

Ash Wednesday 2024

The
Punctuation
of
JESUS
What & How He Communicates



Limitless Love | Courageous Action | Spirited Inquiry

Purpose Statement

Parkway United Church of Christ strives to be an inclusive community embracing: spiritual nourishment, open-minded inquiry, courageous action, and interfaith partnerships to fulfill God's calling to create a just world for all.

Congregational Statement

Parkway United Church of Christ, with God's grace, seeks to be a congregation that includes all persons, regardless of race, ethnic, or socio-economic background while respecting differences of gender, marital status, age, sexual orientation, and mental and physical ability. We aspire to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God. We invite all to share in the life and leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities and blessings of participation in our open and affirming congregation.

Ash Wednesday

February 14, 2024 at 7:00pm

In the middle of a week, we pause to observe Ash Wednesday together—individually and as a faith community. We remember that God made us from fragile, blessed dust and breathes through us the breath of life and love. From dust we are created and to God's good dust we shall return. With dust and oil and glitter tonight—we claim the mark of God's cherished, flawed, blessed and beloved creature.

Today we begin our 40-day Lenten journey to discover who we are created to be as God's beloved—and how we are to approach and treat one another as also beloved.

In daily practices of prayer, study, self-reflection and service we will be very intentional on this Lenten journey. We follow Jesus—God's Beloved Child, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh in whom we see God's image most clearly. So come, let us pray for strength and imagination to follow Jesus wherever he will lead us this Lent. We model ourselves after him and long to be a more faithful, creative and effective expression of him.

Our theme this year is:

The Punctuation of Jesus: *How and What He Communicates*
Jesus links things and sometimes glues them together; asks and answers questions; quotes scripture; make lists; shows emphasis and expresses strong emotion; talks about belonging and possession; sometimes separates and even puts an end to things; helps us to take up his mission and ministry, trusting us with the next steps.

We seek clarity around what it is that Jesus is trying to share with us. He uses different forms of communication in an effort to reach each and every one of us - regardless of our learning styles, life experiences and ability to focus. He is eager and effective in his attempts. We open our heart, mind, spirit and all of our senses - that we might be more available to receive, understand and pass along what he wants and needs us to know.

We welcome the Spirit to lead us, guide us and light the way so that we can be more intentionally communicate the words and ways of Jesus.

Welcome

Passing the Peace of Christ

Meditation *To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way that we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others. ~Anthony Robbins*

Introit *Kyrie*

[The cantor will sing once, the choir will repeat an echo response; the third time, the congregation joins the choir response each time the Cantor sings]

Kyrie Eleison...Kyrie Eleison (Lord, have mercy)

Christe Eleison...Christe Eleison (Christ, have mercy)

Kyrie Eleison...Kyrie Eleison (Lord, have mercy)

Lighting of the Candles & Ringing of the Bell

Hebrew Scripture Lesson Joel 2, selected verses

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 God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. Who knows whether God will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind, 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?’”

Centering Please take a breath between each line.

Be still and know that I am God

Be still and know that I am

Be still and know that I

Be still and know that

Be still and know

Be still and

Be still

Be

Amen.

Lenten Candles

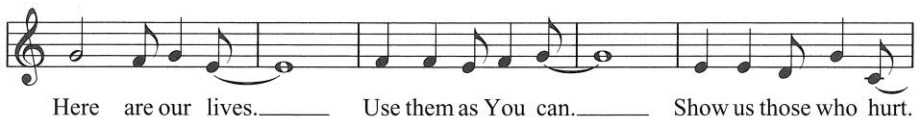
We light seven candles tonight as we embark on this Lenten journey. We want the light of the Holy to illumine our path as we seek to be the words and ways of Jesus. We commit to being more infused by the Spirit as we travel. Even as we know this is good and important work, we recognize that it isn't easy—and we will come upon the shadow side of humanity and some of our own unique darkness.

We extinguish one candle each time we gather for worship this season, acknowledging that this can be tough and exhausting work. As we approach the desertion and depletion of Good Friday, we also prepare ourselves for the dawn and love of Easter morning...the light that never goes out.

Prayer at the Candles

Holy One, send your spirit that we might find more clarity around what it is that Jesus is trying to share with us. He uses different forms of communication in an effort to reach each and every one of us - regardless of our learning styles, life experiences and ability to focus. He is eager and effective in his attempts. Help us to open our heart, mind, spirit and all of our senses - that we might be more available to receive, understand and pass along what he wants and needs us to know now. Amen.

Response *Here Are Our Hearts* by Susan Drake and Julie Jennings



Unison Invitation to Confession Psalm 51, selected verses

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

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

You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Let me hear joy and gladness. 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.

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. 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.

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.

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

Silent Prayers

We suggest more centering and cleansing breaths.

Assurance of Forgiveness based on Romans 8

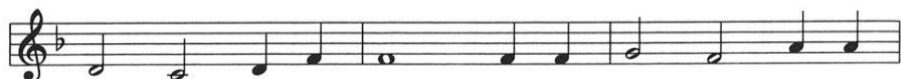
We have this assurance that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Hymn *Sunday's Palms are Wednesday's Ashes*

Our ashes are made from the palms we waved last year during Holy Week.



1. *Sun-day's palms are Wednes-day's ash - es as an -
2. We have failed to love our neigh - bors, their of -
3. We are hast - y to judge oth - ers, blind to



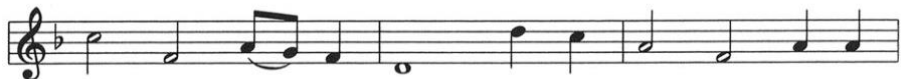
oth - er Lent be - gins; thus we kneel be - fore our
fenc - es to for - give, have not lis - tened to their
proof of hu - man need; and our lack of un - der -



Mak - er in con - tri - tion for our
trou - bles, nor have cared just how they
stand - ing dem - on - strates our in - ner



sins. We have marred bap - tis - mal pledg - es, in re -
live, we are jeal - ous, proud, im - pa - tient, lov - ing
greed; we have wast - ed earth's re - sourc - es; want and



bel - lion gone a - stray; now, re - turn - ing, seek for -
o - ver - much our things; may the yield - ing of our
suf - fering we've ig - nored; come and cleanse us, then re -



give - ness; grant us par - don, God, this day!
fail - ings be our Len - ten of - fer - ings.
store us; make new hearts with - in us, Lord!

Children's Message

Children will remain in Worship this evening. The Nursery door is open but it is not staffed. Please feel free to use that space if your child needs a change of environment for a few minutes. The couches, open area and speaker from the sanctuary also make the Gathering Space a good option.

Blessing & Imposition of Ashes

Response *Spirit of the Living God*

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Mission Moment 2nd Mile Lent/Easter

Heifer International | Lydia's House | Unleashing Potential | Eden Seminary

Offering Our Gifts to God

Offertory Anthem *They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love* –

accomp. arr. by Tedd Smith, for the popular hymn by Peter Scholtes

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,
And we pray that all unity may one day be restored.

Refrain:

And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love;
Yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.

We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand,
We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand,
And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land: (Refrain)

We will work with each other, we will work side by side,
We will work with each other, we will work side by side,
And we'll guard human dignity and save human pride: (Refrain)

All praise to Creator, from whom all things come,
And all praise to Christ Jesus, God's only Son,
And all praise to the Spirit, who makes us one: (Refrain)

***Doxology**

**Praise God whose many names abound;
Our Peace, our Rock, Our Holy Ground,
Our Home, our All, Earth's Majesty,
Love, Spirit, Light and Mystery. Amen.**

***Prayer of Dedication**

**Holy One, we share our gifts with the realization that we cycle
in and out of being the giver and the receiver. Bless us in this
constant flow of generosity. Amen.**

Gospel Lesson Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

“Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from our God 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 our God 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 our God who is in secret; and our God 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 our God who is in secret; and our God 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.”

Reflection

Call to Prayer *Come and Find the Quiet Center*



1. Come and find the qui - et cen - ter in the crowd-ed life we
2. Si - lence is a friend who claims us, cools the heat and slows the
3. In the Spir - it let us trav - el, o - pen to each oth-er's



lead, find the room for hope to en - ter, find the
 pace, God it is who speaks and names us, knows our
 pain, let our loves and fears un - rav - el, cel - e -

frame where we are freed: clear the cha - os and the
 be - ing, touch - es base, mak - ing space with - in our
 brate the space we gain: there's a place for deep - est

clut - ter, clear our eyes, that we can see all the
 think - ing, lift - ing shades to show the sun, rais - ing
 dream - ing, there's a time for heart to care, in the

things that real - ly mat - ter, be at peace, and sim - ply be.
 cour - age when we're shrink - ing, find - ing scope for faith be - gun.
 Spir - it's live - ly schem - ing there is al - ways room to spare!

Prayers of the People and Lord's Prayer

Our [Creator/Mother/Father/Holy One] **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.**

Benediction

Postlude *Lord Jesus, Thou Art Going Forth* - arr. by Albert Beck, based on *So Gehst du Nun*, from *Geistliches Gesangbuch*, Darmstadt, 1638

2nd Mile Lent & Easter 2024

Parkway will again support four worthy organizations with its Second Mile Giving for Lent and Easter. We believe this blend of support will help Parkway create local, national and international impact with its gifts. Please remember that Second Mile Giving is over and above our 2024 PUCC Budget and donations will be divided evenly among the organizations listed below. Please be generous as these organizations need on our gifts in order to be more faithful and effective.

Lydia's House

Lydia's House offers secure housing and immediate community for women and children who are victims of domestic violence. We have 50 confidentially located, fully furnished apartments where families can find refuge, safety and support. Our transitional housing is one of the largest in the country and the only program of its kind in eastern Missouri.

Each family at Lydia's House is provided an advocate to help guide them through the process of recovering from abuse. All family members are connected to support services, including individual and group resources, to help them build the skills that are necessary not only for surviving but thriving in the wake of trauma.

Lydia's House staff are involved in: Advocacy; Children's Programs; Licensed Therapy; Immigrant Services; Development, Outreach & Administrative Services; Maintenance & Facilities Support and Spiritual Support.

For more information, please visit lydiashouse.org

UP - *Unleashing Potential* [formerly Neighborhood Houses]

For well over 100 years, Neighborhood Houses has loved children in St Louis and helped resilient families to be even more so!

Early Childhood Education: Caroline Mission is a licensed and accredited Early Childhood facility operated by UP. Our Mission is to provide quality affordable childcare for children from 6 weeks to 5 years of age. Caroline Mission is a "home away from home."

After School Programs: UP is the #1 provider of before and after school programming in the St Louis Public Schools... fun & creative activities, homework assistance, character education, cultural awareness, health & fitness focus, arts & crafts, supervised recreation, and much more!

GeoQuest Program: expands access to education, hands-on learning, and skill training in geospatial technology for children in K-8 grades. As one of the fastest growing fields in information technology, geospatial science jobs are in high demand. In today's digital world, STEM skills are essential and becoming increasingly specialized. Raising your child to be technologically-savvy is a smart move!

For more information, please visit upstl.org

Heifer International

Heifer International does so much more than put food in the mouths of hungry people. Heifer helps people to feed themselves. The goal of every Heifer project is sustainability -- project partners achieving self-reliance. And year after year, as partner families “pass on the gift” of knowledge and one or more of their animals’ offspring to others in need, they become links in a network of hope, dignity and self-reliance that helps hundreds of others care for themselves.

In addition to supporting their worldwide work, consider purchasing birthday, anniversary and holiday gifts for loved ones through Heifer. Their gift catalogue is one of a kind and is the perfect gift for any occasion!

<https://www.heifer.org/gift-catalog/index.html>

For more information, please visit [heifer.org](https://www.heifer.org)

Eden Seminary

Eden Theological Seminary is a graduate school preparing women and men for ordained Christian ministry. One of the six seminaries of the United Church of Christ, Eden is a community that seeks God’s justice and peace in the world. Eden is welcoming, inclusive and ecumenically diverse.

Eden was established in 1850 at Marthasville, Missouri. It was established because a European education was not adequate to prepare pastors for Evangelical churches on the North American frontier. From its beginning, Eden has embodied an ecumenical spirit. Its first graduating class included six Evangelicals as well as a Methodist and a Mennonite.

Eden admitted its first African American student in 1933. In 1965, the late Joseph Cardinal Ritter of the Saint Louis Archdiocese became the first Roman Catholic Cardinal to address a graduating class in a Protestant seminary.

Today, students from many different denominations are engaged in theological education at Eden as it remains committed to educating faithful and effective leaders for church and society. The seminary counts among its distinguished graduates Reinhold Niebuhr, H. Richard Niebuhr and Walter Brueggemann.

Eden Theological Seminary is committed to the study of theology in the context of the ecumenical Christian community and the contemporary interfaith world.

For more information, please visit [eden.edu](https://www.eden.edu).

Please be sure to clearly mark your financial gifts ‘2nd Mile’ throughout the season of Lent, Holy Week and Easter so that these four mission partners can receive evenly from our generosity.

Consider visiting their websites to find other ways to plug in to the important work they are doing.