Ash Wednesday

13 February 2013

6:30 p.m.

Pilgrim Uniting Church

12 Flinders Street

Adelaide SA

**Keeping Silence**  
  
**Gathering**

From our homes, our workplaces, the streets of the city  
you draw us to this sacred time and space, O Holy One.  
We come to dwell in your presence, for you are  
the source of our being.  
God calls us to renew ourselves and our life’s purpose,  
as we gather with others who are searching for meaning.  
Let us be in silence together.  
  
**Beginning**  
Out of nothingness we came through birth into life:  
**With the Spirit of God within us.**  
From the life of God the universe unfolded into being  
**With the Spirit of God within it.**  
From the heart of God creation goes on till the end of time  
**With the Spirit of God within it and with our spirit within it.**  
Let us embrace the God who enfolds us  
**We delight in God.**    
  
**Listening**  
***Isaiah 58  (Selected verses, NRSV)***  
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...  
  
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.

**Praying**  
We have made our honest confessions before the Sacred in our lives,  
and before one another.  
  
We are thankful for forgiveness and healing.  
We pray for continued forgiveness and healing in a hurting world.  
May nothing separate us from the Ground and Source of Life,  
as we follow Jesus during this Lenten journey. Amen  
  
**Silence**  
  
God is with us.  
The Word is in our midst,  
seen as forgiveness  
known as costly love.  
  
**Blessing**  
Once-burnt and darkened hills now bloom in life of green and gold.  
Once-starving hearts now fill with love more than enough  
to hold us in divine embrace.  
Once-thirsty souls now overflow into the rivers of God’s grace.  
The blessing of the God of life, love and grace  
be with you always   
**Amen**

**Going**  
And the peace of Christ -   
desert wanderer,  
wilderness walker,  
Spirit-led seeker -   
be with you and remain with you,  
always.   
Go in peace -   
to seek, to find, to be found.  
Amen  
  
This liturgy is gently adapted from resources by Rex A. E. Hunt at <http://www.rexaehuntprogressive.com/>

Cover image by Jan Richardson.

**Letting Go**  
We lay down what is past...

**We lay down what is past** **and look to the future.**

**We take into our daily life signs of hope and healing.**

**We reach beyond ourselves to share the lives of others**

**and touch a wider world.**

Ash Wednesday invites us to come back to earth.  
To wonder at the gift of life,  
my life, our life  
with the earth, the shared body of our existence.  
  
These ashes were once trees and shrubs,  
and places where life was lived to its fullest.  
Once they were full of life.  
Now they are black and grey.  
Dry.  
Lifeless.  
  
But mixed with the waters of our baptism ashes lead to growthr:  
ashes help the seeds of the gospel take deeper root in us  
and bring forth the fruits,  
the harvest of justice, peace, and generosity.  
  
These are ashes worth wearing.  
May we accept this gift.  And be blessed.  
And be assured we will be different at the end of this season.  
For from the burnt ashes will spring the green shoot of life  
and the purple flower of attentiveness to God.

**Blessing**  
May these ashes be blessed.  
May they be for us a symbol of our return to the earth.  
May we be blessed.  
May we be earthed in your everlasting love,  
as forgiven and forgiving people.  
  
**Receiving**  
*Those who wish to be marked are invited to come forward.*

***Mark 2: 18-22  (Inclusive Text)***  
Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people came and said to Jesus,  
"Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast,  
but your disciples do not fast?"  
  
Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they?   
As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.  
  
"No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak;  
otherwise, the patch pulls away from it,  
the new from the old,  
and a worse tear is made.  
  
“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins;  
otherwise, the wine will burst the skins,  
and the wine is lost, and so are the skins;  
but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."  
  
**Silence**  
  
**Reflecting**  
  
“Falling”  
by Diana Neutze in *Eremos Magazine*  
  
it feels like a tightrope stretched  
yawningly across my days-  
one false step and I'll fall endlessly  
as in a dream  
where the death is the falling  
yet I want to live within my life with a fullness  
just as a dancing flame devours the air  
not choke smoulderingly on damp wood-  
the narrower the boundaries  
the fiercer the energy  
I look for markers  
signposts of the spirit to define my journey-  
a tiny patch of white violets  
like a passing note-  
birds returning to the feeders  
in a well-tempered fugue-  
I watch a ripple of wind across my garden  
there is a dance of walnut leaves  
grape tendrils sway  
and even the climbing rose  
rocks gently against the light-  
the wind itself I do not see-  
only the surging power  
in the leaves bears witness-  
is it the same with the breath of God?  
for all I encounter  
is a cathedral forest of arches-  
a rose iridescent against the twilight-  
a sharing of ideas with a friend-  
as the spirit breathes across  
my  
life  
  
“Ash Wednesday”  
by Jim Burklo  
  
On my forehead,  
A sign of the cross,  
Smudged in ash from the fire  
That burned down the McMansion of my hubris,  
And, with it,  
The money I should have given away,  
The television I used to numb my senses,  
The carpet I should have been called on,  
The doors I should have opened to others,  
The envelopes I should have used  
To send letters of love,  
The wise books I shelved prominently  
So that others would think I had read them,  
The blank places in my photo albums  
Where my darker moments should have been remembered,  
The calendars where visits with the people who needed me most  
Should have been scheduled,  
The couch of my complacency,  
The lounge-chair of my laziness,  
The shirts I stuffed with my pride,  
The moccasins I should have traded with others  
So we could have walked miles in them.  
On my forehead,  
A sign of the crossroad  
Where I can turn from the way of ruin to the way of life.

**Silence**

**Praying**  
O Source of life and love, torn by desires to sit back  
and to enjoy the beauty of the world –  
to savor the blue skies and gentle days –  
and by desires to recast the world and to fight its evils - to save the world...  
  
Torn by all those things that hurt and confuse  
and make no sense amid beauty -  
yet supported by all those things that heal and hold us -  
smiles, kisses, mountain vistas  
and gentle waves, warm words...  
  
We live in mystery.  
We live torn apart at times: so much glory, so much pain.  
  
We live in faith:  
faith in ourselves and each other,  
faith that we can create bonds of the spirit that proclaim we are not alone.  
  
We have much health within us;  
we can live through the heartache to new life.  
  
So, for the grace of the world and all the tumble, too,  
this day we give thanks.