ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

# First Presbyterian Church of Haddonfield February 14, 2024



PRELUDE Improvisation on Wonderous Love - Lucas Brown

CALL TO WORSHIP *Based on Isaiah 58*

One: God says, Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day and oppress all your workers. **All: God says, Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist.** One: Is this not the fast that God chooses?

To loose the bonds of injustice, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

# All: We are to share our bread with the hungry, bring the homeless poor into our house, clothe the naked, and not hide ourselves from our own kin.

One: Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help,

# All: and God will say, Here I am.

## PRAYER

One: Let us return to the Lord.

# All: God is gracious and compassionate; slow to anger and abounding in love.

One: Have mercy on us, O God, according to your unfailing love.

# All: Wash away our iniquity; cleanse us from our sins.

One: The sacrifice acceptable to God is a humble spirit.

# All: A broken and contrite heart God will not turn away.

One: “Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart.”

# All: With open hearts we call upon the name of the Lord.

HYMN #85 “What Wondrous Love Is This” CALL TO CONFESSION

One: God desires truth in the inward being and receives a broken spirit, the contrite heart.

# All: Seeking abundant mercy, let us confess our sins before God.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION Psalm 51

Wash me through and through from my wickedness and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight. And so you are justified when you speak and upright in your judgment.

Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth, a sinner from my mother’s womb.

For behold, you look for truth deep within me, and will make me understand wisdom secretly.

Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure; wash me, and I shall be clean indeed. Make me hear of joy and gladness, that the body you have broken may rejoice.

Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

Give me the joy of your saving help again and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

## DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

One: According to God’s steadfast love, according to God’s abundant mercy, God does not pass judgment on us the judgment we deserve.

# All: God creates in us clean hearts and gives a new and right spirit.

**In the grace of Jesus Christ, we return to God forgiven. Praise God!**

## READING

SILENT REFLECTION

HYMN #394 “There Is a Balm in Gilead” †

## INVITATION TO THE OBSERVANCE OF THE LENTEN DISCIPLINE

One: Friends in Christ, every year we celebrate our redemption through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Lent is a time to prepare for this celebration and to intentionally renew our life of faith. We begin this holy season by acknowledging our need for repentance, and for the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We begin the Lenten season with the sign of ashes. This ancient sign speaks of the frailty of human life, and marks the penitence of this community. I invite you, therefore, in the name of Christ, to observe a holy Lent by self-examination and penitence, by prayer and fasting, by works of love, and by reading and meditating on the Word of God.

LITANY OF PENITENCE

# All: Holy and merciful God, we confess to you and to one another, that we have sinned in thought, word and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

One: We have not loved you with our whole heart, mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven by you.

*(silence)*

One: We confess our unfaithfulness: our pride, hypocrisy, and impatience, our self-indulgent appetites and exploitation of others, our anger at our own frustration and our envy of others,

*(silence)*

One: We confess our neglect of human need and suffering, our indifference to injustice and cruelty, our uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and our prejudice toward those who differ.

*(silence)*

One: For our wasteful consumption of your creation and lack of concern for those who come after us; for our negligence in prayer and worship, and for failing to live out the faith that is in us,

# All: For these things we repent, trusting in your mercy, ever faithful, ever sure.

**Guide our hearts and direct our steps that we may follow faithfully in the way of Jesus Christ, in whom we hope, Amen.**

## IMPOSITION OF ASHES

One: We bow our heads before you, O God, aware of our sinfulness and our shortcomings. Remembering our baptism, the watermark of the cross upon us, we also receive this ashen cross upon our foreheads— another sign that in life and death, we belong to you. In the name of Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, and coming again, we pray.

# All: Amen.

HYMN #81 “Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days” CHARGE AND BLESSING

Dedicate yourselves to the fast God chooses, loosening the yoke of bondage,

declaring freedom to the oppressed,

offering food to the hungry and shelter to the homeless. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,

and the glory of the Lord will shine upon you.

God will hear your cry and be at your side, now and forevermore.

# Amen.

POSTLUDE Variation on Heinlein - Christa Rakich

*\* Please stand if you are comfortably able*

**†** *First Presbyterian’s Session recognizes that throughout U.S. history African American composers have not been compensated equitably for the music they have created. To remedy this in “our little way,” the congregation is invited to make a donation, using this QR code, whenever we sing an African American*

*Spiritual, whether it’s the choir anthem or a hymn. This donation goes directly to The Essence of Harmony Choral Society to assist them in purchasing music, supporting professional musicians, and paying venue fees.* [*The Essence of Harmony Choral Society*](https://www.essenceofharmonycs.org/) *was formed in 2018 by Cherisse Bonefont. The Choir was born from a need she saw to create the presence of, space for, and a medium through which singers of all skill levels can share their musical gifts with the Burlington County community at large. This diverse group of*

*singers has a cohesive and creative performance style. EHCS focuses explicitly on celebrating the works of both classical and under-recognized African American composers. In addition, the group presents classics and anthems, spirituals, and contemporary gospel music.*

*From 12:00 to 1:00 p.m., the pastors will be outside in the portico (entry through the playground gates) for the imposition of ashes (or a blessing) while you remain in your car. The following words may be said as ashes are placed on the forehead:*

***Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.***

*In life and death, I belong to God*

## LENT AND EASTER AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

**February 18:** "Lean into Lent," a study and volunteer faire in the Bean Parlor after worship

**Throughout Lent:** Lenten small groups read and discuss "Meeting God in Paul," by Rowan Williams. Sign up in the Bean Parlor or use this link: https:// forms.gle/yr5yqk4VsiQgyBsEA

**Thursdays at 6:30 (not February 15):** Online Bible study on Romans. See the Weekly News for link info.

**March 3-24:** Holy Communion Classes on Sundays for 3rd and 4th graders. 10:00 AM, Room 201. Call Barb Sewall, 856-795-7853, to register your child.

**March 24:** Palm Sunday worship at 10:00 AM.

**March 27:** Maundy Thursday Communion service at 7:00 PM.

**March 28:** Community Good Friday worship service at Haddonfield United Methodist Church. 12:00 PM to 3:00 PM.

**March 31:** Easter Sunday worship at 10:00 AM.

**April 1-5:** Walk the Labyrinth in Eastertide. Fellowship Hall.

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# Church Staff

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