

# Fox Valley Methodists raise \$765 for families of Aurora mass shooting victims

AURORA, IL - Fox Valley Methodists recently raised \$765 for families of victims of Aurora's Feb. 15 mass shooting.

The contribution to the Aurora Strong community fund came from freewill offerings at a community Ash Wednesday service at Sugar Grove United Methodist Church. In addition to Sugar Grove UMC, four other Fox Valley Methodist churches partnered in the annual service. They were Flowing Forth UMC, Wesley UMC and Bethany UMC, all in Aurora; and Kaneville UMC.

Rev. Tammy Scott, Sugar Grove UMC pastor, said "The offering will be going to the Aurora Strong Community Fund to help provide financial support to the families whose loved ones died on Feb. 15 in the shooting at the Henry Pratt Co." About 125 persons attended the Ash Wednesday service Rev. Scott said.



Pastors and lay people from each church participated. Pastors reading scriptures were Rev. Sam Park, Bethany of Fox Valley UMC; Rev. Avani Christian, Kaneville UMC; Rev. Derek Rogers, Flowing Forth UMC; Rev. Tammy Scott, Sugar Grove UMC; and Rev. John Bell, Wesley UMC. Laypeople offering reflections were Jacquee Lawrence, Bethany of Fox Valley UMC; Anna Dembrowski, Kaneville UMC; Ron Debaun, Flowing Forth UMC; Seth Carlson, Sugar Grove UMC; and Jonathan Akyea, Wesley UMC.

Pastors imposed ashes on congregants' foreheads or hands and led Holy Communion.

Kim Nelson of Sugar Grove UMC directed a combined choir of vocalists from participating churches who performed "Let Us Not Forget."

A reception with refreshments closed the service.

Rev. Scott said, "Lent is the 40-day period of repentance and renewal preceding Easter. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 5, and ends with the worship service on Easter.

"The word 'Lent' is derived from the old English word, 'lecten,' or 'lengthen.' It refers to the lengthening of the daylight hours that occurs as spring approaches.

"Lent is a special time for meditation and prayer, giving us time to recall the Easter story and absorb its meaning--that Christ lived died to redeem the world from sin."

**PHOTO:** A combined choir of vocalists from five Fox Valley United Methodist churches sings at a community Ash Wednesday service at Sugar Grove UMC. Kim Nelson of Sugar Grove UMC directs. (Al Benson photo)