

Immanuel Lutheran Church

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Ash Wednesday February 18, 2026



AS WE GATHER

Remember That You Are Dust

As we begin another Lenten journey to the cross and to the empty tomb, we will pass the familiar route of Wednesday services, special devotions, and sacrificial acts. It all begins here with ashes, an old and biblical sign of repentance. From the Old Testament to the present, ashes have been an outward sign of inward contrition. While not sacramental, they are not mere ritual either; they bear witness to the internal sorrow over sin with which we come while asking for and expecting forgiveness from God. The mood of this service is somber as we reflect upon the shape of our lives of faith and recall the discipline or piety that accompanies that faith. We are dust and to dust we shall return but even in dust there is hope. The ashes are marked in the sign of that hope: a cross where Christ bore the weight of our sin so that we might be forgiven and restored to Himself.

PRELUDE "O Lord, throughout These Forty Days," arranged by Mark Sedio

WELCOME

✠ **PREPARATION** ✠

HYMN "Dust to Dust"

Dust to dust, my whole life framed—
Earth to earth, my flesh reclaimed—
Till the Lord who has no bound
Breathed His last, lay in the ground.

Dust to dust, all that I know—
Grace on grace, God will bestow—
Life incarnate died for me,
Rose again to set me free.

Dust to dust: my sin and shame—
Buried in my Savior's name.
When He comes, I will arise,
See my Lord with my own eyes.

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Please rise as you are able.

THE LITANY

Pastor: Dear brothers and sisters of our Lord Jesus Christ, on this day the church begins a holy season of prayerful and penitential reflection. Our attention is especially directed to the holy sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. From ancient times the season of Lent has been kept as a time of special devotion, self-denial, and humble repentance born of a faithful heart that dwells confidently on His Word and draws from it life and hope. Let us pray that our dear Father in heaven, for the sake of His beloved Son and in the power of His Holy Spirit, might richly bless this Lententide for us so that we may come to Easter with glad hearts and keep the feast in sincerity and truth.

Pastor: O Lord,

People: **have mercy.**

Pastor: O Christ,

People: **have mercy.**

Pastor: O Lord,

People: **have mercy.**

Pastor: O Christ,

People: hear us.

Pastor: God the Father, in heaven,

People: have mercy.

Pastor: God the Son, Redeemer of the world,

People: have mercy.

Pastor: God the Holy Spirit,

People: have mercy.

Pastor: Be gracious to us.

People: Spare us, good Lord.

Pastor: Be gracious to us.

People: Help us, good Lord.

Pastor: By the mystery of Your holy incarnation; by Your holy nativity; by Your Baptism, fasting, and temptation; by Your agony and bloody sweat; by Your cross and Passion; by Your precious death and burial; by Your glorious resurrection and ascension; and by the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter:

People: Help us, good Lord.

Pastor: In all time of our tribulation; in all time of our prosperity; in the hour of death; and in the day of judgment:

People: Help us, good Lord.

Pastor: We poor sinners implore You

People: to hear us, O Lord.

Pastor: To prosper the preaching of Your Word; to bless our prayer and meditation; to strengthen and preserve us in the true faith; to give heart to our sorrow and strength to our repentance:

People: We implore You to hear us, good Lord.

Pastor: To draw all to Yourself; to bless those who are instructed in the faith; to watch over and console the poor, the sick, the distressed, the lonely, the forsaken, the abandoned, and all who stand in need of our prayers; to give abundant blessing to all works of mercy; and to have mercy on us all:

People: We implore You to hear us, good Lord.

Pastor: To turn our hearts to You; to turn the hearts of our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers; and graciously to hear our prayers:

People: We implore You to hear us, good Lord.

Pastor: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,

People: we implore You to hear us.

Pastor: O God, You desire not the death of sinners but rather that they turn from their wickedness and live. We implore You to have compassion on the frailty of our mortal nature, for we acknowledge that we are dust and to dust we shall return. Mercifully pardon our sins that we may obtain the promises You have laid up for those who are repentant; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES *"Do Not Despair, O Little Flock," arranged by John A. Behnke*

Those who desire to receive ashes come forward at this time and stand before the pastor. The pastor applies ashes in the shape of a cross on the forehead while saying to each person, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

After the distribution of ashes, please stand as you are able.

Pastor: Accomplish in us, O God, the work of Your salvation,

People: that we may show forth Your glory in the world.

Pastor: By the cross and Passion of Your Son, our Lord,

People: Bring us with all Your saints to the joy of His resurrection.

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

People: Amen.

SALUTATION

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Pastor: Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, You despise nothing You have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and contrite hearts that lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness we may receive from You full pardon and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

Please be seated.

OLD TESTAMENT READING Joel 2:12-19

("Return to the Lord, your God, for He is gracious and merciful.")

¹² "Yet even now," declares the Lord,
"return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
¹³ and rend your hearts and not your garments."
Return to the Lord your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;
and he relents over disaster.
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 elders;
gather the children,
even nursing infants.
Let the bridegroom leave his room,
and the bride her chamber.
¹⁷ Between the vestibule and the altar
let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep
and say, "Spare your people, O Lord,
and make not your heritage a reproach,
a byword among the nations.
Why should they say among the peoples,
'Where is their God?'"
¹⁸ Then the Lord became jealous for his land
and had pity on his people.
¹⁹ The Lord answered and said to his people,
"Behold, I am sending to you
grain, wine, and oil,
and you will be satisfied;
and I will no more make you
a reproach among the nations.

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

EPISTLE 2 Corinthians 5:20b–6:10

(Be reconciled to God for now is the day of salvation.)

²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ 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 Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² For he says,

“In a favorable time I listened to you,
and in a day of salvation I have helped you.”

Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

³ We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴ but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵ beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶ by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; ⁷ by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸ through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹ as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰ as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Please stand as you are able.

VERSE Joel 2:13b

**Return to the Lord, your God, for He is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.**

HOLY GOSPEL Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

(Let your piety be genuine and do not act like the hypocrites.)

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew the 6th chapter.

People: Glory to You, O Lord.

6 “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

²“Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁵“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But when 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 when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

¹⁹“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

People: **Praise to You, O Christ.**

THE APOSTLE’S CREED *Found on the last page of your pew hymnal.*

Please be seated.

HYMN “Savior, When in Dust to Thee” #419

SERMON Pr. Mark Croucher

OFFERING AND OFFERTORY

“The Glory of These Forty Days,” arranged by Mark Sedio

Please stand as you are able.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Pastor: We give You thanks and praise, O Lord, holy God, almighty Father, for Your goodness in creating all things and for Your mercy, which bore with us sinners until You sent forth Your Son in flesh to accomplish our salvation by His death and resurrection. Keep us in this holy faith and fear all our days. Lord, in Your mercy,

People: **hear our prayer.**

Pastor: We give You thanks and praise, O mighty and everlasting God, for establishing Your church, for calling us into her life through Baptism, and keeping us as Your own possession through the grace of absolution and the food of Your Son's Table. Give us ears to hear and hearts to heed His voice ever calling us back to You that we may live holy, upright, and godly lives now until we dwell in Your presence on high. Lord, in Your mercy,

People: **hear our prayer.**

Pastor: We give You thanks, O Lord, God of our fathers, for bearing with us in our trials and in our weakness, in our afflictions and in the hour of our death. Hear us on behalf of all for whom we pray, that You may be their strength, their healing, their comfort, and their peace. Lord, in Your mercy,

People: **hear our prayer.**

Pastor: We give You thanks, O Lord God, heavenly Father, for looking upon us with compassion and for not counting our sins against us because of Christ alone. Help us to earnestly wear the marks of our repentance and even more earnestly still to believe in Your gift of salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: **Amen.**

BENEDICTION

Pastor: The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

People: **Amen.**

HYMN "O Lord, throughout These Forty Days" #418

POSTLUDE