



# Worship Notes

**Ash Wednesday, February 17, 2021**

## FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Dear Friends and Family,

On this day, we typically gather for a worship service with the imposition of ashes. The ashes are a symbol of the dust we were created from, the very same dust we shall return to. This year, members have received pieces of black cloth to pin on their shirt. You may wear this all day or for just the time you watch the worship video. While merely symbolic, it is the physical touch that connects us with a truth about God and our relationship with God. When we have ashes imposed on us, it is in the shape of a cross, which reminds us of our resurrection hope in Christ. Another symbol, but another powerful touch that reminds us of God and our relationship with God.

*Thank you for your generous support of our ministry*

Your continued giving makes an impact in our community as our church continues to be a beacon of hope.

Mailing your donations to the church office and maintaining your automatic giving helps support ministries across the nation and around the world.



*Please keep in prayer the following:*



Bradley Anderson, Josie Blake, Bev Coulter, Nancy Dowell, John Ellison, Linda Ellison, Dave Erlandson, Jim Erlandson, Brad and Jodie Haist, Cassie Jern & Family, Delores Johnson, Graham Johnson, Bob Kerschke, Ila Roseberry, Norman Worthington, Evelyn Volz, Darrell Thirtyacre, Donna Larson, Beckie Bean, Joy Johnson, Pat Root, Diane Bradley, Anna Lovdahl, Kim Anderson, Matthew Council, Rose Youngquist, Kathi Cruce, Rob Kerschke, Brendan Kerschke

*Please let the church office know any updates that are needed to our prayer list.*

### T-shirt and Canvas Tote Orders

Did you get your order form for a T-shirt and Canvas Tote bag? Becky Terpening has made these available for order. She designed the logo and is prepared to give \$5 of every order to the church as a fundraiser.

Take a moment to order your T-shirt now.

We will choose a day to wear our new Lutheran church t-shirts when the weather is a bit warmer and we can comfortably attend worship wearing our First Lutheran swag.

### This week in worship



We are beginning a Lenten sermon series on the concepts of sin and redemption. In our Ash Wednesday sermon, these terms will be defined and connected with our sense of mortality. We will ponder what must die that we can live. We will rejoice that sin does not have the final say over our lives. We will give thanks that redemption does not depend on us.

Worship includes an extended moment of confession as well as a special litany of sorrows and sins.

You are invited to begin your Lenten journey to the cross with this special online worship service to-night.

## Black History Month

The movie *Harriet* is a biography about Harriet Tubman, the famed Underground Railroad conductor who led hundreds to freedom, and even led a Union incursion to free several hundred slaves in South Carolina during the Civil War.

Harriet is an inspiring woman for what she endured and how she conducted her life. The movie is available now on DVD and is easy to follow, without having to know a whole lot of names or history. The acting is fantastic. The themes expressed in their historical context will feel as real as if they are themes we still deal with today, which we do.

Take a moment to watch *Harriet* with your family. If you need to borrow a copy, let me know. I will gladly lend you mine. This will inspire lots of powerful conversation in your home. It certainly did in my home.

## Resuming In-Person Worship

It is true our church never closed during the pandemic. It is also true that for most of the past year we were unable to worship together on Sunday mornings. This weekend, we once again resume in-person worship at 9 AM.

We will be modifying slightly our plan for being together from last summer and fall. We learned from our previous experience and as the pandemic continues to wind down, we will gradually move toward a more complete and familiar worship service.

Our patience as we have waited for that moment is to be commended. It is not easy to wait. But we are working together as a community to make the most of this time. Thank you for all your support as we journey together to the end of the pandemic era.

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*Blessings* For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Romans 6:5

Ash Wednesday worship opens with an extended confession. As Christians who have a Lutheran piety, our confession ritual is often a brief paragraph as we enter Sunday worship services. It is but a small hurdle to get through so we can really open with a favorite hymn and move quickly to more favorite parts of worship, like the sermon. But confession is firmly rooted in our Lutheran tradition. Martin Luther wanted desperately to define Confession as a sacrament, but was unable to find Jesus commanding it with an earthly element attached to it, as he found with baptism and communion. But for Luther, confession was a powerful, daily ritual. It draws the faithful back into the baptismal promise, connecting us again to the hope we have in the resurrection.

Today, we tend to think of Ash Wednesday as our big day of confession. So the ritual is drawn out. Sins are named in more specific ways. How we sin is identified powerfully. But again, this is just one day. And tomorrow, the ashes would be washed away, the pieces of cloth for this year are filed in a keepsake box or taped inside our Bibles, and we carry on.

Ash Wednesday need not be a once a year experience. Ash Wednesday teaches us something important about confession. It offers us a way to daily engage our confession. Sure, we do not need an intermediary to hear our confession. Sure, we do not need an intermediary to pronounce our forgiveness. But opening our hearts to let Christ hear our specific sins is cleansing. Opening our hearts to let Christ wash us in forgiveness is cleansing. And sometimes we do need another person to stand in that place, so the words of Christ comforting our broken souls and mending our messed up ways are more real.

Ash Wednesday then is the reminder that we can all be that intermediary. We can be the one who hears the confession of another, and who proclaims the good news of Christ—that sins are forgiven. Who knows who needs to hear these words: You are forgiven! You may need to hear them yourself. You may need someone to say those very words to you. There may well be someone craving to hear you say those words.

This day is not just about private piety practices. Ash Wednesday is the reminder of the power that comes when we confess to one another and hear each other proclaim the good news, and it is the permission to freely share that good news with all who need to hear it.

In Peace,

Pastor Jamie