

Oxnard Pastors and Churches Unite for a Joint Ash Wednesday Worship Service

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Rev. Pearson, Bishop Huggins and Rev. Oden raising hands in solidarity (Photo Credit: Crittenden Ward)

Oxnard, CA — On Wednesday, February 10, pastors, members and friends of the St. Paul Baptist Church, Bishop Broderick A. Huggins, Pastor; Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Rev. Dr. Clyde W. Oden, Jr., Pastor; and North Oxnard United Methodist Church, Rev. Rick Pearson, Pastor, came together for a joint worship service in observance of Ash Wednesday. The purpose of this joint service was for the faith community in Oxnard to gather to worship in an impressive display of love, unity and support of one another. The service was hosted at Bethel AME Church.

The worship service opened with a Call to Worship lead by Rev. Von Beaty of Bethel, followed with prayer by Rev. Tommy Scissom of St. Paul Baptist Church. The Scripture, Joel 2:12-17, was read by Rev. Rick Pearson, Pastor, North Oxnard UMC; Corinthians 6:1-10 was read by Rev. Al Duff, Jr., St. Paul Baptist Church; and Matthew 6:16-18 was read by Rev. Dr. Jane Galloway of Bethel. The Bethel Mass Choir led the congregation in several hymns and the St. Paul Mass Choir rendered a stirring musical selection.

Rev. Oden welcomed the three congregations and in a “teaching moment” spoke on the subject “Why an AshWednesday?” He provided a Biblical history on the celebration of Ash Wednesday and its significance to believers today. Rev. Oden also lead a rousing show of support for Bishop Huggins, who recently was the target of a vile, hate-driven, racist, threatening and cowardly letter received after a recent interview and article that appeared in the Ventura County Star. Rev. Oden and Rev. Parsons stood hand-in-hand with Bishop Huggins, in an impressive show of support, solidarity and defiance against any attempt to intimidate or silence one of God’s own simply because of the color of his skin. Their intent was to send a message that the perpetrator of this heinous action was in the minority. Their action was positive, timely, well received and came with the promise and commitment for future joint services and other initiatives.

Bishop Huggins was the guest speaker for the evening and delivered a moving and inspirational sermon on Ash Wednesday, speaking on the subjects “Reflection, Commitment, Repentance.” He spoke from the text of John 13:1-11 and so divinely used this example of Jesus’ humility, willingness to suffer for our sake, desire to serve, and propensity to forgive all, as attributes of the love for one another that should mark our personal experience of Ash Wednesday and walk with Christ. After the sermon, the pastors and other ministers present applied the sign of the cross in ash to the forehead of each attendee.

Worshippers left the service feeling rejuvenated, reinvigorated, committed and determined to make a difference in this community.