts, O God, and put a new and right spirit within us.

One: We pray for the earth, for the atmosphere, the rivers, the animals, the forests, whose very existence is threatened as a result of our actions. For our selfishness, our short-sightedness, our denial, we pray to you, Creator of All,

Many: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

One: We pray for our community, for the prejudices that we still level against one another, for the ways we exclude those who are just a little different than we are.

For our fears, our insecurities, our bigotry, we pray to you, Hope of All People,

Many: Create in us clean hearts, O God, and put a new and right spirit within us.

One: We pray for our friends, our lovers, and all those whose lives we touch. For the times when we have not treated them as we would want to be treated ourselves, for our disrespect, our impatience, our self-centeredness, we pray to you, Healer of All,

Many: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

One: We pray for ourselves today. For the times we have sold ourselves short, put ourselves down, abandoned our dreams, fallen prey to our fears, we pray to you, O Compassionate One,

Many: Create in us clean hearts, O God, and put a new and right spirit within us.

One: For all that we have done and all that we have left undone, we are grateful for your forgiveness, praying:

Many: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

The Imposition of the Ashes

During the Imposition of the Ashes, please join *Pride & Joy* in song as you are called.

Jesus' Prayer

Closing Song

Freely, Freely

I've come to love in Jesus' name; I've come to God in Jesus' name;
And in Jesus' name I come to you to share his power as he told me to.
He said, "Freely, freely you have received; freely, freely give.
Go in my name and, because you believe, others will know that I live."

All power is given in Jesus' name, in earth and heaven in Jesus' name;
And in Jesus' name I come to you to share his power as he told me to.
He said, "Freely, freely you have received; freely, freely give.
Go in my name and, because you believe, others will know that I live."

I've come to love in Jesus' name; I've come to God in Jesus' name;
And in Jesus' name I come to you to share his power as he told me to.
He said, "Freely, freely you have received; freely, freely give.
Go in my name and, because you believe, others will know that I live."

Prayer of Entering Into the Season of Lent

Benediction

Letting Go / Burning of Written Releases

Letting go . . .

Deacons will be available for prayer after the service.

Prayers

We're here to be with you in prayer. You can send in a request in any one of four ways:

1. Through the prayer book in the Chapel,
2. Call 416-406-6228 x 171,
3. Send an e-mail to: care@mcctoronto.com, or
4. Through the link on the front page of our website at: www.mcctoronto.com

Burning of Written Releases

At any time during the evening you're invited to take the small slips of paper handed out with your Order of Service, and write down anything that was brought to your attention as you listened to the various readings and reflections during tonight's service. Write down anything you feel may be holding you from experiencing the fullness of God's love and God's peace in your life. As you leave the service tonight, surrender these pieces of paper - and all they hold - into the fire that will be burning outside the sanctuary doors.