

BMPC window

Black Mountain Presbyterian Church newsletter

April 2020



Easter: Rooted in Mud and Muck

If there has been any salvation for me during this challenging season of quarantine, it has been the gift of long walks in my neighborhood with my family and our dog, Ridley, listening to soulful music on Spotify, laughter filled dinners with my family, and digging in the dirt pulling weeds in the early morning hours.

My spirit has been refreshed by the reality that even a quarantine can't stop Spring. . . this time of renewal, of burgeoning life, when the silence of winter is pierced aloud by the symphony of morning songbirds and evening peepers. Spring. . . when the first shoots of daffodils and pitcher plants emerge from the hard ground. Spring. . . when all that is brown sheds its winter coat and bursts forth in living color.

One of my favorite educators, Parker Palmer, penned a poem, *Spring and Mudtime is Miracle*, a few years back.

He writes:

*I'll wax romantic about the splendors of spring in a moment,
but first there's a hard truth to be told.*

*Before spring becomes beautiful, it's plug-ugly,
nothing but mud and muck.*

*I've walked through early spring fields
that will suck the boots off your feet,
a world so wet and woeful*

you yearn for the return of snow and ice. (On Being, March 2016)

He's right – spring is rooted in the mud and muck.

It has been a hard season for our congregation and

community as we have dealt with the realities and setbacks of this pandemic. We sit in this time with a foreboding awareness – fully knowing that things could get worse. We are experiencing our share of mud and muck – the kind that sticks to you, that makes you slip and fall sometimes, that makes you wonder if spring will ever come.

But this is also the season of the renewal of our faith as we come to Holy Week and to the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Even though we will be worshipping together remotely, we will rejoice in, celebrate, and dance over, that which arrives in mud, in dark-damp caves; we will sing over the stone that was rolled aside to release the body that defeated death.

This is the eternal season that resides in us who have come to believe, who have experienced the resurrection, and who stand as witnesses to the risen Christ. We know the muck and the mud does not last forever and resurrection and new life always breaks through.

So as we wait for the holy mud to give way to spring gardens, as we wait for the earth to heal itself from a long, deep winter, may the Son warm our days, set our lives ablaze with passion for the life given to us so that we would bring this hopeful message out into the world: "He is Risen . . . He is Risen Indeed."

Resurrection blessings to you,

I've been listening to a lot of music as I write, sermonize, and weed. To download a playlist I made for our congregation, BMPC Songs of Hope, [click here](#). This one tends to be a little more contemporary.

If you are interested in making a playlist for BMPC, let me know at mk@bmpcnc.org.

We hope you'll join us in worship on Sunday mornings on Facebook, our website, and YouTube.

PreSchool Church through Zoom, Sundays at 9:30am
with Pastor David and Brittany

Faith Formation Classes through Zoom, Sundays at 9:45am with George Thompson. Email George and let him know you are interested.

Elementary Church through Zoom, Sundays at 10:00am
with Pastor David and Brittany

Mental Health Support Group through Zoom, first and third Sundays at 3:30pm with Bunny Alexander

Youth through Zoom, Sundays at 5:15pm
with Sam, Pastor David, and Mike Ballard

Sacred Circle through Zoom, Mondays at 8:00am
with Beverly Thompson. A Sacred Circle is a way to be part of a small gathering. Beverly is willing to form another group if more people are interested. Email Beverly if you are interested.

Children's Story Time on Facebook, Monday-Friday 11:00am with our pastors and members.

Earth Care Series through Zoom, Mondays at 1:00pm
with Pastor David

Bible Study on Galatians through Zoom on Wednesdays at 11:00am with Lewis Galloway. What does it mean to be free? Email Lewis and let him know you are interested.

Our Pastor and Head of Staff

Our congregation elected Mary Katherine as our Pastor and Head of Staff five years ago on March 1, 2015 and her first day at BMPC was a few weeks later on April 20. Five years have flown by!

I was proud (and still am) to have been a member of her PNC and have had the pleasure of working closely with her first as an elder, and then as clerk of session. I know the love and joy she has for all of us and how much she enjoys being our pastor.

I encourage all of you to let her know how much we love her back and how much we appreciate her leadership over the past five years.

Thank you, Mary Katherine, and thank you also to Billy, Mary Scott, Munroe, and Sarah Wren for being part of our church family. We look forward to many, many more years working and worshipping together.

“Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow”

Mike Ballard, COS

Holy Week at Home

Sunday, April 5 – Palm Sunday, 8:30 a.m.
on YouTube or on our website

Enter the Palm Sunday story through powerful original first-person narratives, art, and music On Friday afternoon, April 3, as a powerful witness of affirmation and hope, we will place our palms out on the steps and banks of our church.

Hosanna, Save us, Lord!

Thursday, April 9 – Maundy Thursday, 7 p.m.

We will celebrate a powerful remembrance of our Lord's Last Supper virtually through Zoom. We encourage our members to bake bread* at home in preparation for this service.

Friday, April 10 – Good Friday

A meaningful Stations of the Cross devotional of art and scripture will be shared with you through email.

Sunday, April 12 – Easter, Flowering of the Cross

A trumpeter will lead us into our Easter Celebration!
Join us here on YouTube or on our website at 8:30 or after

BMPC's cross will be placed in front of the church on Good Friday. You are invited to drop off flowers from your yard and place them in our Easter Palm Cross.

*Bake homemade bread On Maundy Thursday – We remember Jesus' last meal by sharing Communion as a community. In this season, since we are not able to celebrate Holy Communion together, we invite you to do the next best thing: prepare a loaf of bread at home. Use a favorite family recipe. Have a sourdough starter? Make sourdough! Missing yeast? Make muffins or scones! Have faith that God will show up in the process.



On behalf of the Generosity Team, I'd like to introduce you to the theme for our year-long generosity effort. To build on last year's theme of "Reimagine Generosity," this year our theme will be "**Fearless Generosity**."

Let me take a minute to help you understand what we envision with this theme. All of us have concerns when it comes to our finances. If you are a young adult, you likely worry about how to afford your first house or how to pay off your student loans. If you have kids, you may be concerned about supporting their needs during these important years or saving for their college education. If your kids are grown, you're probably planning for retirement or putting aside money in case you have a medical issue.

All of these are important issues that need our attention and our financial planning. And it can be scary at times when we're not sure how we can meet these needs. But as we've learned from many stories in the bible, our faith and God's help can show us ways to cope with these issues. God can help us to overcome our fears and to remain generous in supporting the church and its missions. When we are not as able to contribute as much as we'd like financially, we can utilize our time and talents to support the church. When we are in a more stable financial position, we can generously support the church with our treasure.

Thus, for 2020 our theme of "**Fearless Generosity**" acknowledges our concerns, but also shows us different paths to supporting BMPC's mission in our community and the world. Trust in God and be fearless in your support of our church.

Dave Johnson, *BMPC Generosity Team*

FROM THE BMPC
EARTH CARE TEAM

You are Invited to Create Art to Celebrate Earth Day

The Earth Is the Lord's, and Everything in It

Wall of Art created by church members of all ages, titled "The Earth Is the Lord's, and Everything in It," will be set up in the narthex as soon as we are able to gather again in our church building. Originally, Martha Jane Petersen had planned to visit Sunday School classes from toddlers through youth on March 22 to extend the invitation. Since then, face-to-face Sunday School and worship have been cancelled until further notice. We would like to invite both children and adults to create art at home as a sacred activity during the time while church is not meeting. Please bring it to the church when we gather again. Hopefully, soon!

While the church buildings are almost empty . . .

I miss seeing each of you, visiting with you, and hearing how you're doing. I miss my time with adults in worship, and in our lively meetings where our nurture, faith formation, and outreach is envisioned and planned. I miss my times with children, youth,



Our youth on their Sunday afternoon Zoom call!

and families, as we build community and have a good time together. I get frustrated with our separation and limitations at least a few times a day (and my dogs have gotten an earful of complaints from me). But

then, each day I hear several

stories about people growing in faith, perseverance, and finding ways to live into God's love. It is a joy when I happen to see you out on a walk or in the garden, at a distance! My daily prayer is that you are becoming more awake (Mark 13:28-37) to God's presence, and God's powerful *Agape* (unconditional divine love) which will always fuel us to death and beyond. (Psalm 139)

During our time of social isolation in response to Covid-19, we are reminded that our church is still living in community. Usually when we think of church, we think of gathering to worship, but we're finding now that looking out for one another and praying for one another are at the core of our church experience. This distance makes us slow down to see God's *Agape* lived out in new ways in our town, state, country and world as people get creative finding selfless ways of giving. The word "church" is derived from the Greek "kyriakon," meaning "The Lord's house." Others say it's derived from the Celtic (from the old English *cirice*) word "kirk," meaning a bounded sacred space.

We feel compassion especially for our folks who live alone and cannot go out of their room or apartments. We know everyone has been affected in some way by this crisis, whether it is with job loss, economic loss, and/or immeasurable changes in our plans and way of living. Hopefully, you feel our love and concern for you, and know that we pray for you.

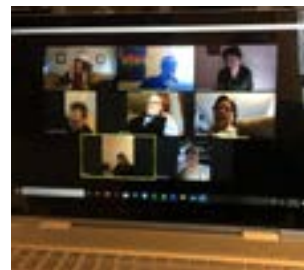
We often tend to think of our church as a building, but as the children's song goes. "I am the church. You are the church. We are the church together – all God's people all around the world, yes,

we're the church together! What we teach is that our church is more like the Greek word "ecclesia," meaning gathering, and the Hebrew word "beth synagogue," meaning "house of gathering." And now that we are prevented from gathering, we are finding that we're discovering how to gather spiritually, even when we can't gather physically.

So, what is your church staff doing during this time? You see our social media posts of storytelling, prayer times, worship, updates and Zoom gatherings. Not having been an "On-Line" church before Covid-19, this is new territory for us, and we are challenged

by issues of cost, time, rate and quality. It is a steep learning curve for all of us. There may be a silver lining as our new website is launched, and we become proficient in supplementing our strong gathering church with some online additions for the long-haul. Here are a few things going on at the Black Mountain Presbyterian Church campus:

- Deep cleaning
- New volleyball area
- New bicycle rack
- New Ga Ga ball pit (an octagonal "pit" ball game) the youth love
- Gardening continues
- New donated compost tumbler
- New outdoor basketball goal and court in the parking lot
- Hallway addition of wainscoting over the old wallpaper
- Refinishing the Fellowship Hall floor
- Cleaning and sprucing up Fellowship Hall
- Cleaning, gleaning, purging, and organizing upstairs on the Education wing
- Upgrades in technology, especially for online capacity



Our weekly Tuesday afternoon staff meeting looks different now!



New compost tumbler given to support our goal of cutting down on waste and building good soil.

David

Reimagining FirstLight

Around 15 years ago, under the direction of the Rev. Bob Ratchford and employing the creative vision of Donna Marie Todd and others, the seeds of what would become the FirstLight worship service took root. The idea was to provide a more casual, creative, and free-flowing worship experience as an alternative to the more traditional service. Soon after, Mike Barker was hired as the church's music director and added his own touches to the service.

Now, at this juncture, we feel it is a good time to take a hard look at the service. Mary Katherine has assembled a group that has already had several meetings to discuss all aspects of FirstLight. We hope to look at everything: from the seating arrangement, to the order of worship, to the physical space itself, to the music – essentially everything about the service – to see how well we are living into and expanding the original vision.

As part of this effort, we are calling folks who have been long-time participants in the service and also to people who once attended but are not attending currently. Time constraints do not allow us to speak with everyone – but we hope you will take a few minutes to give your honest feedback if you are contacted.

We hope to reimagine the FirstLight service and breathe new spiritual life into the service. We've been experimenting with some new ideas already, and we are sure more will follow – the worship task force team is passionate and highly engaged.

If you have been a longtime attendee of FirstLight, we sincerely thank you for giving us an hour of your time on Sunday mornings. If you have never attended FirstLight, we invite you to set your clock a little earlier and come visit us. You might be pleasantly surprised!

Presbyterian Women



Presbyterian Women's Circles are cancelled in April due to the uncertainty we are experiencing with the Covid-19 virus pandemic. Karen Austin will provide a Bible lesson for us which will be emailed or sent to PW members that can be read and studied in your own time. This link is available to [watch the lesson](#) from our author Eugenia Gamble. If you have any concerns or questions, please check with your own Circle Moderator or Co-Moderator or call Gayle Shelton at 664-1474 or Andrea DeWitt at 357-8081. Our hope is to be back to our regular Circles schedule as soon as possible.

UNDIES ON SUNDAYS

We collected a trunk full of warm clothes – underwear, socks, hats, gloves, scarves, coats and jackets – that were given out by Hand in Hand to students in the Owen school district. Thanks to Kyle and Jennifer Holt for their ongoing dedication to caring for children and youth. In response to the weather changes several folks also delivered items directly to the schools. **Thanks to all who supported this project during mission emphasis month.**

Comfort Corner

Now that we are spending more time at home, maybe you are cooking your favorite comfort foods. The Nurture team will highlight a recipe from a member each week in this “Comfort Corner.” Our first recipe was submitted by Katherine Holman.

“*Mama’s hamburger stew was a simple dish my family frequently ate as “comfort food.” Both my two younger brothers and I, as well as our parents, enjoyed it, and we always had its basic ingredients on hand. We also enjoyed it leftover, so Mama always made a pot big enough to have again a day or two later. When my brothers and I grew up, married, and had children of our own, we all asked Mama for her recipe. We continued to enjoy it in our own households, and passed it along to our children. Even today, now that my brothers and I are in our 70’s, we like to get together now and again for a lunch of hamburger stew and my sister-in-law Mary’s wonderful sourdough bread. Those occasions are always filled with love and many fond memories.*

Probably each of you has your own version of this soup, and so I don’t offer it as anything remarkable. What is remarkable is that when I was asked to supply a contribution to BMPC’s recipe-sharing project, Mama’s Hamburger Stew came immediately to mind, and eating the pot I made to create its “recipe” warmed my tummy just as thinking and writing about it has warmed my heart. Enjoy!”

Many thanks to Katherine. We can’t wait to try this recipe!

If you have a recipe you’d like to share, please email Jackie at jackie@bmpcnc.org and include a brief story about why it is special. It can be a holiday recipe, something unusual, one of your children’s or grandchildren’s favorites, a snack combination or beverage that may surprise others. We’re thinking this collection of shared recipes may be the start of a new BMPC cookbook project!

Mama’s Hamburger Stew

- 3 potatoes, roughly cubed (2 cups)
- 2 carrots, sliced (1 cup)
- 1 onion, chopped (3/4 cup)
- 1 celery stick, sliced (2/3 cup)
- salt and pepper to taste (1/2 teaspoon salt; 1/4 teaspoon freshly-ground pepper)
- 3 cups water (or enough to barely cover the vegetables)
- very lean ground beef (a 6” x 3” patty)
- 1 can Campbell’s tomato soup
- 1 can water (to get all the soup out of the can!)

Bring the vegetables to a boil, reduce heat, cover, and simmer until tender (approximately 15 minutes). Pinch small bits of the raw ground beef into the boiling vegetables and cook until the beef turns brown. Add the soup and a can of water and stir well. Serve with crusty bread.

I had to “create” this recipe to determine approximately how much of each ingredient I use! I wanted inexperienced cooks to be able to make it to give the customary cook in the household a break, so this time I measured everything. You can easily turn it into “Pearl’s Hamburger Stew” or “Calvin’s Hamburger Stew,” for example. If you like carrots, add another one; if you don’t like celery, omit it. As a wonderful Cajun cook once told me when I asked her for one of her recipes, “Just make it like you like it.”

Can in Each Hand

Our faithful donations to SVCM help keep their pantry shelves full. Since we are not gathering at church on Sunday, consider dropping off your can-in-each-hand in the boxes under the portico outside our front doors. Please stay home if you can, but if you are out buying groceries you may consider buying extra for hungry folks.

Thank you!



Karen Austin, chair of the Earth Care Team, has received confirmation from the denomination that **BMPC has been certified another year as an Earth Care Congregation.** To be certified, a church earns points in four areas: Worship, Education, Property, and Outreach.

Prayer Trees



We invite you to create your own Prayer Tree!

You can use string and ribbon you already have or contact Brittany (brittany@bmpnc.org) and she will send you the supplies needed. Take a colored ribbon that corresponds to the category of your prayer, write your prayer on the ribbon, and then offer your prayer by tying it to a string on a tree.

BLUE – the world; **PINK** – the most vulnerable; **GREEN** – family or self; **VIOLET** – physical/mental health, **ORANGE** – the church.

Connect with us!

We are going to be posting some fun things on our facebook page and we would like our members to help us out! Here is what we are looking for: Share a church memory or memory about your faith journey (and photo if you have it), something you think makes BMPC special, something you are thankful for in your life (and a photo if you have it), your favorite worship song/hymn, a picture of you with your best friend, and a special talent you have that is hidden or known (and a photo or video if you have one). Each day we will share these on our page: #memoriesmonday #talenttuesday #worshipwednesday #thankfulthursday #friendshipfriday #specialsaturday



Bounty & Soul had another record-breaking market on Friday, March 20, at Black Mountain Presbyterian Church as Covid-19 response efforts continued with over 275 households attending the drive-thru. The small but mighty crew thoughtfully prepared hundreds of well-rounded bags of goodness displaying all colors of the rainbow. Sending gratitude to those who dropped off more sweet handwritten messages of positivity – which were added to the bags along with recipes and community resources. It's important to pay attention to these silver-linings as we navigate these trying times – know that each donation of time of funds and of food is an offering of hope and optimism – we are in this together and couldn't do it without you.

Special thanks to the following growers, grocery stores, and restaurants for helping Bounty & Soul to meet the growing needs of our community: Mountain Food Products, Whole Foods, Biltmore Estates, Renzo's Ristorante, YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly, Hominy Farm, Zoës Kitchen, FARM FRESH Ventures, Ridgcrest Conference Center, Thatchmore Farm, Trader Joe's-Asheville, NC.



APRIL birthdays

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|--|
| 2 | McCain Farish | 16 | Edward Smith |
| 3 | Bridget Leary | 17 | Nancy Ruppert
Helen Sheorn |
| 4 | Brittany Williams | 18 | Pearl Hall
Camryn Davidson |
| 5 | Kiersten Edwards
Ethan Banks | 19 | Joy Minnick |
| 6 | Bill Gilliland | 20 | Carla Sperry
Margaret Waterstradt
Ann Bell |
| 7 | Frances Kennedy | 21 | Vance Stiles |
| 8 | Jane Collins
Jean Norris
Devin Carswell | 22 | Mary McElrath
Ally Gudeman
Xander Dodd |
| 9 | Ann Herring
Ginny Lindsey | 23 | Glenn Bannerman
Karen Smith
David Hana
Thomas McElwee |
| 10 | Mike Morse
Lily Morgan
Melzer Morgan III
April Roy
Graham Roy | 24 | Margaret Fouse
Jayne Vaughan |
| 11 | Susan Jumper
Joy Drummond
Chad Williams
Rylan Van Note | 25 | Susan Hensley |
| 12 | Norman Carswell | 26 | Sam Baraki
Mary Katherine Robinson |
| 13 | Dwight Stobbs
William Holmes | 28 | Chloe Stiles |
| 14 | Cathy Skeen
Diana Soileau | 29 | Ken Farmer
Shay Parker
Maya Fleagle |
| 15 | Dale Culpepper | 30 | Connie Schimpf
Emma Bell |

Happy birthday!

Library News

When our library doors reopen, you may find these two books worth your time and attention, even though they deal with a painful and sometimes controversial subject. The #Me Too Movement is familiar to anyone who has kept up with national news in the last few years. Most people are also aware that the church has not been immune to issues of sexual abuse. However, most of us probably would prefer to divorce ourselves from thinking about it. Ruth Everhart, a PCUSA pastor and a survivor of sexual abuse herself, has written *The #Me Too Reckoning: Facing The Church's Complicity in Sexual Abuse and Misconduct*. She tells not only of her own experience but also that of some others, including a young male minister, and their struggle to find justice. In the process of doing this, Everhart connects Biblical stories with the events which she recounts. While an uncomfortable read in many ways, I believe it is important for us as Christians to understand all implications of this injustice perpetrated on innocent people. *Victim To Survivor*, edited by BMPC member Nancy Werking Poling, relates the stories of six others who suffered sexual abuse by someone who was trusted and was supposed to assist, not hurt them.



Our PC(USA) Book of Order says this about those who serve as **DEACONS**

G-2.0201 Deacon Defined

“The ministry of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of compassion, witness, and service, sharing in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lost, the friendless, the oppressed, those burdened by unjust policies or structures, or anyone in distress. Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, sincere compassion, and sound judgment should be chosen for this ministry.”

Here at BMPC, our deacons are expected to participate in Diaconate meetings once every few months, as well as take an active role in connecting with those entrusted to their care.

Our PC(USA) Book of Order says this about those who serve as **ELDERS**

G-2.0301 Ruling Elder Defined

“As there were in Old Testament times elders for the government of the people, so the New Testament church provided persons with particular gifts to share in discernment of God’s Spirit and governance of God’s people. Accordingly, congregations should elect persons of wisdom and maturity of faith, having demonstrated skills in leadership and being compassionate in spirit. Ruling elders are so named not because they “lord it over” the congregation (Matt. 20:25), but because they are chosen by the congregation to discern and measure its fidelity to the Word of God, and to strengthen and nurture its faith and life. Ruling elders, together with teaching elders, exercise leadership, government, spiritual discernment, and discipline and have responsibilities for the life of a congregation as well as the whole church, including ecumenical relationships. When elected by the congregation, they shall serve faithfully as members of the session.”

Here at BMPC, our elders are expected to participate in Session meetings once a month, as well as actively participate on a standing committee/ministry team. But first and foremost, our elders are our spiritual leaders. They help discern God’s hope and vision for our congregation and lead us into that future.

Do you know someone you think God has prepared to serve as a deacon or elder?

Please email Liesl Case – lc case@bellsouth.net and let her know what skills and/or gifts this person has that you believe equips him/her for this work.

Your Nominating Committee

Liesl Case (chair), Leslie Applewhite, Austin Brown, Andrea DeWitt
Gay Ferguson, Cindy McDaniel, Sam Webber

"Be still, and know that I am God!" – Psalm 46:10

A devotional from Lewis Galloway, posted on Montreat's website – March 27, 2020

One of the hardest things to do in a crisis is to be still! As a confirmed extrovert, I have never found, even in easy times, stillness and quiet to come easily. Being told to be still is a bit like being told to calm down when the mind, heart and body are on fire with anxiety.

The words of W. B. Yeats, "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world..." (*The Second Coming*) fit our time. The lives of loved ones are threatened by a deadly virus; jobs are lost; medical supplies for courageous workers are scarce; loneliness overtakes the soul; children are out of school; residents of nursing homes, prisons and shelters face great risk; businesses are shut down; stores are shuttered; the future is uncertain; and global recession looms on the horizon. Amid the crisis and chaos, the confusion and clamor, we hear those words again, "Be still, and know that I am God." I would laugh, or protest, or run away, except I remember who said it. It is not a 24/7 News Commentator, not the head of CDC, and not even the President. The Lord spoke to a terrified people under attack, "Be still, and know that I am God!"

Even when it may feel like the certainties of life are melting away and the very ground upon which we stand is shaken, we discover something that we may have taken for granted or perhaps never known. In spite of all my resistance, I find those words strangely calming. God is in our midst like a mountain stream watering the dry land or like a powerful wind greater than all the forces and dangers that would destroy life. God is in our midst.

Come what may, we shall not be moved.

I look around and see God in the courage of parents who nurture faith and teach selflessness and compassion to children at home; I see God in those who make phone calls to the homebound and deliver food to the hungry; I see God in those who make music through social media and on apartment balconies; I see God in health care workers and public servants who risk their own lives to save the lives of others; I see God in those who reconcile with old enemies; I see God in those who pray and in those who join in virtual worship; I see God in these beautiful mountains surrounding Montreat that will one day be filled again with the sounds of joy and laughter.

As I seek stillness in disruption, I am guided by the words and music of my favorite hymn, *O God Beyond All Praising. The Majesty* of the tune THAXTED, drawn from Gustave Holst's *The Planets*, lifts the troubled soul to see God's glory all around us:

*O God beyond all praising,
we worship you today
and sing the love amazing
that songs cannot repay...*

The words by Michael Perry lead us to hope and trust in God who holds the future, our future, in the divine and loving hands.

*...and whether our tomorrows
be filled with good or ill,
we'll triumph through our sorrows
and rise to bless you still.*