



*We welcome all.*

*North Decatur Presbyterian Church is called by God to be a community of faith and worship, dedicated to Christian education and nurture so that we may go into the world to serve, work for peace and justice and share God's love with all people.*

611 Medlock Road, Decatur, GA 30033  
www.ndpc.org

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## Ash Wednesday

February 18, 2026

7 pm PM

*\* rise in body or spirit*

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### PREPARATION & ADORATION

#### PRELUDE

WELCOME

Mary Anona Stoops

\* SONG

*We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight*

Glory to God #817

\*CALL TO WORSHIP

The season of Lent calls us home—

**away from what distracts and numbs us,  
toward what is nourishing and enlivening.**

Lent invites us to pause and discern

**what is true,  
which voices we will trust,**

**and how we will live the days we have been given.**

Lent calls us to listen for the voice of the Good Shepherd,

**who goes with us,  
even toward death,**

**trusting love to be the path that leads to life.**

\* SONG

*I Want Jesus to Walk With Me (vs. 1-3)*

Glory to God #775

FIRST READING – John 10:1-19

Claudia Brogan

“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me, just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

*What does it stir in you to be called by name?  
How do you hear the shepherd’s voice?*

SONG

*I Want Jesus to Walk with Me (vs. 1)*

Glory to God #775

SECOND LESSON – Visio Divina

*Notice the sky, the flock, the shepherd. What stirs in you?  
What would it mean to trust the one who walks with you?*

SONG

*I Want Jesus to Walk with Me (vs. 1)*

Glory to God #775

THIRD LESSON – Psalm 139

Cheryl Parlato

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.  
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
you discern my thoughts from far away.  
You search out my path and my lying down  
and are acquainted with all my ways.  
Even before a word is on my tongue,  
O Lord, you know it completely.  
You hem me in, behind and before,  
and lay your hand upon me.  
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
it is so high that I cannot attain it.  
Where can I go from your spirit?  
Or where can I flee from your presence?  
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;  
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.  
If I take the wings of the morning  
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,  
even there your hand shall lead me,  
and your right hand shall hold me fast.  
If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me,  
and night wraps itself around me,”  
even the darkness is not dark to you;  
the night is as bright as the day,  
for darkness is as light to you.

For it was you who formed my inward parts;  
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.  
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully  
made.  
Wonderful are your works;  
that I know very well.  
My frame was not hidden from you,  
when I was being made in secret,  
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.  
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.  
In your book were written  
all the days that were formed for me,  
when none of them as yet existed.  
How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!  
How vast is the sum of them!  
I try to count them—they are more than the  
sand;  
I come to the end—I am still with you.  
Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my thoughts.  
See if there is any wrong in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting.

*What does it stir in you to be fully known?  
How have you experienced the darkness that is not dark to God?*

SONG

*I Want Jesus to Walk with Me (vs. 1)*

Glory to God #775

FOURTH LESSON – Denise Levertov, Agnus Dei

Erika Meyer

Given that lambs  
are infant sheep,  
that sheep are afraid and foolish, and lack  
the means of self-protection, having  
neither rage nor claws,  
venom nor cunning,  
what then  
is this 'Lamb of God'?  
This pretty creature, vigorous  
to nuzzle at milky dugs,  
woolbearer, bleater,  
leaper in air for delight of being, who finds in  
astonishment  
four legs to land on, the grass  
all it knows of the world?  
With whom we would like to play,  
whom we'd lead with ribbons, but may not  
bring  
into our houses because  
it would spoil the floor with its droppings?  
What terror lies concealed  
in strangest words, O lamb  
of God that taketh away  
the Sins of the World: an innocence  
smelling of ignorance,  
born in bloody snowdrifts,  
licked by forebearing  
dogs more intelligent than its entire flock put  
together?  
God then,  
encompassing all things, is

defenseless? Omnipotence  
has been tossed away,  
reduced to a wisp of damp wool?  
And we  
frightened, bored, wanting  
only to sleep 'til catastrophe  
has raged, clashed, seethed and gone by  
without us,  
wanting then  
to awaken in quietude without remembrance  
of agony,  
we who in shamefaced private hope  
had looked to be plucked from fire and given  
a bliss we deserved for having imagined it,  
is it implied that we  
must protect this perversely weak  
animal, whose muzzle's nudgings  
suppose there is milk to be found in us?  
Must hold in our icy hearts  
a shivering God?  
So be it.  
Come, rag of pungent  
quiverings,  
dim star.  
Let's try  
if something human still  
can shield you,  
spark  
of remote light.

*What comes up in you in response to this poem?  
What does it feel like to imagine the shepherd becoming a defenseless sheep  
that we shelter within us?*

ANTHEM

*The Lord is My Shepherd*  
NDPC Community Choir  
Marielle Mai, soloist

John Rutter

In the quiet of this Lenten evening,  
we come, O Christ—  
**listening**  
**for the voice that calls us by name,**  
**the voice we know beneath all others.**

(Sung) *O Lord, hear my prayer...*

In this season of returning,  
aware of how scattered we have become,  
we come, O Christ—  
**seeking**  
**to be gathered again;**  
**to be led through the gate of your love;**

**to find our way back to the life that is truly**  
**life.**

(Sung) *O Lord, hear my prayer ...*

As we remember our frailty and dust,  
we come, O Christ—  
**bringing**  
**the voices that offer easy answers;**  
**the paths that draw us away from love fear**  
**of loss and death;**  
**Our fear of loss and death;**

(Sung) *O Lord, hear my prayer...*

You are the Gate,  
**the passage through which our anxious**  
**hearts**  
**are gathered, re-centered, and transformed.**

In you, nothing is wasted—  
**not even what is lost or broken.**  
**In you, death itself is entered and changed.**

(Sung) *O Lord, hear my prayer...*

Search us, O God, and know our hearts.  
**Quiet what distracts us.**  
**Heal what divides us.**  
**Shape our longing after your own,**  
that we may follow where you lead—  
**into abundant life,**  
**poured out in love for the world.**

*Silence is kept.*

\* SUNG RESPONSE

*Lord, Have Mercy*

KYRIE ELEISON

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Kyrie Eleison 10

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Ky-ri-e, Ky-ri-e, e - le-i-son; Ky-ri-e, Ky-ri-e, e - le-i-son. (hum)

\*ASSURANCE OF GRACE

God is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.  
The way of love remains open before us.

**In Christ Jesus, we are forgiven, loved, and led into abundant life**

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

*All who wish to receive ashes are invited to come forward and form two lines in the center aisle.*

*Upon receiving ashes, you are invited to offer the ashes to the person behind you in line. Rub a finger in the ashes and place the sign of the cross on their forehead as you say:*

***The Shepherd calls the sheep by name. [Name], in life and death, you belong to God.***

MUSIC DURING THE IMPOSITION

*Please join in singing the refrains*  
Glory to God #544

*Bless the Lord*

**Bless the Lord, my soul, and bless God's holy name.  
Bless the Lord, my soul, who leads me into life.**

\*BLESSING

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### NOTES ON WORSHIP TODAY:

**Images:** *A Blessing in the Dust*, Jan Richardson; *Shepherd and Sheep* (c.1880), Anton Mauve.

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**Livestream and video** are produced by NDPC volunteers. If you would like to help with our weekly audio and video production, come up to the balcony and introduce yourself to the team.

### WELCOME, VISITORS

We're happy that you've joined us! It takes courage to show up at a new church. Please introduce yourself to those around you as you are comfortable. If you share your email address in the red Welcome Pads, we will send you the weekly NDPC e-newsletter. You can learn more about NDPC's programs at **www.ndpc.org**. We come from many different backgrounds, traditions, and cultures to worship. Feel free to use language and pronouns for God and for yourself that are authentic to you. After worship, the pastors would love to meet you in person.

### FOR YOUR INFORMATION:

**Would a large print hymnal, magnifying glass, or hearing assist device help you worship?** Ask an usher and they will gladly assist you. Let us know how we can make worship accessible for you.

**Videos of previous worship services** are available at ndpc.org. **Subscribe to our sermon podcast** through any major podcasting service.

**Revs. David Lewicki, Mary Anona Stoops, and Erin Reed Cooper** are available to meet for pastoral care. Pastoral care is confidential and can be held in-person or virtually. Email david@ndpc.org, maryanona@ndpc.org, or erin@ndpc.org.

### NDPC STAFF

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