

SKYWRITER

From the Pastor's Desk

by Rev. John Freeland

Why does Lent begin with a service like Ash Wednesday? In the early Church, Lent was a time of probation for new members. During the forty days of Lent, the church inspected and disciplined the new converts to make sure they were serious about their commitment to Christ and their turning from sin. If these new converts passed the test, they were baptized on Easter and united into full membership in the Church. Ash Wednesday began as a confessional service for them, giving them the opportunity to confess their new faith in Christ and make public their renunciation of sin. The act grew to be accepted by the Church at large as a time of remembering that "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). This year Ash Wednesday is on March 9, 2011.

Do we *have* to fast during Lent? Fasting during Lent is optional. It became a regular practice in the early church and was renewed in the Middle Ages. In the early Church, fasting during Lent was an act of intercession as the Church at large interceded for the new converts to the faith as they rejected their old way of life and adopted the New Way. As the centuries went by that focus shifted to self, and in many cases became an expectation of all members. But fasting for the sake of fasting is simply going hungry or doing without. If this is all fasting during Lent is to you, don't waste your time and suffer such hardship. Fasting during Lent, or any other time, must be in the pursuit of God. Lent, with or without fasting, is a time of self-examination. During the forty days of Lent, look for those things that interfere with your relationship with God and deal with them.

Why ashes? In Jonah 3:6, upon discovering the depth of his sin, the king of Nineveh removed his royal robes and covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. Daniel put on sackcloth and ashes and turned to the Lord in intercessory prayer. Jesus even spoke of sackcloth and ashes in relation to repentance in Mark 11:21. The imposition of the ashes signifies mourning over our unfortunate attraction to the things of the flesh and our mourning for the suffering Jesus incurred to free us from that attraction.

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**PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR
INFORMATION FOR THE
APRIL SKYWRITER
BY SUNDAY, MARCH 13**

Everyone is invited to come worship in the freedom and joy of the Holy Spirit at our next Friday Night Fire service on Friday, March 4 at 7:00pm in the sanctuary. A light supper will be served at 6:15pm in the dining area.



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Ashes also remind us of our decision to die to the flesh and live to the Spirit (see Romans 8:13).

Isn't Ash Wednesday something Catholics celebrate? Yes, Catholics celebrate Ash Wednesday, but so do United Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Anglicans.

Why do we celebrate Ash Wednesday at Skyland? Ash Wednesday is an invitation to die to the flesh so that we might live in the Spirit. Ash Wednesday forces us to remember the suffering Jesus undertook on our behalf. This day reminds us of Isaiah 53. Verse 5 tells us that Jesus “was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.” Certainly this is cause for celebration for us - for joyful singing and dancing. Ash Wednesday is different because it reminds us that even though Jesus willingly took this treatment upon Himself, the piercing, crushing, and punishment He suffered really belonged to us.

Didn't Jesus die for our sins once and for all? So, why then do we approach Ash Wednesday with such somberness? In the Middle Ages worshippers on Ash Wednesday were riddled with guilt. The Church heaped guilt on them because they were, after all, sinners. They were wretched people who deserved such guilt. This, of course, was not true. They were in fact saved by grace, cleansed of guilt and free of condemnation. So, while Ash Wednesday reminds us that “we all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on [Jesus] the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6), we are also reminded that “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). Are we who believe in Jesus sinners? Certainly not! We are saints, cleansed of sin by the blood of the Risen Lamb. We can therefore no longer be identified by words such as “sinner” and “guilty” for these words identify us with Satan, and we have no lot or parcel with the likes of him. Sinners, sin. It is their purpose in life. Believers, believe. We believe that we have been delivered from sin and its power over us. We are no longer slaves to sin. We celebrate Ash Wednesday to remind us of what we were and to renew our hope in what we are becoming. Join me March 9th for a special Ash Wednesday worship service with new elements of worship that will help you focus on your relationship with God during the Lenten season and beyond.

Your servant,




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Weekly Attendance

Date	Small Groups	10:00 Service	11:00 Service
1/23	75	46	80
1/30	86	50	85
2/6	83	52	69
2/13	68	54	61

Offerings

Date	Mile of Pennies	General Funds	Designated Funds
1/23	7.00	3,488.60	278.96
1/30	10.85	4,349.50	255.82
2/6	2.06	9,217.99	1,803.60
2/13	5.70	4,329.20	2,230.00

Designated Funds

Property Maintenance	51.13
Flowers	225.00
Mile of Pennies Interest	206.65
Good Samaritan Fund	545.60
John Stroud Memorial	690.00
Choir	5.00
Ken Freeman Memorial	25.00
Postage	5.00
Youth/Carnations	2,152.00
Stage Renovation	563.00
Children's Ministry	100.00
(In Memory of John Stroud)	



Join the Witness Committee on **Tuesday, March 1 at 6:00pm** to pray and intercede for the needs of our neighbors. Please meet in front of the chapel, dressed for the weather. We will proceed rain or shine. As we walk we trust that the Lord will lead us in the directions that will make a difference not only for the community but also for the kingdom.

*** Mark Your Calendar**

UMW Spaghetti Lunch

Sunday, March 20 @ 11:30am
\$5/adults - \$3/kids 12 & under

Youth Pancake Supper

Wednesday, March 23 @ 6:00pm



The Sky Angels will meet on **Thursday, March 10 at 11:45am** in the dining area. Everyone is invited to join us for a delicious lunch and a wonderful program. This month's entertainment will be provided by the Stella Bass Gospel Group. Please bring a covered dish to share.

The Young Adults will be getting together for a Latin Dinner hosted by Cesar & Victoria Castillo on **Saturday, March 12 at 6:00pm**. Guys, please bring a beverage to share, and ladies please bring a dessert. The main course will be provided by the Castillos. The address is 1897 Mt. Vernon Rd, Dunwoody, GA 30338. Please call Kristen Wages at (404) 323-7221 if you have any questions. Hope to see you there!



Please donate your unwanted household and personal items to the Missions/Outreach Blessings Yard Sale on **Saturday, April 9**. You can begin to bring in items right away - just put them on the metal shelves in the passageway behind the dining hall. We are especially looking for furniture, kitchen utensils and gently used kid's clothing. If you have bigger items to donate (like furniture or tools), please contact Sheila de la Cruz at (404) 354-4299 to arrange pick up. All proceeds will benefit SkyCamp!

Skyland United Methodist Church
P.O. Box 191427
Atlanta, GA 31119-1427

Address Service Requested

**Making Disciples
of All Nations**

CHURCH STAFF

John Freeland, Pastor

Andy Hammer, Director of Children & Youth

Janet Walsh, Minister of Music

Jose Garcia, Pianist

Kimberly Thomas, Church Secretary

Eleanor Flanagan, Comptroller

Ini Emmah, Fellowship Dinner Chef

Melissa Freeman, Nursery Attendant



**BIRTHDAYS
THIS MONTH**

- | | | | |
|-------------|----------------|-------------|------------------|
| 3/5 | Yvonne Norman | 3/14 | Joan Iddins |
| 3/8 | Jodi Holt | 3/15 | John Upchurch |
| | Jenny Morgan | 3/17 | Jean Bennett |
| | John Singleton | 3/18 | Lucy Mendoza |
| 3/9 | John Dennisson | 3/20 | Velma Jackson |
| | Nella Jones | | Mary Mullennix |
| 3/10 | Marilyn Webb | 3/23 | Harold Burrell |
| 3/11 | Sarah Bryson | | Phyllis Day |
| | | 3/29 | Victoria Salosky |

IN OUR THOUGHTS & PRAYERS: Martyne Gilleland, Carolyn Mull, Helen Buffington, Dave & Evelyn Smith, Margaret Barnwell, Velma Jackson, Pam Johnston, Jennifer Hoyla, Shirley Bryant, Jan Boehn, Jeenece O'Donald, John & Mary Turner, Edna Williams, Jack Cooke, Maude O'Donald, Diane Smith, Doris Hester, Joan Iddins, Steve Bryson, Porter Dobbins, Mitchell & Barbara Snipes, Harold Burrell, Kay Hastings, Jo Mull, George Bennett