

ASH

WEDNESDAY



First Lutheran Church

FEBRUARY 18, 2026

ASH WEDNESDAY

On Ash Wednesday we begin our forty-day journey toward Easter with a day of fasting and repentance. Marking our foreheads with dust, we acknowledge that we die and return to the earth. At the same time, the dust traces the life-giving cross indelibly marked on our foreheads at baptism. While we journey through Lent to return to God, we have already been reconciled to God through Christ. We humbly pray for God to make our hearts clean while we rejoice that “now is the day of salvation.” Returning to our baptismal call, we more intentionally bear the fruits of mercy and justice in the world.

The assembly gathers in silence.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

The service begins simply with the greeting.

The assembly stands.

GREETING

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

Almighty and ever-living God, you hate nothing you have made, and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and honest hearts, so that, truly repenting of our sins, we may receive from you, the God of all mercy, full pardon and forgiveness through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

The assembly is seated.

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

FIRST READING

JOEL 2:1-2, 12-17

Because of the coming Day of the LORD, the prophet Joel calls the people to a community lament. The repentant community reminds God of his gracious character and asks God to spare the people, lest the nations doubt God's power to save.

R: A reading from Joel, the second chapter.

¹ Blow the trumpet in Zion;
sound the alarm on my holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near—
² a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick darkness!
Like blackness spread upon the mountains,
a great and powerful army comes;
their like has never been from of old,
nor will be again after them
in ages to come.
¹² Yet even now, says the LORD,
return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
¹³ rend your hearts and not your clothing.
Return to the LORD your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love,
and relenting from punishment.
¹⁴ Who knows whether he will not turn and relent
and leave a blessing behind him,
a grain offering and a drink offering
for the LORD your God?
¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Zion;
consecrate a fast;
call a solemn assembly;
¹⁶ gather the people.
Consecrate the congregation;
assemble the aged;
gather the children,
even infants at the breast.
Let the bridegroom leave his room
and the bride her canopy.

¹³ Let me teach your ways ¹ to offenders,
and sinners shall be re- ¹ stored to you.

¹⁴ Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of ¹ my salvation,
and my tongue shall sing ¹ of your righteousness.

¹⁵ O Lord, o- ¹ pen my lips,
and my mouth shall pro- ¹ claim your praise.

¹⁶ For you take no delight in sacrifice, or ¹ I would give it.
You are not pleased ¹ with burnt offering.

¹⁷ The sacrifice of God is a ¹ troubled spirit;
a troubled and broken heart, O God, you will ¹ not despise. **Refrain**

SECOND READING

2 CORINTHIANS 5:20B—6:10

The ministry of the gospel endures many challenges and hardships. Through this ministry, God's reconciling activity in the death of Christ reaches into the depths of our lives to bring us into a right relationship with God. In this way, God accepts us into the reality of divine salvation.

R: A reading from 2 Corinthians, the fifth chapter.

^{20b} We entreat you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake God made the one who knew no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. ^{6:1} As we work together with him, we entreat you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. ² For he says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you." Look, now is the acceptable time; look, now is the day of salvation! ³ We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴ but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: in great endurance, afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵ beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶ in purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, ⁷ truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸ in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors and yet are true, ⁹ as unknown and yet are well known, as dying and look—we are alive, as punished and yet not killed, ¹⁰ as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing everything.

R: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

The assembly stands.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Re - turn to the Lord, your God, for he is gra - cious and



mer - ci - ful, slow to an - ger, and a - bound - ing in



stead - fast love, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love.

GOSPEL

MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-21

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commends almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, but emphasizes that spiritual devotion must not be done for show.

P: The holy gospel according to Matthew.

C: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹ "Beware of practicing your righteousness before others in order to be seen by them, for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

² "So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your alms may be done in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁵ "And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

¹⁶ "And whenever you fast, do not look somber, like the hypocrites, for they mark their faces to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and

where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

P: The gospel of the Lord.

C: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

The assembly is seated.

SERMON

REVEREND ROGER GIESE

Silence for reflection follows the sermon.

INVITATION TO LENT

P: Friends in Christ, today with the whole church we enter the time of remembering Jesus' passover from death to life, and our life in Christ is renewed.

We begin this holy season by acknowledging our need for repentance and for God's mercy. We are created to experience joy in communion with God, to love one another, and to live in harmony with creation. But our sinful rebellion separates us from God, our neighbors, and creation, so that we do not enjoy the life our creator intended.

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to a discipline that contends against evil and resists whatever leads us away from love of God and neighbor. I invite you, therefore, to the discipline of Lent—self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love—strengthened by the gifts of word and sacrament. Let us continue our journey through these forty days to the great Three Days of Jesus' death and resurrection.

CONFESSION OF SIN

The assembly kneels.

P: Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence is kept for reflection and self-examination.

P: Most holy and merciful God,

C: **we confess to you and to one another,
and before the whole company of heaven,
that we have sinned by our fault,
by our own fault,
by our own most grievous fault,
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done and by what we have left undone.**

P: We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven.

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

P: We have shut our ears to your call to serve as Christ served us. We have not been true to the mind of Christ. We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

P: Our past unfaithfulness, the pride, envy, hypocrisy, and apathy that have infected our lives, we confess to you.

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

P: Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people, we confess to you.

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

P: Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to share the faith that is in us, we confess to you.

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

P: Our neglect of human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty, we confess to you.

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

P: Our false judgments, our uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us, we confess to you.

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

P: Our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us, we confess to you.

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

P: Restore us, O God, and let your anger depart from us.

C: Hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

P: Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. May these ashes be a sign of our mortality and penitence, reminding us that only by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ are we given eternal life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: Amen.

The assembly is seated.

People may come forward to receive the ashes.

DISTRUBUTION HYMN

ELW # 601

An organ interlude will follow the singing of each verse.



1 Sav-ior, when in dust to you low we bow in hom - age due;
2 By your help - less in - fant years, by your life of want and tears,
3 By your hour of dire de - spair, by your ag - o - ny of prayer,
4 By your deep ex - pir - ing groan, by the sad se - pul - chral stone,



when, re - pen - tant, to the skies scarce we lift our weep - ing eyes;
by your days of deep dis - tress in the sav - age wil - der - ness,
by the cross, the nail, the thorn, pierc - ing spear, and tor - turing scorn,
by the vault whose dark a - bode held in vain the ris - ing God,



oh, by all your pains and woe suf - fered once for us be - low,
by the dread, mys - te - rious hour of the in - sult - ing tempt - er's pow'r,
by the gloom that veiled the skies o'er the dread - ful sac - ri - fice,
oh, from earth to heav'n re - stored, might - y, re - as - cend - ed Lord,



bend - ing from your throne on high, hear our pen - i - ten - tial cry!
turn, oh, turn a fa - v'ring eye; hear our pen - i - ten - tial cry!
lis - ten to our hum - ble sigh; hear our pen - i - ten - tial cry!
bend - ing from your throne on high, hear our pen - i - ten - tial cry!

The assembly kneels.

P: Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation,
C: **that we may show forth your glory in the world.**

P: By the cross and passion of your Son, our Savior,
C: **bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.**

P: Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life.

C: **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

P: Reconciled by God's mercy and sustained by God's presence, let us pray for the world and its needs.

A brief silence.

L: Guide your church, O God. Accompany all Christians in this season of repentance, and renew our faith in the riches of grace you give to us in baptism.

P: Hear us, O God.

C: **Your mercy is great.**

L: Heal this earth, O God. Satisfy the needs of every parched place, every diverse ecosystem, every creature. Though all return to dust, grant beauty and purpose to each living thing.

P: Hear us, O God.

C: **Your mercy is great.**

L: Restore the nations, O God. Let your healing spring up quickly across the world. Give all in authority the will to loose the bonds of injustice and let any who are oppressed go free.

P: Hear us, O God.

C: **Your mercy is great.**

L: Deliver your people, O God. Comfort any whose hearts are filled with grief, uphold any who are sick, bring food to those who hunger, and give housing to all without shelter.

P: Hear us, O God.

C: **Your mercy is great.**

L: Bless this assembly, O God. Reconcile us to one another and to you. Strengthen our resolve to fast from evil, open our hands in sharing, and quicken our prayer.

P: Hear us, O God.

C: **Your mercy is great.**

L: Hold us forever, O God. We thank you for all who now know their treasure in heaven, and for Martin Luther and all who on earth proclaimed your abounding, steadfast love.

P: Hear us, O God.

C: **Your mercy is great.**

P: Receive our prayers, O God, through Jesus Christ, our strength and salvation.

C: **Amen.**

The assembly is seated.

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

OFFERING AND ORGAN MEDITATION

LLANGLOFFAN

Barbara Harbach

Bless Now, O God, the Journey

The assembly stands.

OFFERING PRAYER



Cre-ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re-new a right



spir-it with-in me. Cast me not a-way from your pres-ence, and take



not your Ho-ly Spir-it from me. Re-store to me the joy of



your sal - va - tion, and up-hold me with your free Spir - it.

OFFERING PRAYER

L: Let us pray.

God our provider, you have not fed us with bread alone, but with words of grace and life. Bless us and these your gifts, which we receive from your bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: **Amen.**

GREAT THANKSGIVING

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: **We lift them to the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

PREFACE

P: It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. You call your people to cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast, that, renewed in the gift of baptism, we may come to the fullness of your grace. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,



heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -



san-na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless-ed is he who



comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na in the high - est.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

- P: In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.
- P: Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

LORD'S PRAYER

- L: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.
- C: Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

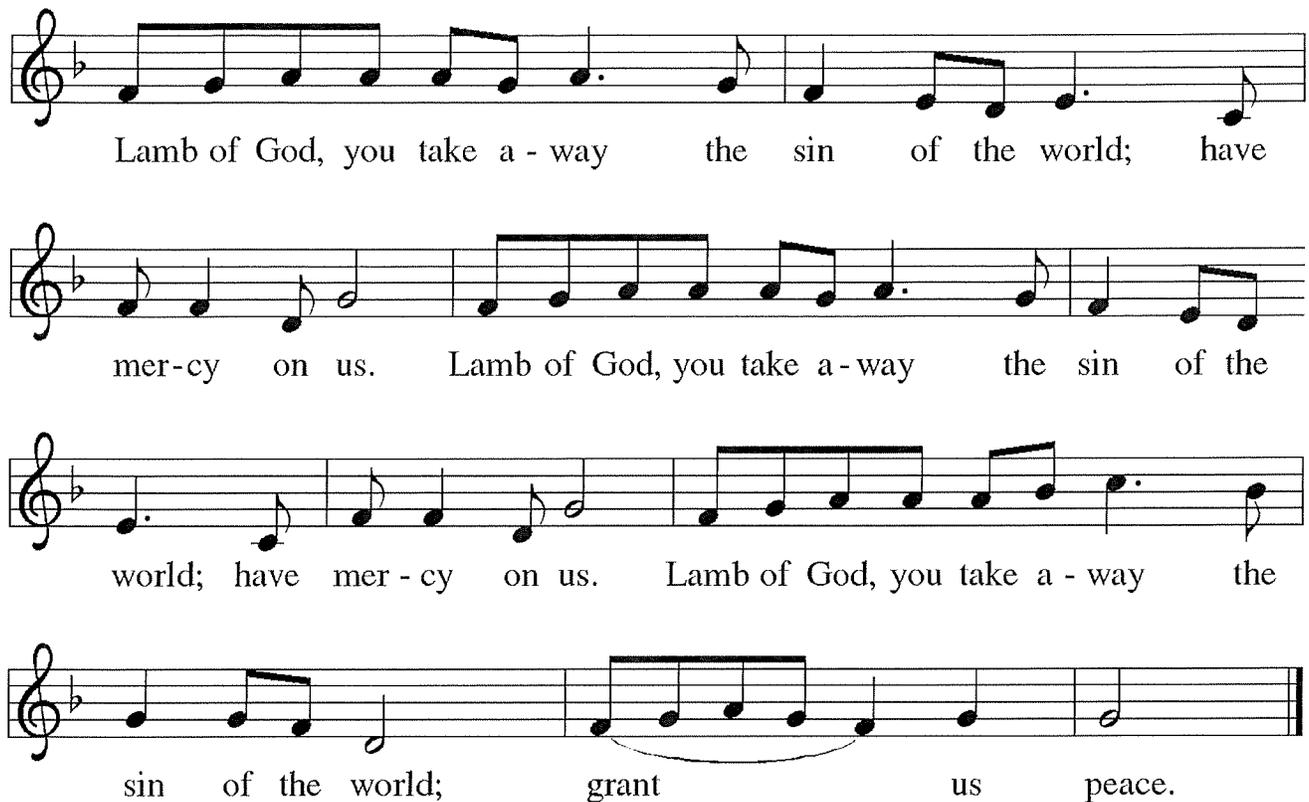
- P: Taste and see that the Lord is good.

The assembly is seated.

COMMUNION IS DISTRIBUTED IN TWO MANNERS AT FIRST LUTHERAN

- † *You may commune in your pews.
Individual communion kits are available at the Narthex doors.*
- † *You may come to the Table, to receive the Body and Blood of Christ.*

LAMB OF GOD



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; grant us peace.

COMMUNION MUSIC

Johann Sebastian Bach

O MENSCH, BEWEIN' DEIN' SÜNDE GROSS, BWV 622

O Man, Bewail thy Grievous Fall

The assembly stands.

TABLE BLESSING

P: The body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,
strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

C: Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

L: Let us pray.

Merciful God, accompany our journey through these forty days. Renew us in the gift of baptism, that we may provide for those who are poor, pray for those in need, fast from self-indulgence, and above all that we may find our treasure in the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

**C: Oh God,
your everlasting love for us is always trustworthy and sure.
We are grateful for the goodness you have shown us
through the years,
and we ask now for confidence to go forward into the future.
Bless our community of faith, bless our healing,
bless the changes that are before us, bless our pastoral leaders
who will shepherd us through this time of transition.
We thank you now for the wisdom you will show us
as we align with your will, and servant or servants
you are already preparing to send us in your blessed time.
Help us to keep looking to you to define our ministry and our future.
In his name and for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, Amen.**

BLESSING

**P: The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.
The Lord look upon you favorably and + give you peace.
C: Amen.**

SENDING SONG



1 Bless now, O God, the jour - ney that all your peo - ple make,
2 Bless so - journ-ers and pil - grims who share this wind-ing way;
3 Di - vine e - ter - nal lov - er, you meet us on the road.



the path through noise and si - lence, the way of give and take.
your hope burns through the ter - rors, your love sus-tains the day.
We wait for lands of prom - ise where milk and hon - ey flow,



The trail is found in des - ert and winds the moun-tain round,
We yearn for ho - ly free - dom while of - ten we are bound;
but wait-ing not for plac - es, you meet us all a - round.



then leads be - side still wa - ters, the road where faith is found.
to - geth - er we are seek - ing the road where faith is found.
Our cov - e - nant is writ - ten on roads, as faith is found.

DISMISSAL

P: Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness;
be of good courage;
hold fast to that which is good;
render to no one evil for evil;
strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak;
help the afflicted; honor all people;
love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

~ ~ *All depart in silence* ~ ~