

## Pastor's Page

Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your holy spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

These are words from Psalm 51 (verses 10-12), a Penitential Psalm. There are seven designated Penitential Psalms in the Psalter. These psalms are: Psalm 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143. Strictly speaking, a Penitential Psalm is designed to help the reader and/or the worshipping community to recognize sinfulness and express sorrow in seeking God's forgiveness.

For the midweek services this Lenten season, we will be focusing on Psalm 51, specifically verses the through twelve (printed above). You may recognize these words as being one of the Offertories (the song sung at worship as the offering is brought forward). We will be dividing these verses into five sections and using them as a focus for the meditation on Wednesday evening Lenten Midweek worship. The line-up is as follows:

March 4<sup>th</sup> – Create in me a clean heart, O God  
March 11<sup>th</sup> – Put a new and right spirit within me  
March 18<sup>th</sup> – Do not cast me away from your presence  
March 25<sup>th</sup> – Do not take your holy spirit from me  
April 1<sup>st</sup> – Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
And sustain me in a willing spirit

The purpose of penance is not to make you feel more remorse than you may already feel about mistakes made and wrong doings done. The purpose of penance is to nurture honesty within, to steer one toward apology for making amends, and to become a base for growth (both personal & communal) in striving for spiritual maturity. Penance initiated toward God becomes a sacred place for growing a faith relationship with your Creator. Penance initiated toward another becomes the corner stone for the possibility of relationship renewal.

Imagine a world where there was no penance or forgiveness. Relationships could not last or find any continuance that has meaning and growth. The purpose this year for our midweek Lenten services is to help us as individuals and as a community of faith to see and understand penance as fundamental part of our relationship with God and with each other. Additionally, to understand that penance is an integral to your own growth spiritually and as a human being. This can be an excellent opportunity for all of us to make our journey toward the celebration of Easter one that bears multiple layers and depths of meaning. I encourage you to read these verses over and over throughout the 40 days of lent ... not as a "must" that has to be done, but as a practice to open you up to God's power to heal our spiritual and emotional wounds.

Blessings to you this Lenten season,

Pastor Rick