

sizzle of a homemade meal on the stove, and melodies buried deep in our souls. Yes, indeed, it's a beautiful life. Not because it's perfect, but because it's real. Journey with us, accompanying us as the path winds. Lift our heads to witness the majesty tucked around every detour. If we look closely, we might see your fingerprints. And if we listen deeply, we just might hear your voice calling us good, so very good. Amen.

BEARING GOD'S WORD INTO THE WORLD

*HYMN 422

Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God

*CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

Beloved wanderer, as you leave this place, may you carry your curious heart on your sleeve. May you look for God in every face. May you find the courage to get out of the boat, to run to the tomb, and to speak of your faith. And when the world falls apart, may you hear God's voice deep within, saying, "Take heart, it is I, be not afraid." You are called. You are blessed. In both your ups and your downs, you always belong to God. Go now in peace. Go trusting that good news. Amen.

POSTLUDE

Lord, Throughout these Forty Days

June Nixon

Today's service is a combined service with First Presbyterian Church Milledgeville, First Presbyterian Church Greensboro, Eatonton Presbyterian Church and United Methodists of Milledgeville, Reverend Susan Balfour and Reverend Meg Jackson Clark presiding.

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Treasurer, Joel Burns

OFFICE HOURS

9am ~ 1pm M-Fri.

PASTOR OFFICE HOURS

10am ~ 1pm Tues.-Fri. If you would like to schedule an appt. with Rev. Susan, please call the office (478) 452-9394



RADIO MINISTRY
WKZR (102.3FM)



Under the Palm
Podcast: <https://anchor.fm/susan-balfour0>

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Followers of Christ, called to serve our community and be an actively-engaging light to the world.

We live into our faith, inspired by our worship, encouraged by our fellowship, empowered by our studies. As a Matthew 25 Congregation, we answer the call to provide food and shelter to those in need. As a More Light Presbyterians Congregation, we provide a safe and affirming worshiping community for LGBTQIA+ persons, celebrating the uniqueness and dignity of each person as they seek a home for their faith and confidence in the promises of God for them.

**February 14, 2024
Combined Service
Ash Wednesday: Tune My Heart**

PRELUDE

I Need Thee Every Hour

Emma Lou Diemer

GATHERING AROUND GOD'S WORD

CALL TO WORSHIP

Reverend Susan Balfour

Leader: As we begin the season of Lent, let us turn inward and tune our hearts. Before an orchestra plays together, they must all tune their instruments—the cacophony of this process may be very loud and create lots of dissonance, but it's a necessary step in the process of creating harmonies and melodies. And so, this Lent, how can you tune the instrument of your heart so that it aligns with God?

Congregation: Tune our hearts to you, Lord, as we journey together this Lent in search of you. Amen.

TUNE OUR HEARTS

Come Thou Font of Every Blessing

Special Music

Meg Jackson Clark, violin; Laurie Peebles, flute

PRAYER

God of Righteousness, you see the secret acts of our devotion and know the hidden motives of our hearts. Confirm in us a spirit of humble obedience, that without regard to earthly honor we may live as your faithful children and receive the treasure of eternal life with Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

*HYMN 166

Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days

GOSPEL

Mark 1:12-15

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

INVITATION TO OBSERVE THE LENTEN DISCIPLINE

Reverend Meg Jackson Clark

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.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Reverend Meg Jackson Clark

Leader: Merciful God, how many times in a day could we choose love?

Congregation: How many times could we choose justice?

Leader: How many times could we speak kindly to ourselves?

Congregation: How many times could we offer grace?

Leader: How many times, God? And how often do we miss it?

Congregation: Forgive us for choosing the path you did not travel.

Leader: Forgive us for hitching our horse to the world's measure of goodness, instead of yours.

Congregation: Return our hearts to you, and guide us continually, even in the parched places.

Leader: With gratitude we pray, **Amen.**

*DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

Reverend Meg Jackson Clark

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:2

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!

*HYMN 422

Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God

ANTHEM

Drop, Drop, Slow Tears

Orlando Gibbons, arr. Sarah MacDonald

Drop, drop, slow tears, and bathe those beautiful feet, which brought from heaven the news and Prince of Peace. Cease not, wet eyes, his mercies to entreat; to cry for vengeance sin doth never cease. In your deep floods drown all my faults and fears; nor let his eye see sin, but through my tears.

PSALM 51:1-17

Reverend Susan Balfour

BLESSINGS OF ASHES

Bless, O God, these ashes and those who receive them. Let them be a reminder of our mortality, a call to sincere repentance, and a testimony to your abundant mercy in Jesus Christ. Amen.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

*PRAYER

Reverend Susan Balfour

Holy Creator, you fashioned us from the dust and called us good, so very good. Your fingerprints remain all over us. Don't let us forget that we come from the earth, we will return to the earth, and every day in between is a gift from you. Gifts aren't meant to be encased in glass boxes and set high on a shelf, lest they show any signs of use. No, you gave us this life in the hopes that we would live it fully, using it up and letting it develop signs of wear and tear, a marvelous patina that proves we have lived. But some days we'd rather be safe and sound, where nothing can touch us. It's a beautiful life, but the living can be so hard, God. All along our journeys we get scraped knees, hurt feelings, missteps, mistakes, unexpected diagnoses, broken hearts, painful endings, and phone calls that change our lives in an instant. As the paths of our lives wander through hills and valleys, as we get caught in the rain and the soles of our shoes wear down, tune our hearts to hear your voice everywhere. If we listen closely, we can hear it now. It's in uncontrollable giggles, birdsong at the window, the

***Please stand as you are able.**