

February 20, 2020



Greetings,

We are close to Ash Wednesday and Lent. There are many adjectives and verbs that we use to describe this season and tone. What are the adjectives and verbs you use? Lamenting, very purple, turning, dark, repent, remember.... We have many words of reflection in preparing for Ash Wednesday and the season of Lent.

For some of us, we are plenty prepared. We do “this” every year! We may be masters at preparing and ordering the services and the entire Lent season. So then how can we be un-ordered, or vulnerable enough into this time? Kind of catching myself when I have prepared abundantly for folks to have the “experience” of Ashes...that I forget all it takes is the breath prayer and the ashes themselves.

Many in our presbytery participate and provide ***Ashes on the Go***. This started within our band of leaders several years back. Some Associate Pastors at the time were less than busy in preparing for the evening services and they wanted to do something. Leaders like Rev. Lakesha Bradshaw, Rev. J.C. Cadwallader, and Rev. Denise Anderson (there were others but since they have left us, I can call them out!). These women went out into un-ordered places of city life: metro stops, parks, and courtyards. With a sign announcing, “Get your Ash over here”, wearing a stole, some oil and ashes they just stood there.... waiting, with a smile.

Every year since we continue to do this. It is super-duper vulnerable. We just stand there. Then, true to human nature, it takes just one person. They offer apologies for how they don’t go to church anymore, sometimes they offer money for the service, and sometimes they ask for prayers. I offer in response to the imposition, “remember the love you are created in and live fully into it.” Or, “from love and dust you are created and into this you return.” That is it. Sometimes we can advertise another service that is happening, or you have postcards to pass out AND it is this simple. It is a marking and a blessing.

We know how to order services well! Amen. And that is exactly why I recognize it to be essential that we take some time in the day of imposition and be vulnerable. We know what is needed and we know what to offer. So many people have not carved out this kind of sacred time and when they encounter us, they say thank you!

***Prophetically***, standing out there, you are proclaiming the gospel! ***Missionally***, you are meeting people where they are. ***Pastorally***, we have set apart a moment for sacred space, breath, and ashes. We hope you can join others and get vulnerable while you share ashes on the go. If you have any questions about how to do this feel free to contact my office!

Peace and Courage,

Tara

