

## **Ash Wednesday Prayers**

**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

*With Neil*

Hello, I hope you're well. Here, we join together in prayer at the start of our journey through Lent:

### **Opening sentence**

Return to the Lord, your God,  
who is gracious and merciful;

***God is slow to anger***

***and abounding in steadfast love.***

### **Psalm 51:1-17**

*Prayer for Cleansing and Pardon*

- <sup>1</sup> Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy  
blot out my transgressions.
- <sup>2</sup> Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin.
- <sup>3</sup> For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.
- <sup>4</sup> 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 judgement.
- <sup>5</sup> Indeed, I was born guilty,  
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
- <sup>6</sup> You desire truth in the inward being;  
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
- <sup>7</sup> Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- <sup>8</sup> Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
- <sup>9</sup> Hide your face from my sins,  
and blot out all my iniquities.
- <sup>10</sup> Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.
- <sup>11</sup> Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
- <sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing spirit.
- <sup>13</sup> Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
and sinners will return to you.
- <sup>14</sup> Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,  
O God of my salvation,  
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.
- <sup>15</sup> O Lord, open my lips,  
and my mouth will declare your praise.
- <sup>16</sup> For you have no delight in sacrifice;  
if I were to give a burnt-offering, you would not be pleased.
- <sup>17</sup> The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

### **A short prayer – From dust we came**

From dust we came,  
to dust we will return  
WE BELONG TO GOD

We gather in penitence,  
we gather in confidence  
WE BELONG TO GOD

At the beginning of Lent,  
at every moment of our lives  
WE BELONG TO GOD

*A moment of quiet*

### **Old Testament Reading - Isaiah 58:1-5**

#### *False and True Worship*

**58** 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.

<sup>2</sup>Yet day after day they seek me  
and delight to know my ways,  
as if they were a nation that practised righteousness  
and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;  
they ask of me righteous judgements,  
they delight to draw near to God.

<sup>3</sup>'Why do we fast, but you do not see?  
Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?'  
Look, you serve your own interest on your fast-day,  
and oppress all your workers.

<sup>4</sup>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.

<sup>5</sup>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?

### **Gospel Reading – Matthew 6:1-6**

#### *Concerning Almsgiving*

**6** 'Beware of practising your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

<sup>2</sup>'So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. <sup>3</sup>But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup>so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

*Concerning Prayer*

<sup>5</sup> 'And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. <sup>6</sup> But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

*A moment of quiet*

**Our Prayers of Intercession**

Wait for the Lord;  
be strong, and let your heart take courage.

***Hear, O Lord, when we cry aloud,  
be gracious to us and answer us!***

God who brings release to troubled spirits,  
we offer our prayers in the name of Jesus.

Lord, in your mercy,  
***hear our prayer.***

The fast you choose ushers in light and healing.  
we pray for ourselves and those dear to us:  
*(personal prayer)*

Lord, in your mercy,  
***hear our prayer.***

The fast you command brings relief for those who are oppressed.  
We pray for our community and for our neighbours:  
*(personal prayer)*

Lord, in your mercy,  
***hear our prayer.***

In the fast you choose, we share bread with those who are hungry.  
We pray for the church in all places,  
that we may bear witness to your reign of justice, peace, and joy:  
*(personal prayer)*

Lord, in your mercy,  
***hear our prayer.***

The fast you desire looses is the bonds of injustice.  
We pray for the world,  
for all who are ensnared in greed, violence, and oppression:  
*(personal prayer)*

Lord, in your mercy,  
***hear our prayer.***

We offer you other concerns we carry in our hearts:  
*(personal prayer)*

Lord, in your mercy,  
***hear our prayer.***

God our only hope,  
 you seat us at the table with our enemies,  
 breathing in our fears.  
 Feed us from your mouth,  
 that our bread may be to do your will,  
 in the strength of your anointed,  
 who taught us to pray:

***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 trespasses,  
 as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
 Lead us not into temptation;  
 but deliver us from evil.  
 For thine is the kingdom,  
 the power and the glory,  
 for ever and ever. Amen***

#### **Closing Prayer – A time of turning round**

Truly dust we are, and to dust we shall return;  
 and truly yours we are, and to you we shall return.  
 Help this to be a time of turning round and beginning again.  
 Through the forty days of lent, help us to follow you  
 and to find you; in the discipline of praying  
 and in the drudgery of caring –  
 in whatever we deny ourselves,  
 and whatever we set ourselves to learn or do.  
 Help us to discover you  
 in our loneliness and in community,  
 in our emptiness and our fulfilment,  
 in our sadness and our laughter.  
 Help us to find you when we ourselves are lost.  
 help us to follow you on the journey to Jerusalem  
 to the waving palms of the people's hope,  
 to their rejection, to the cross and empty tomb.  
 Help us to perceive new growth amid the ashes of the old.  
 Help us, carrying your cross, to be signs of your Kingdom. Amen

#### **Blessing**

***Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself  
 and God the father,  
 who has loved us and through grace  
 has given us eternal comfort and good hope,  
 comfort and strengthen our hearts  
 in every good work and word. Amen***

Resources taken and adapted from ***Take our Moments and our Days: An Anabaptist Prayer Book*** and from ***Eggs and ashes*** by Ruth Burgess & Chris Polhill: *From dust we came* was written by Ruth Burgess and *A time of turning round* was written by Jan Sutch Pickard.

The Bible readings are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicised Edition, copyright © 1989, 1995 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.