



DECATUR PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Ash Wednesday Service, February 22, 2023

5:30 p.m.

Sanctuary

You are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Genesis 3:19



Ash Wednesday is the first day in the season of Lent (the six weeks preceding Easter Sunday). It is a day when we remember that we are sinful, hurting God, others, and ourselves. We are invited to use these weeks to take a hard look at our lives and turn away from the things that are barriers between us and God. We also remember that we, like all human beings, will die. Remembering how fragile life is helps us to put our trust in God who is bigger and stronger than even death.

GATHERING AROUND THE WORD

PRELUDE

WELCOME AND INVITATION TO THE JOURNEY

Rev. Dr. Todd Speed

*HYMN 215

What Wondrous Love Is This

Wondrous Love

CALL TO CONFESSION

Rev. Tully M. Fletcher IV

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Leader: Almighty God, Maker of all things,

People: Have mercy on us.

Leader: Jesus Christ, Redeemer of the world,

People: Have mercy on us.

Leader: Holy Spirit, Giver of life,

People: Have mercy on us.

(Silence is kept for personal prayers of confession)

God of mercy, you sent Jesus Christ to seek and save the lost. We confess that we have strayed from you and turned aside from your way. We are misled by pride, for we see ourselves pure when we are stained, and great when we are small. We have failed in love, neglected justice, and ignored your truth. Have mercy, O God, and forgive our sin. Return us to paths of righteousness through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

*HYMN 366 (1st stanza)

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

Hyfrydol

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Nicole Jiskoot

NEW TESTAMENT READING

2 Corinthians 5:20b–6:2
(pew Bible page 181, NT)

MEDITATION

“Transformative Grace”

Nicole Jiskoot

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

The **imposition of ashes** reminds us that God created us out of dust and when we die, we return to the earth. They are an ancient sign of repentance, or turning away from sin. The sign of the cross reminds us that we are claimed by God through the love of Jesus Christ. On our own, we are only dust, but because of God's love for us, we are called children of God. The cross on our foreheads encourages us to spend the time we have before Easter thanking God by forming habits that show Christ's love and breaking the habits that do not.

Communion can also be called The Lord's Supper or the Eucharist. It is one of two sacraments in the Presbyterian Church. We understand the communion meal tonight to be nourishment for the spiritual journey of Lent.

Please come forward down the center aisle to receive the mark of the cross on your forehead and to receive the communion elements. Please take the elements with you as you return to your seat by the side aisles. You may receive the bread individually, and we will drink the cup together as a community. The bread used in communion is gluten free. The ashes are ashes of palm branches from Palm Sunday. The tradition of placing them on the forehead in the mark of the cross goes back to the first century church, to remind believers of Christ and their dependence on his grace. The bread and cup are the symbols of Christ's body and blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins

CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table

Dr. Speed

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Rev. Emily Wilmesherr

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to the Lord.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give thanks and praise.

Leader: All honor and praise and glory be to God.

People: The Lord's name be praised forever.

Words of Institution

Dr. Speed and Rev. Wilmesherr

Imposition of Ashes and Communion of the People

Pastor: Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

People: I will always belong to God.

Music during Communion:

Duet: Pie Jesu (from REQUIEM)

Andrew Lloyd Webber

Pie Jesu, qui tollis peccata mundi dona eis requiem. Pie Jesu, qui tollis peccata mundi dona eis requiem. Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi dona eis requiem. Sempiternam requiem.

Merciful Jesus, you take away the sins of the world. Grant them rest. Merciful Jesus, you take away the sins of the world. Grant them rest. O Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world. Grant them eternal rest.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Dr. Speed

SENT INTO THE WORLD TO SERVE

*HYMN 722

Lord, Speak to Me that I May Speak

Canonbury

*BENEDICTION

Nicole Jiskoot

Music

Ginny Corradino, *soprano*, and Allison Melton, *alto*

“Follow Me” Spiritual Practices for Lent

Sunday, February 26—**Love Extravagantly**

Like 6:27–38; 10:27

The principal text for this entire unit comes from the Gospel of Luke where Jesus answered a question from a man who asked him how he should live. Jesus’ affirmation of the man’s response is often called the Great Commandment: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27).

Loving God and our neighbor makes sense to us. Loving our enemy is something else altogether. That can seem an extravagance too great to expect. Many of us are reluctant even to identify others as our enemy. Yet, it’s a word Jesus uses. If it seems too harsh to our ears, perhaps simply associating it with people we find hard to love would be a place to start.

It’s worth noting that a life of robust Christian discipleship will spark opposition. Loving others in the expansive, extravagant way of Jesus infuriates some people. If we truly have no enemies, perhaps we have been conformed too much to this world, to echo the words of Paul in Romans 12:2.

Sunday, March 5—**Serve a Stranger**

1 Kings 17:8–16

From an early age, many of us learn to trust only those our elders tell us to. As a result, we may unconsciously learn apathy and distrust of strangers throughout life, despite biblical stories and hymns that teach otherwise. An additional reality in the US is that the country is only a couple of generations away from legalized, forced segregation based on race and is still one of largely de facto segregation by racial and economic class.

Despite being in one of the richest multiracial countries in the world, most people’s closest friends, neighbors, and worshiping communities resemble their own race, ethnicity, culture, and social class. Strangers abound. Even serving those in our trusted families and community may be a huge challenge at times, but helping those we have been taught to distrust or blame for their need is an essential component of loving others. It takes an intentional act of love to reach across stubborn cultural, racial, class, geopolitical, and religious boundaries to connect with those whom we don’t know.

Sunday, March 12—**Show Mercy**

1 Samuel 24

From celebrities and politicians swinging at one another on Twitter or on public stages, to our own private battles at work or home, the impulse to act or react in anger is on full display, daily. Yet those who follow Jesus are called to a different way. He embodied mercy, praying for God’s mercy even for those who crucified him.

At the root of all of humanity’s worst modern offenses, from slavery to the Holocaust, is dehumanization, a refusal to see the basic worth of others. If we can convince ourselves of people’s otherness, it’s only a short journey to convincing ourselves of their inferiority. Combine their perceived inferiority with our perceived entitlement or superiority, and we have all the ingredients we need for any manner of atrocities. Those who follow Jesus are called to a different way, the way of love that sees commonality among all created in God’s image. When we can act out of that conviction, love looks like mercy.

Sunday, March 19—**Wash Another’s Feet**

John 13:1–20

Loving others in the way of Jesus isn’t something we can do from afar. Just sending a check isn’t enough. Loving the way Jesus loves means we get up close and personal with others. Jesus spent time in close proximity and relationships with all kinds of people. He conversed with religious leaders in the temple and fishers on the Sea of Galilee. He ate meals with despised tax collectors and outcasts. He visited with both Jews and Gentiles in their homes. He touched and healed young and old, rich and poor.

In one of his most striking acts of hands-on love and service, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. All of them, even those who would betray and abandon him. Such love is an act of humility. This is one of the last things Jesus does before his arrest, trial, and execution. And it also witnesses to the aim (end) of his ministry: to show tangibly what radical love looks like. To borrow from the beloved hymn, they’ll only know we are Christians by our love.

Sunday, March 26—**Be Courageous**

Acts 6:8–7:2, 51–60

Following Jesus, and loving as he tells us to love, can lead to trouble. The world we live in so often values priorities like power and money over loving God, neighbor, and enemy. When loving others jeopardizes the stability of power structures, the voices and violence of those in power, whose privilege is threatened, tend to rise in opposition. We see that dynamic played out in biblical narratives, as well as in historical and current stories.

This fifth aspect of loving God, neighbor, and enemy is slightly different than the others in that it is not specifically an action. However, it almost always results in action. Courage is the strength to act on one’s beliefs. We need to develop those courage muscles to overcome our natural fear of harm or criticism when it comes to actively loving our neighbors.

(continued on next page)

Sunday, April 2—**Live Peaceably** (Palm Sunday)

Romans 12:9–21

It is easy to get overwhelmed by all the violence and unrest in our world. It scrolls across our screens 24/7. Where does one even begin? The odds seem impossibly in favor of powerful people and institutions who rule by greed and spreading fear and violence. Christians who preach peace must be crazy, right?

Right! We follow Jesus who was in a somewhat similar circumstance. One thing he taught was to create new communities bound together by self-giving love rather than self-protecting walls. We are to create communities dedicated to peace. The hymn “Let There Be Peace on Earth” ends the first line with “and let it begin with me.” Peace is not something that simply happens. Rather, world peace is something that we actively work toward every day of our lives in little and big ways.

Upcoming Wednesday Night Schedule

5:00-6:15 pm

Parent Fellowship at Twain’s

5:00 to 6:30 pm:

New! Grief Support Group in the Session Room, led by Vernon Gramling

5:00–5:25 pm

Cricket Choir (children 3 years old–Kindergarten), in Mrs. Mac’s room

Kid’s Club (1st through 5th grade), in the Children’s Ministry Room (next to Mrs. Mac’s room)

5:30–6:15 pm:

Covenant Choir (children 1st through 5th grade), in Mrs. Mac’s room

Godly Play (3 years–Kindergarten), in the Children’s Ministry Room

“Faithful Living” adult class/discussion group led by Todd Speed in the Keith Parlor Classroom

6:15–7:00 pm:

Wednesday Night Dinner in Slack Fellowship Hall

\$10/adult, \$5/child, \$30/family max

7:30 pm:

Chancel Choir Rehearsal in Scott Chapel

New Lenten Book Study on Wednesdays

led by Leslie Raymer and Nicole Jiskoot

All are invited to join our Director of Threshold Ministry Leslie Raymer and Ministry Intern Nicole Jiskoot in the Parlor Classroom Wednesdays at 5:30 pm for a 4-week book study on the book *Nickle and Dimed—On (Not) Getting By in America* by Barbara Ehrenreich. We begin on Wednesday, March 1 and continue through March 22. Copies of the book are available at the Reception Desk, donations are appreciated. Each week is a complete lesson, so feel free to join when you can—you do not have to attend all four weeks.

Todd Speed will lead a class/discussion on Stations of the Cross on Wednesday, March 29, and the *Faithful Living* group will resume April 12.

Holy Week at DPC

April 2	Palm Sunday	10:30 am	Tully Fletcher preaching	Procession of Palms & Communion
April 6	Maundy Thursday	5:30 pm	Tully Fletcher preaching	Communion
		6:15 pm		Dinner on the Lawn
April 7	Good Friday Tenebrae	8:00 pm	A Service of Darkness	Reading of the Passion Narrative
April 9	Easter Sunday	9:00 am		Decorate Cross on the Lawn
		10:30 am	Todd Speed	Festival Service of Easter



**DECATUR
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**
205 Sycamore Street
Decatur, GA 30030
www.dpchurch.org
404-378-1777