

**ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH (ELCA)**

**ASH WEDNESDAY**



**February 18, 2026**

**6:00 p.m.**

## 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 sanctuary is darkened to set the Lenten mood of somberness and solemnness.\**



### + GATHERING +

*The assembly gathers in silence and then stands to pray Psalm 51.*

Leader      <sup>1</sup>Have mercy on me, O God, according to your | steadfast love;  
in your great compassion blot out | my offenses.

**C      <sup>2</sup>Wash me through and through | from my wickedness,  
and cleanse me | from my sin.**

A      <sup>3</sup>For I know | my offenses,  
and my sin is ev- | er before me.

**C      <sup>4</sup>Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil | in your sight;  
so you are justified when you speak and right | in your judgment.**

A      <sup>5</sup>Indeed, I was born | steeped in wickedness,  
a sinner from my | mother's womb.

**C      <sup>6</sup>Indeed, you delight in truth | deep within me,  
and would have me know wisdom | deep within.**

- A    <sup>7</sup>Remove my sins with hyssop, and I | shall be clean;  
       wash me, and I shall be pur- | er than snow.
- C    <sup>8</sup>Let me hear | joy and gladness;  
       that the body you have broken | may rejoice.**
- A    <sup>9</sup>Hide your face | from my sins,  
       and blot out | all my wickedness.
- C    <sup>10</sup>Create in me a clean | heart, O God,  
       and renew a right spir- | it within me.**
- A    <sup>11</sup>Cast me not away | from your presence,  
       and take not your Holy Spir- | it from me.
- C    <sup>12</sup>Restore to me the joy of | your salvation  
       and sustain me with your boun- | tiful Spirit.**
- A    <sup>13</sup>Let me teach your ways | to offenders,  
       and sinners shall be re- | stored to you.
- C    <sup>14</sup>Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of | my salvation,  
       and my tongue shall sing | of your righteousness.**
- A    <sup>15</sup>O Lord, o- | pen my lips,  
       and my mouth shall pro- | claim your praise.
- C    <sup>16</sup>For you take no delight in sacrifice, or | I would give it.  
       You are not pleased | with burnt offering.**
- A    <sup>17</sup>The sacrifice of God is a | troubled spirit;  
       a troubled and broken heart, O God, you will | not despise.
- C    Amen.**

## **GREETING**

- P    The grace of Jesus Christ our Savior, the reconciling love of God, and the  
 communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
- C    And also with you.**

## PRAYER OF THE DAY



P Let us pray.

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.

*We sit.*



**+WORD+**

### 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.*

<sup>1</sup>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—<sup>2</sup>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.

<sup>12</sup>Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; <sup>13</sup>rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. <sup>14</sup>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?

<sup>15</sup>Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; <sup>16</sup>gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her canopy. <sup>17</sup>Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep. Let them say, “Spare your people, O LORD, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’”

L Holy Wisdom, Holy Word.

C Thanks be to God.

**ANTHEM** *"Dust, Remember You Are Splendor" -Organ/Cherwien*

(Refrain)

Splendor, splendor,  
Dust, remember you are splendor.

Dust, remember you are splendor:  
in God's image you were made;  
God's own breath breathes in your breathing;  
God's own hands shaped you of clay:  
noble, precious, and beloved,  
godliness in dust arrayed. (refrain)

Dust, remember you are splendor:  
set aside the works of night;  
put away the deeds of darkness;  
set your face toward God's own light,  
nevermore to yoke and trample,  
nevermore to press and slight. (refrain)

Dust, remember you are splendor:  
strive to walk the narrow way;  
follow Christ into the desert;  
there the Spirit's call obey.  
Now, the time of your returning;  
now your resurrection day. (refrain)

Dust, remember you are splendor:  
like a watered garden grow;  
light shall warm you like the dawning;  
rivers through your glades shall flow;  
fruitful, precious, and beloved,  
you shall God's own splendor show. (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.*

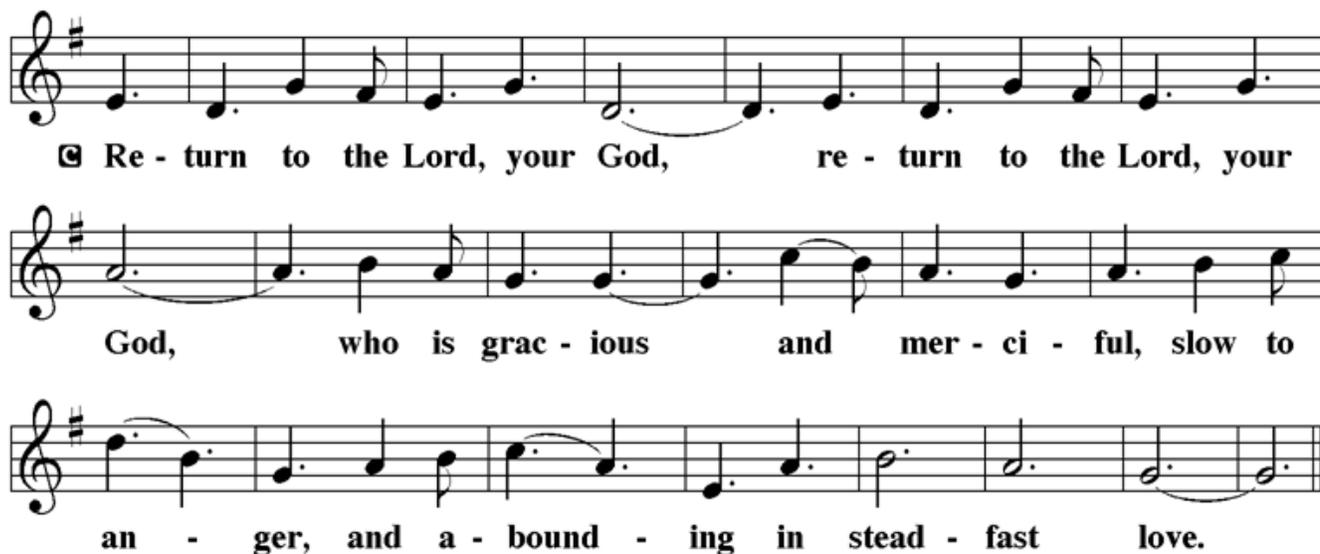
5: 20<sup>b</sup>We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 6:1As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. 2For he says, "At an acceptable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

L Holy Wisdom, Holy Word.

C Thanks be to God.

*We stand.*

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Re - turn to the Lord, your God, re - turn to the Lord, your  
God, who is grac - ious and mer - ci - ful, slow to  
an - ger, 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, the sixth chapter.

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

Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup>so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>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. <sup>16</sup>And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. <sup>17</sup>But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>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.

<sup>19</sup>Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; <sup>20</sup>but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

P The gospel of the Lord.

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

*We sit.*

## **ASH WEDNESDAY MEDITATION**

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

*We stand.*

1 O Lord, through - out these for - ty days you  
 2 You strove with Sa - tan, and you won; your  
 3 Though parched and hun - gry, yet you prayed and  
 4 Be with us through this sea - son, Lord, and

prayed and kept the fast; in - spire re - pen - tance  
 faith - ful - ness en - dured; lend us your nerve, your  
 fixed your mind a - bove; so teach us to de -  
 all our earth - ly days, that when the fi - nal

for our sin, and free us from our past.  
 skill and trust in God's e - ter - nal word.  
 ny our - selves that we may know God's love.  
 Eas - ter dawns, we join in heav - en's praise.

Text: based on Claudia F. Hermann, 1838-1898; para. Gilbert E. Doan Jr., b. 1930  
 Music: CONSOLATION, A. Davison, *Kentucky Harmony*, 1816; arr. Theodore A. Beck, 1929-2003  
 Text © 1998 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress.  
 Arr. © 1969 Concordia Publishing House.

# GREAT LITANY OF CONFESSION

Leader	Assembly
Lord, have mer - cy.	Lord, have mer - cy.
Christ, have mer - cy.	Christ, have mer - cy.
Lord, have mer - cy.	Lord, have mer - cy.
O Christ, hear us.	In mer - cy hear us.

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.

God, the Father in God, the Son, redeemer of the God, the Holy Holy Trinity, one	heaven, world, Spirit, God,	have mer - cy have mer - cy have mer - cy have mer - cy	on us. on us. on us. on us.
Be grac - ious to us.	Spare us, good Lord.		
Be grac - ious to us.	Spare us, good Lord.		

A Our past unfaithfulness,  
the pride, envy, hypocrisy, and apathy that have infected our lives,

**C we confess to you.**

A Our self-indulgent appetites and ways,  
and our exploitation of other people,

**C we confess to you.**

A Our negligence in prayer and worship,  
and our failure to share the faith that is in us,

**C we confess to you.**

A Our neglect of human need and suffering,  
and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,

**C we confess to you.**

A Our false judgments,  
our uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors,  
and our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us,

**C we confess to you.**

A Our waste and pollution of your creation,  
and our lack of concern for those who come after us,

**C we confess to you.**

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

**C We implore you to hear us, good Lord.**



## **IMPOSITION OF ASHES**

*Those wishing to receive the imposition of ashes may kneel or stand around the altar as the choir sings.*

ELW 326 *Bless Now, O God, the Journey*

*When those who desire ashes have received them and have returned to their places:*

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.

Text: Sylvia G. Dunstan, 1955-1993  
Music: LLANGLOFFAN, Welsh tune, 19th cent.  
Text © 1991 GIA Publications, Inc. GIA Music, Inc. Chicago, IL 60630 www.gia.com 800.447.3558

*We stand.*

A Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation,

**C that we may show forth your glory in the world.**

A 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.**



+ MEAL +

## **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.**

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-er and  
might, heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry.  
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. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

The image shows a musical score for the hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy". It consists of five staves of music in a single system, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff begins with a common time signature 'C'. The music is written in a simple, melodic style with various note values including quarter, eighth, and half notes, and rests. The lyrics are: "Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might, heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry. 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. Ho - san - na in the high - est."

## WORDS OF INSTITUTION

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.

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

P Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

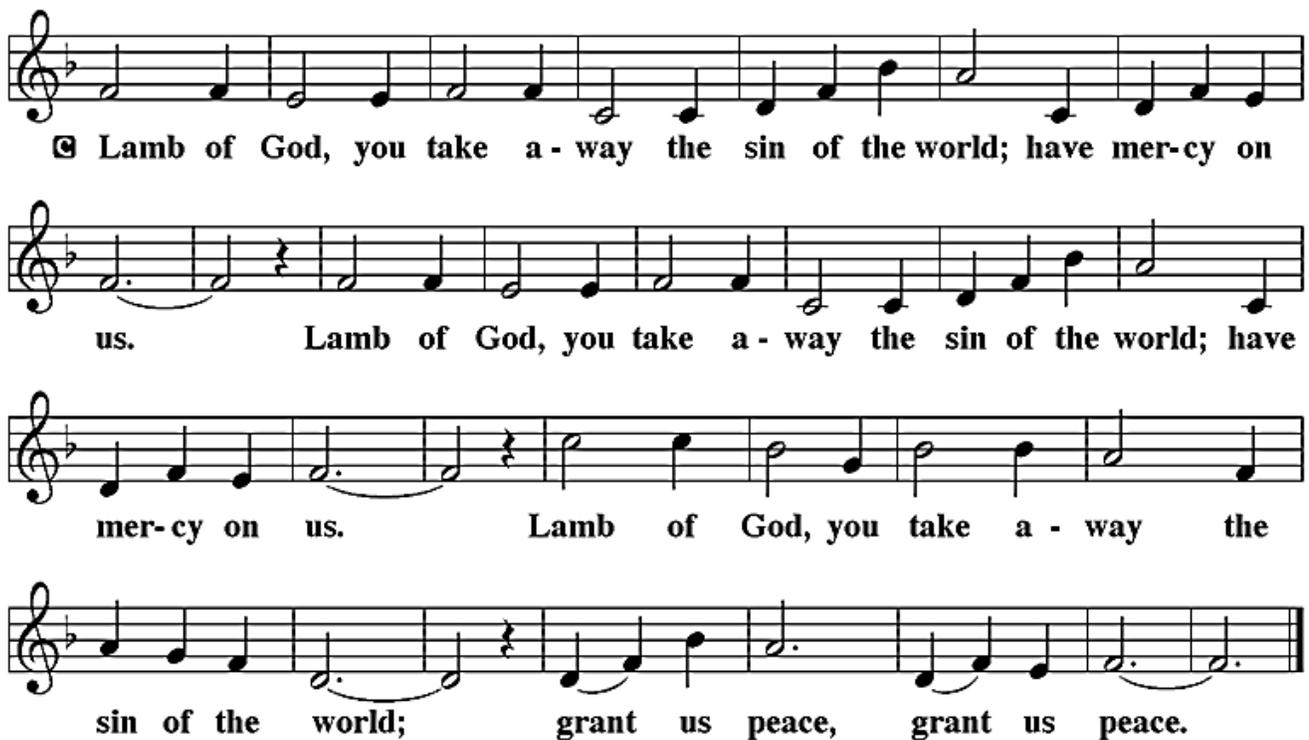
C Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

## INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P Bread for the journey. A feast for hungry hearts. Come!

*We sit.*

## 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, grant us peace.

## DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

Lutherans believe that Jesus Christ truly is present for us in the bread and wine of Holy Communion. All are invited to receive the sacrament. Those not wishing to commune are welcomed to the altar to receive a blessing (to indicate this, please cross your arms over your chest). If you are not able to come forward, please inform the ushers and the meal will be brought to you.

*As the ushers direct you, come to the altar using the side aisles and return to your seat via the central aisle. The assisting ministers offer both wine and grape juice from pouring cups; take a communion glass from the tray as you approach the rail. Leave the empty glass on the lower level of the rail. Wheat-free wafers are available— simply tell the pastor.*

**COMMUNION HYMN**      **469**    *By Your Hand You Feed Your People*

**793**    *Be Thou My Vision*

## PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

**A**    Let us pray.

Generous Host, you have shared your feast with us and made us new. Send us now to set tables of love and grace in our communities, that your liberating love might nourish the world into freedom, in the name of the crucified one, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**C**    **Amen.**

*We stand.*

**+ SENDING +**

**CLOSING HYMN**      **325**    *I Want Jesus to Walk with Me (Please see next page)*

## BLESSING

**P**    God our tender parent, God the crucified one, God the reconciling Spirit, ✠ bless you now and forever.

**C**    **Amen.**

**+++**

*\*Please leave contribution to God's glory in the narthex.\**

1 I want Je - sus to walk with me; walk with  
 2 In my tri - als, Lord, walk with me; walk with  
 3 When I'm in trou - ble, Lord, walk with me;

me: I want Je - sus to walk with me; walk with  
 in my tri - als, Lord, walk with me; walk with  
 when I'm in trou - ble, Lord, walk with me;

me: all a - long my pil - grim jour - ney,  
 when my heart is al - most break - ing,  
 when my head is bowed in sor - row,

Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.  
 Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me. walk with me.  
 Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.

Text: African American spiritual  
 Music: SOJOURNER, African American spiritual, arr. hymnal version  
 Arr. © 2006 Augsburg Fortress.

✝ *All are invited to remain seated for silent prayer and meditation.* ✝

Serving tonight:

Pastor Tom Holdcraft, Presiding

Katharine Gossman, Music Director

Colleen Holdcraft, Assisting Minister

Jen Dritt, Cup Minister

Monty Mortensen, Lector

Audrey Post and Sandy Lamb-Daniels, Tech Team