

Welcome to *Amherst Presbyterian Church*. We are one of the visible churches for the invisible church that shall be gathered into one, under Christ, the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Christ that fills all in all.

You are so welcome to our worship every Sunday.



Ash Wednesday

February 14, 2024 at 7:00 PM

AMHERST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
The Presbyterian Church in the USA
All Are Welcome

* We invite you to please stand, as you are able, for items preceded by an asterisk.

PRELUDE: Andante Handel

WELCOME

Pastor Amir

* HYMN: My Song Is Love Unknown # 76 - verses 1, 2 and 5 (blue hymnal)

CALL TO WORSHIP

Pastor: Blow the trumpets; summon all God's servants!
Call a solemn assembly for people of all ages.

People: **We respond to God's mercy and steadfast love.
We are drawn by God's saving grace.**

Pastor: Sound an alarm among all who have forgotten God.
Turn back with fasting and repentance.

People: **We want to worship God with our whole being.
We intend to be genuine in our praise and service.**

Pastor: God's blessings penetrate our gloom and despair.
God gathers us into the holy presence.

People: **Surely we will be washed and cleansed.
God will teach us, and we will learn.**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

(in unison)

God of steadfast love, we tremble before you. We know our transgressions. We have rebelled since our earliest days, shutting you out of our lives. We have doubted your presence, ignored your blessings, and resented your inclusiveness. It is hard to be truthful with others and within ourselves. Our worship has slipped into dull routine. Our sacrifices have been superficial. Blot out our iniquities, we pray, and wash us clean. Renew our spirits in the joy of your salvation. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

(in unison)

The grace of God is abundantly present to change our lives. God lifts us above our transgressions and cleanses us from our sin. In Christ we are restored to the wholeness God intends for us. Our contrite hearts and receptive spirits welcome the deliverance we are offered. Open your mouths to declare God's praise. Open your lives to accept the transformation that comes with forgiveness.

PASSING OF PEACE

Pastor: "The Peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you..."

People: "...and also with you."

FIRST READING

Isaiah 58:1-12

(Please turn to page 688 in your pew Bible)

ANTHEM: God Loved the World Burkhardt

Unified Choir

(The congregation is invited to join in on the last verse - see bulletin insert.)

SECOND READING

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

¹ "Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

² "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. ³ But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁵ "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. ⁶ But whenever you

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pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

¹⁶ “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. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

¹⁹ “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Pastor: The Word of God, to all people of God.

People: Thanks be to God.

SERMON

“True Fasting”

Rev. Jason Cashing

MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION ~ *Please observe this time of silence.*

LITANY OF PENITENCE

Pastor: Holy God, we confess to you and to one another that we have sinned, by our own fault, in our thoughts, our words, and our actions.

People: Have mercy on us, O God.

Pastor: We have not loved you or our neighbors with our whole hearts.

People: Have mercy on us, O God.

Pastor: We have failed to do justice and to love mercy and to live humbly.

People: Have mercy on us, O God.

Pastor: We have left many things undone that would bring justice and equality to the human community.

People: Have mercy on us, O God.

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Pastor: We have despoiled the natural world that you created in beauty and rich diversity.

People: Have mercy on us, O God.

Pastor: We continually store up possessions as earthly treasure and neglect the true treasure that you offer.

People: Have mercy on us, O God.

Pastor: With honesty, we confess our pride, our envy of others, our anger, our self-indulgence, our contempt for those who differ from us.

People: Have mercy on us, O God.

Pastor: So we begin a journey through the wilderness of Lent with the marks of our human brokenness upon us. Accompany us on the way; forgive us as we stumble; encourage us as we learn the way of discipleship; bring us safely to the cross and the empty tomb. Restore us to wholeness, and embrace us in your steadfast love.

People: Turn to us in your mercy, O God, and redeem us. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT OF EUCHARIST

(follow insert)

INVITATION TO THE OBSERVANCE OF A HOLY LENT

We begin the journey to Easter with the sign of ashes. The ashes placed on our foreheads convey the uncertainty and frailty of our lives. May they remind us to spend the days of Lent in prayer and fasting, in examination of our lives, in doing works of love and justice, and in grounding ourselves in the words of Scripture.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

(Everyone is invited to receive ashes from the ministers at the front of the sanctuary. We would ask that you please wait for the ushers to invite you forward, row by row. Please approach via the center aisle and return to your seats by the side aisles. If you are unable to come forward and need to receive ashes at your seat, please let us know by raising your hand.)

LENTEN PRAYER

(in unison)

Our gracious God, who calls us to journey through the wilderness, we step forward with courage, called to walk the way of Christ. May we walk in humility and courage.

As we experience our internal and individual repentance, may we also repent of the social brokenness that we have caused, the injustices and inequalities we have turned away from. Give us compassion for the mourning and disaster that others experience, and show us how to be healers even as we ourselves are healed.

And after our forty days of reflection, repentance, and mourning, when we come at dawn to the Easter garden, may we know the true joy of Resurrection morning. Amen.

* **HYMN:** O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee # 357 (blue hymnal)

* COMMISSION AND BLESSING

Pastor: Go forth in the steadfast love of God.
Spread the good news of salvation from sin.

**People: Our spirits have been fed in this time of worship.
Our lives have been cleansed by a merciful God.**

Pastor: Share with others the joy of living in God's grace.
Let your fasting and sacrifices be a blessing to others.

**People: Our lips will declare God's praise.
Our secret alms will extend God's love.**

Pastor: We are assured of God's continuing presence.
The One who knows our hearts accepts us as we are.

**People: We will seek to grow in truth and purity.
We will use well the time and resources God gives.**

ALL: Amen.

POSTLUDE: Just a Closer Walk With Thee Arr.

In observance of Ash Wednesday, we request that everyone depart the service in silence. Thank you.

We are grateful to this evening's worship leaders and participants:

Ministers:

Rev. Amir Tawadrous (Amherst)
Rev. Jason Cashing (Clarence)
Rev. William Hennessey (North)

Musicians:

Dr. Donna Lorenzo, Music Director (Amherst)
Nancy Lorenzo-Deleys, Pianist (Amherst)
Unified Choir: Vocalists from the
choirs of Amherst, Clarence, and
North Presbyterian Churches.

Amherst Presbyterian Church

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CONTACT INFORMATION

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Rev. Amir's Cell: 773-961-6977 / **Email:** APCpastor@verizon.net

Rev. Amir's hours: 9:00am—12:30pm, Mon, Wed, Thurs, Fri, and by appointment
(scheduling your visit is recommended)

Church website: <https://amherstpreshurch.com>

Facebook: Amherst Presbyterian Church—closed group; ask to be invited