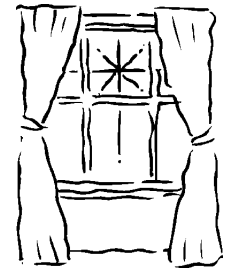


## Looking Out My Window, March 4, 2022



The season of Lent began this Wednesday, March 2. We marked that day with the Ash Wednesday liturgy at noon and 6 pm. As ashes are imposed on the forehead of each worshipper in that service, the priest says, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

At St. James', Marietta, Georgia, where I served as associate rector, we had three Ash Wednesday services. Three times each Ash Wednesday, I would hear and voice those words as I received and/or imposed ashes. Nothing like three Ash Wednesday services to bridge the seventeen inches from head to heart. This powerful ritual puts into ceremonial action so many profound realities. But, more than that, the symbol of the ashes brings home to me with new power the realities of which the symbolic act speaks.

I think of Genesis 2:7, ". . . the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being." Grains of ash on my thumb and the feel of grit on my forehead. What makes me more than dust? The creative life of God.

I think of Psalm 104:29-30,  
When you hide your face, they are dismayed;  
when you take their breath, they die and return to their dust.  
When you send forth your spirit, they are created;  
and you renew the face of the ground.

Of course, Ash Wednesday brings the first couplet of this Psalm verse to symbolic expression; when God's life-giving breath is withdrawn, we die. Yet, the second couplet gives new meaning to Ash Wednesday for us. If we are dust, and if God's breath has animated us and given us life, then that breath can reanimate us and reenergize us and renew our powers for creative living.

What better way to begin Lent than by ritualizing on Ash Wednesday our need for the fresh breath of God's Spirit? By our Lenten fasting and abstinence and additional spiritual practices, we shall align our bodies with our souls so that they hunger "in synch," our souls for God and our bodies for the comforts that shield us from that deeper hunger. By our prayers and spiritual disciplines, we shall reach out for God's life-giving Spirit.

Breathe on us, living Spirit of God. We are but waiting dust.

God's peace,

*David*

David W Perkins  
Interim Rector