

A song to sing or to read: *Because We Bear Your Name*

Lord Jesus we belong to you, you live in us we live in you
We live and work for you - because we bear your name.

Help us receive each other Lord, for you receive the least of us
And come to us in them - because we bear your name.

Bless those who give us any gift because they know that we are yours
Reward them with your grace - because we bear your name.

Let us acknowledge those as friends who use your name to right a wrong
But have not joined us yet - because we bear your name.

Let nothing that we do or say offend the weak so that they fall
And lose their faith in you - because we bear your name.

Keep us from missing out on life, give hands that help and single sight
And feet that walk your way – because we bear your name.

You are the salt that cleanses us, so clean us out and make us fit
For common life with you – because we bear your name.

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Closing Prayer

Nourished by God's
Word, go in peace to
love and serve. We are
ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making the appeal directly
through us. Therefore, we implore in Christ's name to be reconciled to
God.

Amen



With thanks to Dan Eaton for preparing today's reflection



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Church in a Bag Ash Wednesday

Dubbo Uniting Church



A Gathering

Spirit of God, who led Jesus into the desert to fast and pray
lead us as we enter this time of Lent.

Give us courage to scrutinise our hearts with honesty
give us strength to deal with what we find
give us love to forgive ourselves and each other
so that in peace and joy we may celebrate at Easter
the death and resurrection of Jesus
and all that it means for each of us.

We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.

Amen

Preparation

Ash Wednesday is
the best way to
begin a season
which calls us into
self-examination as
well as self-denial;

into deeper contemplation about the mystery and grace of God's
mercy; and towards more radical giving to those most in need of
comfort, sustenance, and hope.

The ancient practice of Ash Wednesday reminds us that we are mortal.
It causes us to pause and look at our lives; to remember what we are
made of; to remember where we are going; and encourages us to fully
immerse ourselves in the Lenten season.



First Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:20 – 6:10

“In time of my favour I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.”

Reflection

The Ministry of Paul was never an easy one, nor would Paul ever describe it otherwise. He readily acknowledges that we, in our receiving of God’s grace as his fellow workers, may encounter the Good, the Bad and the Ugly in our ministry. Paul is urging us not to squander one bit of the marvellous life God has given us. As it has been said, “When God envisions, God provisions!”

Think about this. In ministry we tell of eternal truths to people who would rather hear the latest cricket scores. We teach, although we must solicit our own classes. We seek to heal, though without pills or knife. We pray for people and hope they pray for us in our own need. We lead or assist with worship and try to make God real to those present. We sow God's Word and cultivate God's vineyard so that we may have deep roots in Christ and bear abundant fruits of the Spirit. We take up roles in our church: manager, administrator, correspondent, and keeper of official records. We provide advice, do social work and respond to emergencies. We are sometimes the target of panhandlers (beggars) and may be asked to “do the prayer” at public functions. We write to those who are alone, and engage in conversation with those on the fringe.



From our studies we contribute a bit of the scholar, philosopher, entertainer, salesman, and arbitrator to those in our community. We offer understanding and interpretation of the church at large. We seek the lost, visit the sick, counsel the troubled. We comfort the afflicted and afflict the too comfortable. We try to get people ready for baptism, confirmation, ministry, marriage, parenthood, old age - and finally death. We try to keep people focused on an everlasting life as they rush through time. We encourage programs and help recruit others to come and see our community. We are determined to multiply ministry. We want people to experience the joy of being givers of Christian

service, as well as being recipients. Between all this we prepare ourselves for Sunday to be with those who are doing the same. Then on Monday we smile when some jovial chap quips “What a way you have - just going to church on a Sunday”.

Second Reading: Matthew 6:1–21

Reflection (Adapted from *Kenneth W Collins*)

The Lord’s Prayer comes in more than one form. Consider this one in which there is opportunity to have both spiritual and physical renewal: “Every evening I walk three miles as part of my losing campaign against high blood pressure and my imperialistic waistline. I generally don’t wear an iPod, because I prefer to take my exercise without anaesthesia. Plus, I enjoy the sounds of nature and want to be able to hear the cars honk before they run me over. Sometimes I devote the time to prayer and I have found that the Lord’s Prayer makes a good outline. Here’s how I do it:

- *I address God as my Father* by adoption through the grace of Jesus Christ and give thanks for his salvation.
- *I pledge to keep his name holy in all my conduct.* I remind him of ways I have done this in the past and ask him forgiveness for all the ways I have failed to do so as well.
- *I ask that his will be done*, here on earth through me, as efficiently as it is done by his angels in heaven. I give examples of how I think I could do that; I ask his guidance and pledge my obedience.
- *I ask for my material needs for the day*, itemising and discussing them. I give thanks for specific instances of his providence in the past.
- *I ask forgiveness*, but only to the degree I am willing to forgive others. If I have a problem, I discuss it in detail.
- If I am facing any particular temptations, *I discuss them and ask God to help me* resist them. If I have recently survived any tough tests, I discuss them and thank God that he gave me the power to overcome them.
- *I tell God about* the evil things that frighten me and *ask him to deliver me* from them. I also give thanks for past rescues.

You get the idea. When you pray like this, it’s amazing how much fitter you become, both physically and spiritually!