



# Ash Wednesday Service

## *Pickens Presbyterian Church*

Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday. Lent is a time for penance by all Christians. Ash Wednesday emphasizes a dual encounter: we confront our own mortality and confess our sins before God within the community of faith. *The imposition of ashes in this service is made available for all who wish to take advantage of this gesture of prayer and repentance to begin the Lenten season. It is **not** intended for a show of piety. We use the ashes as a sign of God's grace, who in Christ allows and by the Spirit enables us to turn again to be disciples. We pray with and for one another. We call one another to remember our baptism. At the conclusion of the service, all are invited to turn to a neighbor, in a gesture of God's grace, in our baptism and through Christ's self-offering, to clean the ashes from their neighbor's forehead.*

**Welcome**

**Prayer of Preparation**

*Let us prepare our hearts for worship first in silence, then as we listen to the prelude.*

*Gracious God, out of your love and mercy you breathed into dust the breath of life, creating us to serve you and neighbors. Call forth our prayers and acts of tenderness, and strengthen us to face our mortality, that we may reach with confidence for your mercy; in Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

**Prelude**

*“There's a Sweet, Sweet, Spring”*

*Akers*

**Call to Worship**

*Psalm 46.1-3*

God is our refuge and strength, *a present help in trouble.*

Therefore we will not fear *though the earth should change,*

*though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though the waters roar and foam,*  
*though the mountains tremble with its tumult. God's love endures forever.*

**All: Come, Let us worship God.**

**\*Hymn #339**

*“Be Thou My Vision”*

**Prayer of the Day and The Lord's Prayer** *(debts and Debtors)*

**Prayer of Confession:**

*God our Redeemer, we confess that we are people of ashes and dust. We want you to notice our humility, but we fail to notice neighbors in need. We want you to show us your mercy, but we fail to show mercy to others. Forgive us, God of grace. Cleanse our hearts and renew our spirits so that we may know once again the joy of your saving love; through Jesus Christ our Lord . . . (silent personal confession.) Amen.*

**Assurance of Pardon**

**Prayer for Illumination**

*Elder David McCormick*

**1<sup>st</sup> First Testament Reading:** Joel 2.1-2, 12-17

**2<sup>nd</sup> Second Scripture Reading:** Isaiah 58.1-8

**Anthem**

*“Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy”*

*Hart*

PPC Adult Choir, Starla Taylor – Director, Marianne Holland – Pianist

**2<sup>nd</sup> Testament Reading:** Matthew 6.1–6, 16–21

**Meditation**

*“An Acceptable Fast”*

Rev. Dr. David Torrey

**Invitation to the Observance of Lenten Discipline**

1. *Have mercy, LORD, according to  
The measure of Thy love;  
Blot out my sin, and from my heart  
All wickedness remove.*

2. *The failings of my deeds and thoughts  
Are ever in my sight;  
Release me from the path of death,  
And set my course aright.*

3. *Into my secret heart send truth,  
Let wisdom in me grow;  
O wash the evil from my hands,  
And make me pure as snow.*

4. *A clean and upright heart, O LORD,  
Exchange for mine of stone;  
Thy Holy Spirit meld with mine,  
And leave me not alone.*

5. *A contrite heart is Thy desire,  
My offering, the same;  
My lips unlatch, my mouth engage  
Thy praises to proclaim.*

O Lord, open my lips, *and my mouth will declare your praise.*

### Litany of Penitence

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.

*Have mercy on us, O God.*

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

*Have mercy on us, O God.*

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

*Have mercy on us, O God.*

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

*Have mercy on us, O God.*

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

*Have mercy on us, O God.*

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

*Have mercy on us, O God.*

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

*Have mercy on us, O God.*

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.

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

### Imposition of the Ashes:

*Those who desire may come forward to receive an imposition of ashes as a sign of penitence not only for our individual sin, but also in recognition of our complicity in the sin of the world. While ashes are being imposed, those who are seated in the pews are invited to sit and sing "Jesus Remember Me" for meditation.*

\*Hymn #397

*"O for a Closer Walk with God"*

Blessing and Charge - *Please Depart in Silence*

