



**Community  
Ash Wednesday  
February 14, 2024  
at First Presbyterian  
Church Covington, GA**



✦ *You are invited to stand in body or spirit*



# *Gathering As God's Beloved People*

## **Gathering Music**

### **Prelude**

### **Welcome and Announcements**

*Rev. Neeley Rentz Lane*

### ✦ **Call to Worship**

written by Kate Bowler

These days of dust. These days of despair.

**We can hear reality speak to us in a clear ringing voice.**

**So we approach. Carefully.**

**Barely ready to hear the hard truths**

**we long to be told about beautiful, terrible death.**

How strange that it will feel so right and so good to walk forward together wearing our finitude, a mess of ash smeared on our foreheads to be told: remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

**"Do we not know what the Holy One can do with dust?"**

Let us worship the living God!

### ✦ **Hymn of Praise**

*Sunday's Palms Are Wednesday's Ashes*

BEACH SPRING

***See next page for hymn.***



1. \*Sun-day's palms are Wednes-day's ash - es as an -  
 2. We have failed to love our neigh - bors, their of -  
 3. We are hast - y to judge oth - ers, blind to

oth - er Lent be - gins; thus we kneel be - fore our  
 fenc - es to for - give, have not lis - tened to their  
 proof of hu - man need; and our lack of un - der -

Mak - er in con - tri - tion for our  
 trou - bles, nor have cared just how they  
 stand - ing dem - on - strates our in - ner

sins. We have marred bap - tis - mal pledg - es, in re -  
 live, we are jeal - ous, proud, im - pa - tient, lov - ing  
 greed; we have wast - ed earth's re - sourc - es; want and

bel - lion gone a - stray; now, re - turn - ing, seek for -  
 o - ver - much our things; may the yield - ing of our  
 suf - fering we've ig - nored; come and cleanse us, then re -

give - ness; grant us par - don, God, this day!  
 fail - ings be our Len - ten of - fer - ings.  
 store us; make new hearts with - in us, Lord!

## ✦ Call to Confession

*Rev. Erin Morgan*

## ✦ Silent Confession

## ✦ Community Confession

written by Jeanyne Sletton

**God, this is a hard time. The focus of Lent is on the pain and suffering of Jesus and our own need for penitence. It is a time of gathering darkness. But we would rather skip this part and go straight to Easter. We would rather ignore the suffering—in you and in the world—and avoid the hard**

**work of true self-examination. Forgive us for wanting this to be bright and painless and easy, when we know that Jesus did not take the easy way, but chose the path of the Cross. Teach us the true meaning of penitence, so that we use this Lenten season to humbly seek a clean heart and a renewed spirit. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.**

✠ **Confessional Hymn 698**

*Take, O Take Me as I Am*

TAKE ME AS I AM

***Take, O take me as I am; summon out what I shall be;  
set your seal upon my heart and live in me. (Repeat)***

**Assurance of God's Love and Forgiveness**

*Rev. Erin Morgan*

The truth is this: God's love and mercy are never-ending.

God knows us in our inward being; God cleanses us from our sins and shortcomings, and says you are my beloved.

Church, we are forgiven!

**We are free to try again.**

✠ **Response 166**

*Lord, Who throughout These Forty Days*

ST. FLAVIAN

***Lord, who throughout these forty days for us did fast and pray,  
teach us with you to mourn our sins and close by you to stay.***

***And through these days of penitence, and through this Passiontide,  
yes, evermore, in life and death, O Lord, with us abide.***

**Blessing of the Dust**

written by Jan Richardson

*Rev. Becky Baker*

**Imposition of Ashes**

Lent is a time for us to return to our Creator who formed us from the dust of the earth. Our lives are finite, so we want to spend every precious moment in tune with God, living whole, abundant lives—the kind of lives we were created to lead. And so in recognition of our origins in the earth, in acknowledgment of our finite days, we come to receive ashes and remember: dust we are, and to dust we shall return.



## *Proclaiming the Word*

### **Anthem**

*Cast Thy Burden Upon the Lord*  
CFUMC & FPCC Chancel Choirs

Benjamin Harlen

### **Prayer for God's Wisdom and Understanding**

*Rev. Chris Shurtz*

### **Scripture Reading**

*Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21*

Pew Bible page 5

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **Message**

*Habits God Rewards*

Rev. Chris Shurtz



## *Responding to the Word*

### **Lenten Prayer**

written by Walter Brueggeman

*Rev. Dr. Royeese Stowe*



## *The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*

### **Invitation to the Table**

*Rev. Neeley Rentz Lane*

### **The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving**

*Rev. Becky Baker*

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

## The Lord's Prayer

Rev. Chris Shurtz

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

## Words of Institution

Rev. Neeley Rentz Lane, Rev. Erin Morgan

*Church, you are invited to partake with bread and cup upon hearing the words "The gifts of God for the people of God." We recognize Christ is present with us as the Body of Christ in our sanctuary and in our homes this day. May the Holy Spirit dwell with you as we participate in the sacrament of communion together. One bread, one body! You may choose to receive prepackaged communion elements or a gluten-free option which are available at the Lord's table. See our Worship Practices section for more details.*

## Communion Music

## Prayer After Communion

Rev. Dr. Royeese Stowe

**Holy God, as we leave this space, may we be awestruck by the beauty of the world while holding the pain, the hurt, and the tears of your people. May we overflow with love for those around us. May we be effusive with hope and quick to point out joy. And in our living, and breathing, and being, may we find ourselves this Lent binding our wandering hearts to you. May this Lenten journey change us for the better. From dust we were created, and dust we shall return. Beautiful, holy, messy, grace-filled dust, we pray. Amen.**



## *Being the Church in the World*

### ✦ Sending Hymn 435

*There's A Wideness in God's Mercy*

IN BABILONE

### ✦ Benediction

Rev. Chris Shurtz

### ✦ Please exit in silence



## Worship Practices

**Communion**—All are invited to come forward to take communion. The ushers will guide you to two stations on either side of the Lord's table to receive the bread and the cup. You may choose to receive prepackaged communion elements or a gluten-free option which are available at the Lord's table. If you are not physically able to come forward and would still like to receive communion, please let an usher know and it will be brought to you. Communion elements are taken to the nursery for children to participate in the sacrament. If you would not like to receive communion, you are welcome to stay in your seat for a time of prayerful reflection.

**Worship Art**—Today's worship guide cover art is an acrylic painting on raw canvas with digital drawing by Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity titled *Stardust*. The artist's statement follows:

*Many of us begin Lent with ashen marks smudged against our foreheads, the oil glistening on our skin throughout the rest of the day. It's a mark that is holy because it tells the truth: we are formed from the dust, and to dust we shall one day return. We are not immortal. Death will one day find us all.*

*However, we've found ourselves asking for more from our Lenten journey. Yes, death will surely find me one day, inhaling me into that infinite abyss. But the cross on my forehead only tells me part of the story. The empty tomb tells me a fuller, more expansive truth: death will not have the last word. There is more. God is more.*

*This expansive truth requires more of us. It invites us to abandon empty or showy practices of faith, and instead, draw inward to open ourselves to a deeper journey of transformation. It requires me to believe that I am truly worthy of love, belonging, and grace. It requires me to believe others are also.*

*In this Lenten season, we've reimagined this Ash Wednesday ritual. What if, instead of ashes, gold gleamed on our foreheads? What if, alongside the certainty of death, we are also reminded of God's expansive grace? What if on this day we said to one another, "From stardust you have come, and to stardust you shall one day return"?*

**Children in Worship**—We have a "Children in Worship" guiding brochure available in the Narthex! This brochure is intended to serve as an aid to parents and other members of our congregation in welcoming our children to worship. Children are always welcome to wiggle and giggle in the pews at FPC! If you need help finding the nursery, you are invited to ask an usher to point the way.

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# *Worship Notes & Doodles*

*We invite you to fill the space below with the thoughts, reminders, and doodles that you may be blessed with during and after worship.*



## *Serving Today*

First Presbyterian Church Covington | Rev. Neeley Rentz Lane, Rev. Erin Morgan  
Covington First United Methodist Church | Rev. Chris Shurtz, Rev. Dr. Royeese Stowe  
Gum Creek Presbyterian Church | Rev. Becky Baker  
Music | Nathan Autry (CFUMC), Mark Fiddie (FPCC), Gwyn Bacon  
Becky Ramsey (CFUMC), Alice Walker (FPCC)  
Tech Team | Dan Walden, Kenny Compton, Jonny Atkins, Brad Hawley, Kraig Howell  
Usher Chair | Luke Usry