



The Mustard Seed

Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree... *Matthew 13:32*

Presbyterian Church of Ruston PCUSA

February 2018



"**Ash** Wednesday. I have heard about it. I know that it is the first day of Lent but that's about all." That's what most people think of Ash Wednesday.

First of all, let's look at how we even know what day is Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday falls on different dates each year just like Easter. Easter is always celebrated the Sunday after the first full moon that occurs after the spring equinox. (An equinox is when the earth's orbit and position cause the Sun to pass directly over the equator.) So, Easter and Ash Wednesday are calculated on the lunar calendar not the Gregorian calendar. Once Easter is calculated, you count back 46 days (or 7 Wednesdays) to reach Ash Wednesday.

Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, is a day when ashes are placed on the foreheads of the faithful to remind us of death, of the sorrow we feel for our sins, and the necessity of changing our lives.

This practice dates back to the early Middle Ages. The actual origins of Ash Wednesday probably come from the Day of Atonement. In Leviticus 16, the Lord establishes an annual day of repentance for the Israelites as a lasting ordinance for all their generations.

Ashes are used because in ancient times they were an expression of mourning. Dusting oneself with ashes was the way of expressing sorrow for sins and faults. Ashes have been used as a reminder of our mortality and a sign of humility.

If you would like to come and meditate for a few minutes and/or have the imposition of ashes, the sanctuary will be open on **Wednesday, February 14 from 7:00 to 8:00 AM.**

Edith

Monthly Calendar

Sunday, February 4	10:00 Doug Jenkins Bible Class 10:45 Worship/Souper Bowl of Caring 11:00 Children's Sunday School Class 12:00 Lunch hosted by Witness/Service
Tuesday, February 6	09:45 Prayer Group
Wednesday, February 7	11:30 Lunch on Us 2:00 Communion at Princeton Place 6:00 Choir Practice
Thursday, February 8	11:30 Lunch Bunch
Saturday, February 10	Presbytery Meeting in Texarkana Commissioner: Buddy Johnson
Sunday, February 11	10:00 Doug Jenkins Bible Class 10:45 Worship/Communion 11:00 Children's Sunday School Class 4:30 Robin Dickens Circle: Faye Wiggins
Tuesday, February 13	9:45 Prayer Group
Wednesday, February 14	7:00 Ash Wednesday Meditation Service 11:30 Lunch on Us 2:00 Bennie Kendall Circle 6:00 Choir Practice
Sunday, February 18	10:00 Doug Jenkins Bible Class 10:45 Worship 11:00 Children's Sunday School Class
Monday, February 19	6:00 Session Meeting
Tuesday, February 20	9:45 Prayer Group
Wednesday, February 21	8:00 Men's Breakfast 11:30 Lunch on Us 6:00 Choir Practice
Sunday, February 25	10:00 Doug Jenkins Bible Class 10:45 Worship 11:00 Children's Sunday School Class
Tuesday, February 27	09:45 Prayer Group
Wednesday, February 28	11:30 Lunch on Us 5:30 Lenten Supper 6:15 Choir Practice

Session News - Committee Moderators

Witness and Service

Betty Jo Fagan, Wayne Neuroth

Property & Equipment

Chris Allen; Frank Ohene

Congregational Care/Fellowship

Barbara Sharp

Stewardship

Buddy Johnson

Worship/Christian Education

Gail Nelson; Dottie White

The session approved Christmas gifts for staff - Mallory Ballard, Diane Dablow, Mary Ann Parks, Sarabeth Ringle, and Jimmy Spivey.

The session approved a recommendation from the Property and Equipment Committee that the Piney Hills Chorus (Sweet Adelines) be allowed to place a storage building for their risers and other equipment beside the church storage building off the parking lot.

The session approved the installation of Betty Jo Fagan and Buddy Johnson for January 28, 2018.

The session voted to use \$1,109.15 from the parlor fund and \$289.76 from undesignated memorial funds to cover the cost of the new sofa in the parlor.

The Session approved Edith Hill's request to be away for a Living Waters trip to Haiti from March 14 to 18, 2018.

Buddy Johnson was approved to serve as Commissioner to the February 10, 2018 Presbytery Meeting in Texarkana, AR.

Communion was approved for February 11, 2018.

The Time & Talent Sheets were tallied and were reviewed by the session.

Elders of the Month: Betty Jo Fagan & Wayne Neuroth

THANK YOU

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A SPECIAL thank you to Betty Sheeler and Faye Wiggins for their service on the session during the past three years. They have served our congregation well in providing leadership to Congregational Care and Witness and Service Committees, and nurturing members and friends.

. . . **AND ANOTHER THANK YOU!** I am humbled by your Christmas gift. As a congregation you are always so generous, and I appreciate it very much. I am so proud to be your pastor and to share in ministry with you.

Edith



The amount of space on the new bulletin boards is smaller than the old boards. That was intentional so that BJ Fagan and others would not have to find more and more information and pictures to put on the boards. With intentionality, those boards will have pictures and color to catch your eyes and the eyes of visitors. So, the monthly church financial statements will be attached to the bulletin board across from the office (beside the children's Sunday school room.) If you would like to have a church financial statement, call Diane in the office.



We all enjoy the beautiful bouquets of flowers in worship on Sunday mornings. David and Mary Elleson have put up another beautiful flower chart on the bulletin board near the kitchen. If you would like to serve the church by providing flowers to honor or remember a loved one on a special Sunday, feel free to pen your name on the date. If you let Diane know the week before, an acknowledgement can be placed in the bulletin.

Remember, it is not necessary to *buy* flowers. Some of the most beautiful bouquets that we have had are those which come from our gardens, simply arranged in a vase. Of course, if you'd like a florist bouquet, they can be ordered and delivered to the church.

SECURITY

Recently, Wayne Neuroth, Jim Evans, and Edith Hill attended an informational session hosted by the Lincoln Parish Sheriff's Department for a discussion about church safety. The panel (the sheriff and deputy sheriffs) explained the law about concealed weapons on church property, some tips on preventing an intruder, etc.

Several years ago the session decided to lock the outside doors except for the front door on Sunday mornings before worship to protect our children who are at the opposite end of the building. That was done for a long time, and then we became a bit lax in locking doors.

Because of a conversation between Edith and Buddy Johnson about security even before the workshop, Buddy, Edith, and Norm Carter have been locking the doors each Sunday at around 10:45 as we go into worship. At the meeting with the Sheriff, we heard that locking doors that are away from the sanctuary doors is the greatest deterrence to an intruder.

The session at its January meeting talked about security and will have a small group of people investigate this issue more thoroughly.

The doors near the kitchen and the double doors between the fellowship and the sanctuary will continue to be locked close to 10:45. Feel free to call the church to get the security code to get in the back doors if you think you will ever be late and don't want to walk to the Bonner Street front doors

CONTEMPLATION

(From Richard Rohr's *Daily Meditation*)

Contemplation helps us to actually experience our experiences so that they can become transformational. Contemplation exposes our small self so that we can be open to our Big Self, which many of us call "God." This article will explore what the contemplative mind is and how it is necessary --- in some form --- to allow us to rediscover our inherent divine "image" and grow into our "likeness" of God. Without contemplative consciousness, we live on the surface of our own experiences and our own self.

The world today tends to be cynical about most things. We have a hard time believing in an enchanted world, a sacred or benevolent universe. Why would we if we see only at the surface level? Everywhere we turn, every time we watch the news, we see suffering. We have become skeptical about God's goodness, humanity's possibilities, and our planet's future. We can't help seeing *what is not* and are often unable to recognize or appreciate *what is*. I see this temptation in myself almost every day. I have to pray and wait for a second gaze, a deeper seeing. This is my daily bread.

From the very beginning, we see that nature is good, humans are good, and God is good. I have never met a loving human being who did not also believe in the foundational goodness of people and all of creation. We are sons and daughters of God, and all creatures are our brothers and sisters. We come forth from God, we have the privilege of co-creating with God, and we will return to God. Each being uniquely reflects part of the mystery of God for a while on this earth, before returning home. Remember, the divine *image* is objectively held by all people, but we each have to choose to grow in our *likeness* to God. That is our primary task on this earth. God always sees and loves the image; we tend to get distracted by the likeness.

We must discover and accept what unique part of the divine mystery is ours to reflect. All each of us can give back to God is what God has already given to us. We must choose it, respect it, and allow it to blossom. The most courageous thing we will ever do is to bear humbly the mystery of our own reality, to trust our divine image and grow in God's likeness. It is simply a matter of becoming who we already are.

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY ACTION

Summary of CCA Services from July to December 2017

Number of families served	1,173
Number of home visits completed	76
Number of new families	81
Number of food items distributed	48,390
Food donations received	58,610
Food purchased	\$6,783
Utility bills paid	\$8,936

Upcoming events for CCA

Souper Bowl of Caring	February 4
Soup for the Soul	October 23

PLACES TO FIND HELP. . .

Recently a person came to the church asking for assistance with finding a place to spend the night. The people who were at the church at the time didn't know how to respond.

Rolling Hills Ministries has a new website that helps all of us figure out where to find help for ourselves or for others. That website is: <http://www.rollinghillsministries.com/get-help-in-ruston>. The services offered by various agencies, churches, and organizations are categorized to make it easier to find. There are websites and phone numbers on that webpage.

Also, the United Way, which is listed on that web page, has a help line. All a person has to do is dial 211. The United Way has listings of groups, agencies, organizations, churches, etc. who can help. It is a great resource that not many people know about.