



## Ash Wednesday Community Service Trinity Episcopal Church February 18, 2026

### **WELCOME** *(Rev. Bill Rinderknecht)*

Welcome to Trinity Episcopal Church! The offering collected from this evening's service is being taken for The Friends of the Homeless of Tuscarawas County ([www.fohtusc.org](http://www.fohtusc.org)). Please consider donating toward their wonderful work in the community.

### **OPENING PRAYER** *(Rev. Bill Rinderknecht)*

God of our salvation, we long to be reconciled to you. Help us to clear away any obstacle that prevents us from accepting the grace of Christ. No matter what we face in this life, increase in us knowledge and patience, kindness and holiness of spirit, genuine love and truthful speech, so that, by the power of God at work in us, we may live even as we are dying and rejoice even in our sorrows. Though it may seem like we have nothing, if we are reconciled to you, we possess everything, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**People respond: Amen.**

### **PRELUDE** "My Faith Looks Up to Thee" -- Gerig

### **\*CALL TO WORSHIP** *(Rev. Ben Lippert) (Please stand, if able)*

Leader: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

**People: Wash me through and through from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin.**

Leader: For I know my offenses, and my sin is ever before me.

**People: 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.**

Leader: Indeed, I was born steeped in wickedness, a sinner from my mother's womb.

**People: Indeed, you delight in truth deep within me, and would have me know wisdom deep within.**

Leader: Remove my sins with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be purer than snow.

**People: Let me hear joy and gladness; that the body you have broken may rejoice.**

Leader: Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my wickedness.

**People: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.**

Leader: Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

**People: Restore to me the joy of your salvation and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.**

Leader: Let me teach your ways to offenders, and sinners shall be restored to you.

**People: Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness.**

Leader: O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare your praise.

**People: For you take no delight in sacrifice, or I would give it.**

Leader: You are not pleased with burnt offering.

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

Leader: Favor Zion with your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem.

**People: Then you will delight in the appointed sacrifices, in burnt and whole offerings; then young bulls shall be offered upon your altar.**

### **\*HYMN: # 574** "Before Thy Throne, O God, We Kneel" *(Please stand, if able)*

## **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION** *(Rev. Rob Eller)*

Leader: Compassionate God, since faith comes by hearing your Word, help us to listen to the scriptures with all attention, that they may criticize our faults, confirm our faith, and console our spirits, through Jesus Christ the Word made flesh.

**People respond: Amen.**

## **READING OF THE SCRIPTURES**

**Joel 2:1-17** *(Rev. Bill Rinderknecht)*

2 <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>3</sup> Fire devours in front of them, and behind them a flame burns. Before them the land is like the garden of Eden, but after them a desolate wilderness, and nothing escapes them. <sup>4</sup> They have the appearance of horses, and like war-horses they charge. <sup>5</sup> As with the rumbling of chariots, they leap on the tops of the mountains, like the crackling of a flame of fire devouring the stubble, like a powerful army drawn up for battle. <sup>6</sup> Before them peoples are in anguish, all faces grow pale. <sup>7</sup> Like warriors they charge, like soldiers they scale the wall. Each keeps to its own course, they do not swerve from their paths. <sup>8</sup> They do not jostle one another, each keeps to its own track; they burst through the weapons and are not halted. <sup>9</sup> They leap upon the city, they run upon the walls; they climb up into the houses, they enter through the windows like a thief. <sup>10</sup> The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. <sup>11</sup> The Lord utters his voice at the head of his army; how vast is his host! Numberless are those who obey his command. Truly the day of the Lord is great; terrible indeed—who can endure it? <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?’”

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

**2 Corinthians 5:16—6:10** *(Rev. Rob Eller)*

5 <sup>16</sup> From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. <sup>17</sup> So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup> that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. <sup>20</sup> So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 6 <sup>1</sup> As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. <sup>2</sup> For 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! <sup>3</sup> We are putting no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, <sup>4</sup> but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup> beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; <sup>6</sup> by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, <sup>7</sup> truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; <sup>8</sup> in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; <sup>9</sup> as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; <sup>10</sup> as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

**Matthew 6:1-21** (*Rev. Joe Svancara*)

6<sup>1</sup> “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>7</sup> When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. <sup>8</sup> Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. <sup>9</sup> Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. <sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread. <sup>12</sup> And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup> And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. <sup>14</sup> For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; <sup>15</sup> but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. <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.”

Leader: The Gospel of the Lord.

**People: Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

**SERMON** (*Rev. Joe Svancara*)

Many might mistake the season of Lent for a season of gloom and doom, despair and castigation, guilt and shame. We come into service, confess our sins, grudgingly accept our mortality, and anticipate when all of this puts Jesus up on the cross. While it might be easy for us to wring our hands and agonize over our mistakes putting Jesus on the cross, what we must remember is that Jesus has been accepting of this journey all along. Time after time he mentioned this fate, this destination, to the disciples who were not truly understanding of this yet. They thought he would be killed as another wannabe Messiah who failed to deliver Israel from imperial rule and corrupt religion, but the real result is what changed the hearts of all who watched this unfold. What we ultimately await is not a defeat but a victory, and we live in the hindsight of history and divine salvation. So what can this season mean, how do we grow, without allowing guilt or shame to cloud the process?

The prophet Joel wrote to the people of Israel in a time when they thought natural disaster was a sign of the LORD's displeasure, of judgment and doom, and how the 'day of the LORD' would be coming for them all. Regardless of the locust plague being literal or metaphorical, Joel was helping the people to understand what the LORD was allowing to happen in that process. The true focus was on the 'day of the LORD', a day of revelation and illumination. When the LORD would pull back the curtain on the universe, on the world, and reveal all the true motivations, powers, and mentalities among all. To gather together all who were in true need of the LORD, truly cried out for mercy and understanding, and be satisfied from his hand. The ones who were in danger of this judgement were not those who simply made mistakes, but who purposefully snubbed the covenant, the holy instruction within law and prophet, and decided to walk away from life itself. The Hebrew passage itself has been an assurance for millennia for the

LORD's people, that restoration and hope are possible because the LORD makes it possible. One does not have to scratch and beg, only realize what life is missing and who truly provides.

That is the message of Jesus as he teaches the disciples within the Sermon on the Mount, telling about what separates a true worshipper of the LORD from a pretender. He points out the Pharisees, priests, scribes, and all who were part of the 'religious aristocracy' of the day. They acted the way they did based upon human expectation. They were seen as priests, learned, obedient to the written law, and were almost chained to those perceptions and expectations. Jesus makes it clear that one's devotion is to the LORD only and not any person; to pray, tithe, and fast in secret is a sign of where your validation and expectation comes from. In that instance one does not do it for earthly reward and validation, but because somewhere deep inside they yearn for something the world cannot provide. And responds to the divine rule ever-present in asking for help.

St. Paul clarifies this state-of-life, this mentality, of the seeking soul by describing his own present circumstances and those of the other teachers of the world. That they do what they do not for money, celebrity, status, power, or anything deemed 'respectable' by the world- proof that this is worthy. Christ had already deemed himself worthy by first calling them, sometimes from truly deplorable states of life and mind! And they simply speak about what they have witnessed, what they have learned, and what is necessary to not just live but live the way the LORD designed since the very beginning. Those teachers no longer see Christ from a human point of view or expectation, the crucifixion and resurrection had long ago done away with that, now it was realizing the effects and changes that 'day of the LORD' had brought. What Christ being present now allows them to do and become, and how to open that way for others to realize as well.

Lent is not about purposefully depriving ourselves because the LORD wants our suffering, not feeling guilty over something we cannot change now, but realizing the impact that Jesus has upon our lives and leading us into. The LORD does not desire anyone to die, to walk away from life, but to embrace and become who they were always meant to be. The LORD makes no mistakes and has made each and every one of us the way we are, set us in such a time and place as we find ourselves, to realize how we might tend this small patch of the earthly garden in a way that benefits all. The LORD has given Jesus so we might grow into that potential, learn to choose what is better, and mature so we might be the Christ others need to discover that truth for themselves. That does not happen wishing we never sinned and were merely human. It is a measure of the rescuing power of divine love, and the ashes a sign to all who see us wearing them that this is possible for them also.

**\*THE APOSTLES' CREED** *(Rev. Bill Rinderknecht) (Please stand, if able)*

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

**\*HYMN: # 142** "Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days" *(Please stand, if able)*

**INVITATION TO OBSERVE A HOLY LENT** *(Rev. Ben Lippert)*

Beloved people of God: Every year at the time of the Christian Passover we celebrate our redemption through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Lent is a time to prepare for this celebration and to renew our life in the paschal mystery. We begin this holy season by acknowledging our need for repentance, and for the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We begin our journey to Easter with the sign of ashes. This ancient sign speaks of the frailty and uncertainty of human life, and marks the penitence of this community.

We invite you, therefore, in the name of Christ, to observe a holy Lent by self-examination and penitence, by prayer and fasting, by works of love, and by meditating on God's word. Now let us bow before God, our creator and redeemer, and confess our sin.

**LITANY OF PENITENCE** *(Rev. Bob Eller)*

Leader: Holy and merciful God, we confess to you and to one another, and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth, that we have sinned by our own fault in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. 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.

**People: Have mercy on us, O God.** *Moment of Silence.*

Leader: We have not listened 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.

**People: Have mercy on us, O God.** *Moment of Silence.*

Leader: We confess to you, O God, all our past unfaithfulness. For the pride, hypocrisy, and impatience in our lives.

**People: Have mercy on us, O God.** *Moment of Silence.*

Leader: For our self-indulgent appetites and ways and our exploitation of other people.

**People: Have mercy on us, O God.** *Moment of Silence.*

Leader: For our anger at our own frustration and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves.

**People: Have mercy on us, O God.** *Moment of Silence.*

Leader: For our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts, and our dishonesty in daily life and work.

**People: Have mercy on us, O God.** *Moment of Silence.*

Leader: For our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to commend the faith that is in us and others.

**People: Have mercy on us, O God.** *Moment of Silence.*

Leader: Accept our repentance, O God, for the wrongs we have done. For our neglect of human need and suffering and our indifference to injustice and cruelty.

**People: Have mercy on us, O God.** *Moment of Silence.*

Leader: For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and for our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us.

**People: Have mercy on us, O God.** *Moment of Silence.*

Leader: For our waste and pollution of your creation and our lack of concern for those who come after us.

**People: Have mercy on us, O God.** *Moment of Silence.*

Leader: Restore us, O God of our salvation, and show us your steadfast love.

**People: Have mercy on us, O God.** *Moment of Silence.*

**ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS** *(Rev. Bill Rinderknecht)*

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

**BLESSING OF THE ASHES** *(Rev. Ben Lippert)*

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. **Amen.**

**IMPOSITION OF ASHES** *(All clergy) Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return.*

**PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING** *(Rev. Joe Svancara)*

We bow our heads before you, O God, aware of our sinfulness and our shortcomings, but also aware of the gift of salvation you place within our reach. Remembering our baptism, the watermark of the cross upon us, we also receive this ashen cross upon our foreheads -- another sign that in life and in death, we belong to you. Guide us all in this Lenten season closer to your loving heart, O Christ. **Amen.**

**\*HYMN # 467** "Sing My Soul, His Wondrous Love" *(Please stand, if able)*

**\*BENEDICTION** *(Rev. Joe Svancara)*

Practice your piety not before others, but before God. Give generously, but quietly; pray constantly, but confidentially; fast with gratitude to God: and store up that which is in your heart; for it cannot be taken from you. The blessing of God, who hears you when you call; the grace of Christ, who reconciles you; the power of the Holy Spirit, who sustains you; remain with you in these Lenten days and for all your days, forevermore. **Amen.**

**POSTLUDE** "Out of the Depths I cry to Thee" -- Kuhnau



**A SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL THE CHURCHES WHO  
PARTICIPATED IN TODAY'S SERVICE:**

The Rev. Joe Svancara, First Presbyterian Church, New Philadelphia  
The Rev. Rob Eller, Emmanuel Lutheran Church, New Philadelphia  
The Rev. Ben Lippert, Schoenbrunn Moravian Community Church, New Philadelphia  
The Rev. Bill Rinderknecht, Trinity Episcopal Church, New Philadelphia  
Paula Fritz, Trinity Episcopal Church, Organist