

The First Baptist Church

Henderson, North Carolina



Ash Wednesday

Service available at vimeo.com/fbchendersonnc



A - mid this world's dis - tress and fear, We hear your lov - ing call: "Re - turn!"
O God, we seek a brand new start, A new be - gin - ning here with you.
When we have drift - ed toward the wrong, You call us back, your way to seek.
Yet in our life with you we find The joy that comes when we re - turn.

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THE GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 18:9-14

David Allen

⁹He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: ¹⁰“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.’ ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

THE CALL TO CONFESSION

THE PRAYER OF CONFESSION (based on Psalm 51)

Have mercy on us, O God, according to your love and your mercy. Help us to remember our transgressions so that we can confront the wrongs we have done and bring about the change we want to see in the world.

We forgot to love each other as you commanded. Instead, we point out our differences, labeling them flaws rather than part of your good creation.

We want the easiness of being washed and made clean, yet there is no magic to remedy the sins we have committed, or to wipe away the injury we have caused each other.

Our sins are before us. Help us to find our way to repentance that is holy, right, and just – repentance that is framed by naming the wrongs we have done, acknowledging the harm we caused, providing apology, and finding our way to restoration as an act of repentance.

The sins we have committed are many. We have sinned against you and against each other. The evils of racism, sexism, classism, ageism, ableism, and

all forms of discrimination are but a few names we put in place to identify the ways in which we fail ourselves and each other.

We are guilty of not loving as you have called us to love. We are guilty of dismissing those with disabilities of many kinds. We negate the experiences of those we deem to be unlike us.

We want to wash our hands to feel clean. We would prefer to turn our heads rather than confront the transgressions we commit with every breath. We want to be forgiven without repenting.

Holy God, you desire truths we are afraid to utter – truths that would identify our fears, our weaknesses, and our brokenness – truths that point to our human failings and fragilities.

We will not be clean until we can truly repent of the wrongs we have done. We destroyed our communities, we destroyed the land, and we destroyed our relationship with you in our quest for privilege and power.

We want to forget, rather than hold responsibility for the turmoil we have caused. We want to ignore the bones that we have crushed and the suffering we have caused. We hide our faces, rather than confront and change our behaviors.

Put a right spirit in us, one that will provide us with the courage to face our sins and own the degradation we have wrought around us. Poverty and violence are signs that your Holy Spirit is not with us.

Create in us hearts that are caring and compassionate. Restore to us the love that is of you, love that will sustain us and nurture those in community around us.

Deliver us from the pain of our suffering. We hurt others because of our own pain and feelings of inadequacy. Deliver us from the wounds of the generational traumas that perpetuate suffering and are a result of being descendants of oppressors and the oppressed.

Open our spirits to experience visions of a world that is devoid of injustice. Hold us accountable for the hard work that will transform our lives.

Creator God, you take no delight in the money we have or the commitments we have made to our religious institutions. These do not please you when we continue to perpetuate injustice and hate.

The sacrifice acceptable to you, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you will not despise. Help us to acknowledge our brokenness. Push us to a place of remorse and repentance.

Then, and only then, can our healing begin, moving us to transformation and joy. Then and only then will we enjoy right relationship with the Creator and all creation.

THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Friends in Christ, know that God loves you, forgives you, welcomes you, and rejoices in you. Be assured of God's transforming love.

THE PROPHETIC LESSON: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

¹Blow 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—²a 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.

¹²Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; ¹³rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. ¹⁴Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord, your God? ¹⁵Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; ¹⁶gather 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. ¹⁷Between 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?'"

THE HOMILY

A Conversation in the Dark

Kari Martin

THE HYMN OF PREPARATION

Lord, We Call to Thee From Darkness

BEACH SPRING

Jason Wright, 1980-

BEACH SPRING 8.7.8.7. D.
Attr. to B. F. White, 1800-1879
Harm. Philip M. Young, 1937-



1. Lord, we call to thee from dark - ness In the sha - dows of the night;
2. Lord, we call to thee for mer - cy; Fa - ther make our spir - it whole,
3. Lord, we call to thee for guid - ance, And for strength from you a - bove;



Through your grace there is for-give - ness, From the depths we see your light.
 So that we may ev - er praise thee; Ho - ly God, now bless our souls.
 From you comes our dai - ly sub - stance, Giv - en free - ly, Christ of Love.



Through these days of pre-par - a - tion, Lord, we of - fer un - to thee,



Of our - selves in de - di - ca - tion, As we pray on bend-ed knee.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ASHES

Amy Russell

THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES

...from dust you came and to dust you shall return...

THE MUSIC FOR WORSHIP

Just As I Am

William Bradbury,
arr. Craig Courtney

A PRAYER FOR THE LENTEN JOURNEY

Ronald Cava

THE SENDING FORTH

THE HYMN OF COMMITMENT

From the Depths of Deepest Darkness

GENEVA

Paul A. Baxley, 1969-

GENEVA 8.7.8.7.D.

George Henry Day, 1883-1966

Unison



1. From the depths of deep - est dark-ness, O - ver-whelmed by crush-ing pain;
 2. When no words could pierce the sor - row, And no prayer my lips could form,
 3. Hear this prayer of great thanks-giv - ing; May it ech - o all a - round!



As my dreams gave way to sad-ness, Lord, I cried: "My life sus-tain!"
In the val - ley of the sha-dow, Lord, you held me through the storm.
For your love is ev - er - last-ing; Sav - ing grace in Christ is found!



Now your light dis - pels the dark-ness, As de - spair gives way to peace.
Now my words speak of your heal-ing; Make them ves - sels of re - form,
I will sing in ad - o - ra - tion At the dawn - ing of the day.



Re - newed call - ing is my glad-ness; Great - er dreams my faith in-crease!
Giv - ing grace when hearts are break-ing. Lord, you brought me through the storm!
Make my life a cel - e - bra - tion; Keep me ev - er in your way!

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THE TOLLING OF THE TOWER BELLS

The ashes for today were made from palms saved from our 2020 Palm Sunday service. Children burned the palms this past week to learn of the significance and symbolism of Ash Wednesday and of the coming Lenten season.

Music for the service is offered by tenor Jonathan O'Geary. Congregational hymns are led by tenor Andy Dickerson.

The Call to Worship was written by the Rev. Dr. Ginny Brown Daniel, adapted and used with permission.

The Prayer of Confession was written by the Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, adapted and used with permission.

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