

St. Mark's United Methodist Church

601 Eighth Street | Laurel, Maryland 20707

301.776.8885 | stmarksfmd@gmail.com



"We come together at St. Mark's to praise God, celebrate His love for us, and grow together in Christ by equipping the people of God to implement and spread His Word to the world."

Rev. Eugene W. Matthews, Pastor

443.257.2730 | reveugene@comcast.net

Rev. Dr. George F. DeFord, Pastor Emeritus

Bishop LaTrelle Millet Easterling

Baltimore/Washington Conference

Rev. Sarah Schlieckert

*District Superintendent
for the Southern Annapolis Region*



Welcome, as we gather here to worship!

Wednesday, February 22, 2023

*Black History Month
Ash Wednesday Service*

Worship Leader – Cynthia Whitfield

Call To Worship.....Cynthia Whitfield

Leader: O, God, when we pause to look back at our lives on this Ash Wednesday, we realize that we have been weighed in the balance and found wanting.

People: **We have neglected to do good when it was in our power to do so.**

Leader: We, like believers of old, have pulled down your altars and erected idols crafted in our own image. We have turned our backs on the poor, choosing instead to criminalize poverty.

People: **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.**

Leader: We have bankrupted the country with our greed and consumed more than our share of the world's riches. We have not dealt honorably with our enemies or our friends, and we have manufactured a place in the company of the righteous.

People: **Forgive us, O God, for turning sackcloth and ashes into a fashion statement by pursuing form without substance.**

Leader: Forgive us, O God, for the times we have neglected to provide our children and our world an authentic example of Christianity.

All: **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.**

“Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross”

1. Jesus, keep me near the cross; there a precious fountain, free to all, a healing stream, flows from Calvary’s mountain.

Refrain:

In the cross, in the cross, be my glory ever, till my raptured soul shall find rest beyond the river.

2. Near the cross, a trembling soul, love and mercy found me; there the bright and morning star sheds its beams around me.
(Refrain)

3. Near the cross! O Lamb of God, bring its scenes before me; help me walk from day to day with its shadow o’er me.
(Refrain)

4. Near the cross I’ll watch and wait, hoping, trusting ever, till I reach the golden strand just beyond the river. **(Refrain)**

Scripture Lesson.....Cynthia Whitfield

(Joel 2:1–2, 12–17, Common English Bible)

Announcement of alarm and peril

2 Blow the horn in Zion;
give a shout on my holy mountain!
Let all the people of the land tremble,
for the day of the Lord is coming.

It is near—

² a day of darkness and no light,
a day of clouds and thick darkness!

Like blackness spread out upon the mountains,
a great and powerful army^[a] comes,
unlike any that has ever come before them,
or will come after them in centuries ahead.

Change your hearts

¹² Yet even now, says the Lord,
return to me with all your hearts,
with fasting, with weeping, and with sorrow;

¹³ tear your hearts
and not your clothing.

Return to the Lord your God,
for he is merciful and compassionate,

very patient, full of faithful love,
and ready to forgive.

¹⁴ Who knows whether he will have a change of heart
and leave a blessing behind him,
a grain offering and a drink offering
for the Lord your God?

¹⁵ Blow the horn in Zion;
demand a fast;
request a special assembly.

¹⁶ Gather the people;
prepare a holy meeting;
assemble the elders;
gather the children,
even nursing infants.

Let the groom leave his room
and the bride her chamber.

¹⁷ Between the porch and the altar
let the priests, the Lord's ministers, weep.
Let them say, "Have mercy, Lord, on your people,
and don't make your inheritance a disgrace,
an example of failure among the nations.
Why should they say among the peoples,
'Where is their God?'"

Call to Confession (*in unison*)

God knows our false piety and religious pretense. All that we say
and do is known to God. We can hide nothing from our Creator.
Now is the time to bare our souls before God.

Scripture Lesson.....**Cynthia Whitfield**
(*2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10, Common English Bible*)

²⁰ So we are ambassadors who represent Christ. God is negotiating
with you through us. We beg you as Christ's representatives, "Be
reconciled to God!" ²¹ God caused the one who didn't know sin to
be sin for our sake so that through him we could become the
righteousness of God. **6** ¹ Since we work together with him, we are
also begging you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² He
says, *I listened to you at the right time, and I helped you on the day
of salvation.* Look, now is the right time! Look, now is the day of
salvation!

³ We don't give anyone any reason to be offended about anything so that our ministry won't be criticized. ⁴ Instead, we commend ourselves as ministers of God in every way. We did this with our great endurance through problems, disasters, and stressful situations. ⁵ We went through beatings, imprisonments, and riots. We experienced hard work, sleepless nights, and hunger. ⁶ We displayed purity, knowledge, patience, and generosity. We served with the Holy Spirit, genuine love, ⁷ telling the truth, and God's power. We carried the weapons of righteousness in our right hand and our left hand. ⁸ We were treated with honor and dishonor and with verbal abuse and good evaluation. We were seen as both fake and real, ⁹ as unknown and well known, as dying—and look, we are alive! We were seen as punished but not killed, ¹⁰ as going through pain but always happy, as poor but making many rich, and as having nothing but owning everything.

Gospel Lesson**Cynthia Whitfield**
(*Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21, Common English Bible*)

Showy religion

6 "Be careful that you don't practice your religion in front of people to draw their attention. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

² "Whenever you give to the poor, don't blow your trumpet as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets so that they may get praise from people. I assure you, that's the only reward they'll get. ³ But when you give to the poor, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing ⁴ so that you may give to the poor in secret. Your Father who sees what you do in secret will reward you.

Showy prayer

⁵ "When you pray, don't be like hypocrites. They love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners so that people will see them. I assure you, that's the only reward they'll get. ⁶ But when you pray, go to your room, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is present in that secret place. Your Father who sees what you do in secret will reward you.

Showy fasting

¹⁶ "And when you fast, don't put on a sad face like the hypocrites. They distort their faces so people will know they are fasting. I assure you that they have their reward. ¹⁷ When you fast, brush your hair and wash your face. ¹⁸ Then you won't look like you are

fasting to people, but only to your Father who is present in that secret place. Your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Earthly and heavenly treasures

¹⁹”Stop collecting treasures for your own benefit on earth, where moth and rust eat them and where thieves break in and steal them. ²⁰ Instead, collect treasures for yourselves in heaven, where moth and rust don’t eat them and where thieves don’t break in and steal them. ²¹ Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Selection St. Mark’s Choir

Message Rev. Eugene W Matthews

“A Time for House Cleaning”

Invitation to the Observance of Lenten Discipline

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ: the early Christians observed with great devotion the days of our lord’s passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church that before the Easter celebration there should be a forty-day season of spiritual preparation. During this season converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism.

It was also a time when persons who had committed serious sins and had separated themselves from the community of faith were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to participation in the life of the Church. In this way the whole congregation was reminded of the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ and the need we all have to renew our faith. I invite, therefore, in the name of the Church, to observe a holy Lent: by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God’s Holy Word. To make a right beginning of repentance, and as a mark of our mortal nature, let us now kneel before our Creator and Redeemer.

Thanksgiving Over the Ashes Rev. Eugene W. Matthews

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. Grant that these ashes may be to use a sign of our mortality and penitence, so that we may remember that only by your gracious gift are we given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior.
Amen.

Imposition of Ashes..... Rev. Eugene W. Matthews

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

Hymn..... Choir/Congregation

“Alas! and Did My Savior Bleed”

- 1 Alas! and did my Savior bleed, And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred head For sinners such as I?

Refrain

At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light, and the burden of my heart rolled away; it was there by faith I received my sight, and now I am happy all the day.

- 2 Was it for crimes that I have done, He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity! Grace unknown! And love beyond degree!

(Refrain)

- 3 Well might the sun in darkness hide, And shut His glories in,
When God, the mighty Maker, died For man, the creature’s sin.

(Refrain)

- 4 But drops of grief can ne’er repay The debt of love I owe;
Here, Lord, I give myself away; ‘Tis all that I can do. ***(Refrain)***

Prayer of Thanksgiving..... Rev. Eugene Matthews

O God, maker of everything and judge over all that you have made, from the dust of the earth you have formed us and from the dust of death you would raise us up. By the redemptive power of the cross, create in us a new spirit that we may repent of our sins and lead lives worthy of your calling; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession *(in unison)*

God, on this Ash Wednesday, we come before you acknowledging your greatness, exalting your supreme power, declaring that you are the God of our salvation. We come confessing the multitude of our transgressions known and unknown. We’re guilty and we need your grace. And so, we bow before you, kneel before you; lay down prostrate before you, asking that you would intervene for our sinful, sorrowful, and sick souls. Create in us newness of life, happiness of heart. Restore to us the full blessings of heaven. Deliver us from the penalty we deserve. And we will rise up. We

will stand up. We will get up and live up to the expectations of your calling on our lives. These things we pray in the powerful and mighty name of Jesus. **Amen.**

Assurance of Forgiveness Rev. Eugene W. Matthews

Hear the Good News. The LORD, our God, is gracious and merciful; slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. God hears the earnest cries of the repentant and forgives our sins. Happy are those who accept God's forgiveness!

Selection St. Mark's Choir

The Lord's Prayer (*sung*)

Signs of Reconciliation and Love

Closing Hymn

"Give Me a Clean Heart"

Give me a clean heart so I may serve Thee. Lord, fix my heart so that I may be used by Thee. For I'm not worthy of all these blessings. Give me a clean heart, so I'll follow Thee.

Dismissal With Blessing

Pastor: Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are repentant.

People: **Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, while we, humbly lament of our sins and acknowledge our wretchedness, we may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.**

Pastor: Holy God, whose Spirit drives us into the wilderness to confront our priorities with a holy fast; grant that as we are about to do battle with our demons and the power of evil, we may be defended by our grace through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Going Forth

