

*For Immediate Release...*

## **Successful Ash Wednesday Events Usher in Lenten Season in Hamden**

HAMDEN, CONN.—More than 100 people made their way to Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church on Wednesday, March 2, to receive ashes as part of a multi-congregational “Ashes-to-Go” event, marking the official start of the Lenten season. It was followed that evening by a memorable interdenominational Ash Wednesday worship service hosted by Christ the Good Shepherd, which included five clergy and members of their congregations from six Hamden churches, resulting in a near-capacity crowd.

“It was an incredible ministry of holiness,” said Pastor Joshua Sullivan of Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (CGSLC). “It was such a holy moment and I’m so grateful to have been part of it. I really felt gathered by God at the Ash Wednesday service. It just felt like God’s people in Hamden and the greater Hamden region were gathered together. It was really special.”

In addition to Pastor Sullivan, other Hamden clergy and congregations participating in the “Ashes-to-Go” event and interdenominational Ash Wednesday service were The Rev. George Manukas of Dunbar United Church of Christ; The Rev. Robert Bergner of Grace & St. Peter’s Episcopal Church and St. John the Evangelist Episcopal of Yalesville; The Rev. Jeremiah Paul of Hamden Plains United Methodist Church; and The Rev. Olivia Robinson of Mount Carmel Congregational Church.

### **Ashes-to-Go**

For Christians, the imposition of ashes on their foreheads symbolizes repentance for sin as well as devotion to God.

“On Ash Wednesday, our foreheads are marked with ashes as a two-fold reminder,” Pastor Sullivan explained. “First, the ashes remind us that we believe that all false things will pass away, and second, and most importantly, the ashes help us confess that our true self comes only from God.”

On March 2, the opportunity to receive “Ashes-to-Go” was offered at CGSLC in a morning session from 7:30 a.m. to 9 a.m., and a lunchtime session, which ran from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Those wishing to participate drove their cars into the church parking lot, pausing long enough to receive ashes from the clergy stationed outside.

“It turned out to be very successful,” said Leo Goodrich, CGSLC Council Vice President, who helped organize the inaugural event. “More than 100 people received the ashes, and many were very grateful to us for doing that.” Other volunteers from CGSLC assisting with the “Ashes-to-Go” event were John Downs, Linda Ibsen, Sarah DeLong and Ruth Knollmueller.

### **A Service to Remember**

To top off a successful Ashes-to-Go event, nearly 80 people turned out for the interdenominational Ash Wednesday service, which included moving pastoral reflections and a rousing musical rendition of “I’ll Fly Away” led by all five clergy. During a freewill offering, nearly \$700 was collected for [Columbus House](#), whose mission it is to serve people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

“Ash Wednesday isn’t usually a joyful service, but we gathered together six churches with five ministers and marked the beginning of Lent,” said Pastor Sullivan. “It was an incredible service. If you weren’t able to attend, I invite you to watch the service on [Facebook Livestream](#), if you can.” By Sunday evening, March 6, the interdenominational Ash Wednesday worship service had nearly 100 views.

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*For more information about Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran, visit [christgoodshepherdlutheran.org](http://christgoodshepherdlutheran.org), contact Pastor Sullivan at [Pastor@christgoodshepherdlutheran.org](mailto:Pastor@christgoodshepherdlutheran.org), or call the church office at (203) 288-3196.*

Photo Caption:

**Melisa Velez Vieira and her daughter, Izabella, pictured here with Pastor Joshua Sullivan, were among more than 100 people who stopped by the multi-congregational “Ashes-to-Go” event on Ash Wednesday, March 2, at Christ Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 600 Shepard Ave., Hamden.**