

Welcome!

O Come, let us worship! (Ps. 95:6)

Wednesday, February 14, 2024

Ash Wednesday



St. James Lutheran Church

1213 U. S. Route 22

Phillipsburg, NJ 08865

Vice Pastor: Rev. Scott Schantzenbach

908.454.2864

www.strawchurch.org

strawchurch@gmail.com

Welcome to St. James!

We are so glad you are here! The people of God have been worshipping in this place since 1750. Much has changed since then, but God has not changed. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. He is our anchor in every storm, a light to our feet, our savior and our friend. Jesus rejoices that each of us has come to His house!

Introduction to the day

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.

If you are visiting today: Thank you for joining us today! If you have any questions, please ask! We ask that you sign our guest book or complete a hospitality card found in the pew racks. If you would like more information about us, please don't hesitate to contact the church office.

Vice-Pastor Contact Information:

Pastor Scott Schantzenbach
908-892-8299
pastorschantzenbach@gmail.com

*Presiding
Liturgist
Musicians*

*Rev. Scott Schantzenbach
Dan Gulick
Dave Miller*

Gathering the People

Even in an age when a tweet or an online post can be shared instantly with a whole network of people there are still some moments so important that everyone is asked to come together in person. We are gathered in times of excitement or crisis, for a wedding or a funeral, by friends who have big news to share or need a shoulder to cry on.

So, as the church begins the season of Lent this Ash Wednesday, we borrow the words of the prophet Joel and say, “gather the people” (Joel 2:16). We are called together to walk through this season at one another’s sides, offering one another encouragement, guidance, and support. In this walk we seek renewal in our baptismal identity, a task we do together, not alone.

Joel speaks of a “solemn assembly” that comes together “with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning” (Joel 2:12). It is true that Lent calls us together to face some hard realities about ourselves and our lives. We begin by marking one another with crosses made of ash and reminding one another of our failings and our frailty. But this return is motivated by a God who is “gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love” (Joel 2:13).

That steadfast love draws us from this solemn gathering of repentance into a walk toward the renewal of Easter when we will celebrate the good news and encouragement of the resurrection. In many places, at the Easter Vigil, assemblies will celebrate our call into Christian community through baptisms or the remembrance of baptism. The cross of ash will be replaced with a cross of water made on foreheads to celebrate the fulfillment of God’s promise of mercy through Christ.

GATHERING

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

PSALM: Psalm 51:1-18

1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your lovingkindness; in your great compassion blot out my offenses. 2

Wash me through and through from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is
ever before me.

4

Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.

5 And so you are justified when you speak and upright in
your judgment.

6

Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth, a sinner from my mother's womb.

7 For behold, you look for truth deep within me, and will make me
understand wisdom secretly.

8

Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure; wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.

9 Make me hear of joy and gladness, that the body you have
broken may rejoice.

10

Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

11 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right
spirit within me.

12

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

13 Give me the joy of your saving help again and sustain me with
your bountiful Spirit.

14

I shall teach your ways to the wicked, and sinners shall return to you.

15 Deliver me from death, O God, and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness,
O God of my salvation. 16

Open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

17 Had you desired it, I would have offered sacrifice, but you take no delight
in burnt-offerings.

18

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

GREETING

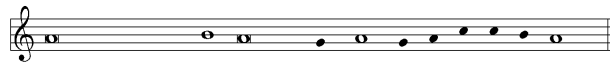
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also, with you.

KYRIE



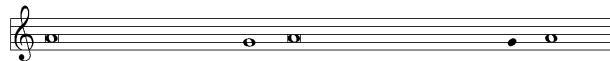
☩ In peace, let us pray to the Lord. ☩ **Lord, have mer - cy.**



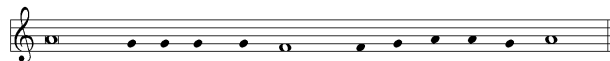
☩ For the peace from a - bove, and for our sal - vation, let us pray to the Lord.



☩ **Lord, have mer - cy.**



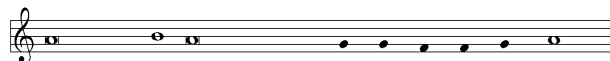
☩ For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God,



and for the u - ni - ty of all, let us pray to the Lord.



☩ **Lord, have mer - cy.**



☩ For this holy house, and for all who offer here their wor - ship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord. ☩ **Lord, have mer - cy.**



☩ Help, save, comfort, and de - fend us, gra - cious Lord. ☩ **A - men**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

And also, with you.

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.

Amen.

† WORD †

God speaks to us through scripture, sermon and song.

**(The congregation may be seated.) **

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.

¹Blow 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—
²a 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.

¹²Yet even now, says the LORD,
 return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
¹³rend 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.

¹⁴Who 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?

¹⁵Blow the trumpet in Zion;
sanctify a fast;

call a solemn assembly;

¹⁶gather 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.

¹⁷Between 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?'"

Thanks be to God.

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.

^{20b}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.

^{6:1}As 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.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL: **(please stand if able) **

The Holy Gospel according to **Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21**

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said to the disciples: ¹“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.

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. ³But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so 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. ⁶But 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 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. ¹⁷But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so 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; ²⁰but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

**(The congregation may be seated.) **

SERMON

Silence for reflection may follow

APOSTLES' CREED **(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 into hell. 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.

INVITATION TO LENT

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

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

Silence is kept for reflection and self-examination. Most holy and merciful God,

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.

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.

Have mercy on us, O God.

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.

Have mercy on us, O God.

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

Have mercy on us, O God.

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

Have mercy on us, O God.

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

Have mercy on us, O God.

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

Have mercy on us, O God.

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

Have mercy on us, O God.

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

Have mercy on us, O God.

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

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

The Imposition of Ashes – Those wishing to take part are encouraged to come to the head of the aisle at this time. A musical interlude may be played. When all have received their ashes, the presiding minister continues:

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

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

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, does not desire the death of sinners but rather that they may turn from their wickedness and live. Therefore we implore him to grant us true repentance and his Holy Spirit, that those things may please him which we do on this day, that the rest of our life may be pure and holy, and that at the last we may come to his eternal joy; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

THE PRAYERS

Trusting in God's promise to reconcile all things, let us pray for the church, the well-being of creation, and a world in need.

A brief silence.

You call us to return to you, steadfast God. Renew a right spirit within the church and cleanse the hearts of your people. Strengthen those who proclaim your gospel in word and deed. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You sustain your creation, generous God. Supply all that is needful for life to flourish. Protect endangered species and fragile habitats. Teach us to live lightly upon the earth and to honor it as our home. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You seek justice and peace, righteous God. Rebuild cities and homelands devastated by war. Provide welcome, help, and safety to refugees. Prosper negotiations that lead to lasting peace among the nations. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You care for all people, loving God. Heal any who are scarred by violence, addiction, or trauma of any kind. Comfort those who grieve and bring relief to any in pain. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You gather this assembly, abiding God. Unite us in serving our neighbors and working for justice. We pray for caregivers and people who are hospitalized, in treatment, or recovering from illness Jim, Barbara, Pr. Brndjar, Shirley J and our homebound; Beverly, Helen, Marcia, Alayna & Elsie. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You redeem us from death, faithful God. We give thanks for those who served you in the church (*especially Cyril and Methodius, missionaries, whom we commemorate today*). Bring us with all the saints into everlasting joy. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Accompany us on our journey, God of grace, and receive the prayers of our hearts, through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always.
And also, with you.

**(The congregation may be seated.) **

OFFERTORY

OFFERTORY PRAYER

**(please stand if able) **

Let us pray.

Jesus, you are the bread of life
and the host of this meal.

Bless these gifts that we have gathered
that all people may know your goodness.

Feed us not only with this holy food
but with hunger for justice and peace.

We pray this in your name.

Amen.

† THE MEAL †

We are invited by God, to receive God.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life: Blessed are you for the birth of creation. Blessed are you for your promise to your people. Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams. Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will. Blessed are you for your Son Jesus, the Word made flesh.

And we remember how, 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.

Holy God, with this bread and cup we remember your Word dwelling among us, full of grace and truth. We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection and we look with hope for his coming again. Bless this meal so that your Word may take flesh in us, and we may be filled with your light and peace.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

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 THE TABLE

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

THE DISTRIBUTION

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

May the body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in His grace. **Amen.**

Let us pray.

Generous God, at this table we have tasted your immeasurable grace. As grains of wheat are gathered into one bread, now make us one loaf to feed the world; in the name of Jesus, the Bread of Life. **Amen.**

BLESSING

Beloved,
we are God's own people,
Holy, washed, renewed.
God bless you and keep you,
shower you with mercy,
fill you with courage,
and give you peace.
Amen.

✠ SENDING ✠

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

SENDING HYMN: LBW 309 - "Lord Jesus, Think on Me"

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, Share your bread.

Thanks be to God.

Altar Flowers: The 2023 sign-up sheet is in the narthex.

*No Flower donations during Lent, 2/14-3/31

Communion: Please fill out the communion cards so record of who takes communion can be kept.