

Prelude

• Call to Worship

With fasting, weeping, and mourning,

we return to God.

With honesty and humility,

we acknowledge our humanity.

In accord and in silence,

we offer our prayers.

• Invocation

Scripture Reading (From Psalm 51)

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;

according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight,

so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment . . .

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.

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

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

Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation,

and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

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

For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.

*The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. The Word of the Lord; **thanks be to God.***

• Hymn - #314 Longing for Light, We Wait in Darkness (verses 1, 2, 5)

Scripture Reading - From Isaiah 58:1, 4-11 (Liturgist, Paul Roark)

Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high.

Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,

if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden,

*like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. The Word of the Lord; **thanks be to God.***

• Prayer of Confession:

Now is the time. Now is the day of salvation.

Now is the beginning of a season of deep breaths, deep reflection, and deep reckoning.

We must not accept God's grace in vain. Now is the time for confession.

Have mercy on us, O God. We know the ways we have sinned against you.

We know the ways we have done evil. We know the ways we are guilty.

We deserve your judgment, and yet we plead: do not cast us away from your presence.

Do not take your Holy Spirit from us. Create in us clean hearts.

Hide your face from our sins and blot out the evil we have done.

Let us hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.

Even now the Lord says, Return to me with all your heart.

God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love.

Thanks be to God for this unimaginable grace.

• Congregational Response - #604 Lamb of God

Scripture Reading - From II Corinthians 5:20 – 6:10

. . . We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you." See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be

*found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything...The Word of the Lord; **thanks be to God.***

- **Hymn** - #816 If Thou But Trust in God to Guide Thee

Imposition of Ashes – *To receive ashes, come forward by the center aisle. Then, return to your seat by the side aisle.*

- **Benediction** – Based on Joel 2

Even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend 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. Amen.

Postlude

The (●) dot in the order of worship invites you to stand as you are able. Text in **bold** indicates unison reading.

The Season of Lent spans 40 weekdays beginning on Ash Wednesday and climaxing during Holy Week with Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and concluding the Saturday before Easter. Originally, Lent was the time of preparation for those who were to be baptized, a time of concentrated study and prayer before their baptism at the Easter Vigil, the celebration of the Resurrection of the Lord early on Easter Sunday. Today Lent is marked by a time of prayer and preparation to celebrate Easter. Since Sunday celebrates the resurrection of Jesus, the six Sundays that occur during Lent are not counted as part of the 40 days of Lent, and are referred to as the Sundays in Lent. The number 40 is connected with many biblical events, but especially with the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness preparing for His ministry by facing the temptations that could lead him to abandon his mission and calling. Christians today use this period of time for introspection, self-examination, and repentance. This season of the year is equal only to the Season of Advent in importance in the Christian year and is part of the second major grouping of Christian festivals and sacred time that includes Holy Week, Easter, and Pentecost.

Ash Wednesday, the seventh Wednesday before Easter Sunday, is the first day of the **Season of Lent**. Its name comes from the ancient practice of placing ashes on worshipers' heads or foreheads as a sign of humility before God, a symbol of mourning and sorrow at the death that sin brings into the world. It not only prefigures the mourning at the death of Jesus, but also places the worshiper in a position to realize the consequences of sin. **Ash Wednesday** is a somber day of reflection on what needs to change in our lives if we are to be fully Christian. ~ *Dennis Bratcher, Biblical and Theological Resources for Growing Christians*

Donelson Presbyterian Church

Sharing the Love of Christ



We warmly welcome all who have come to worship with us today. If you are a guest at Donelson Presbyterian Church, we encourage you to fill out a yellow visitor card which you will find in the pew.

February 22, 2023
Beginning the Lenten Journey

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