

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

Ash Wednesday

7:00pm



ST. STEPHEN 
ELCA Lutheran Church
WORSHIP | FELLOWSHIP | SERVICE

Welcome

Gathering

Please remain seated until the reading of the Gospel.

Introduction

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.

Opening Hymn

Lamb of God
-Christianson

St. Stephen Choir

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.

*Prayer of the Day

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.**

Additional Devotional Readings:

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Psalms 51:1-17

2 Cor 5:20b--6:10

*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.

Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For desiring self-reliance instead of hungering for your word:

Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For failing to recognize your coming reign,

and for hindering the work of the Spirit: Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For drawing from the well of self-serving ambition,

and for disdaining the living water Christ offers: Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For disregarding voices from the margin,

and for distrusting signs of your healing and hope in the world:

Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For dwelling in tombs of self-pity and discontent,

and for disregarding Christ's call to come forth to life:

Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

God's steadfast love, grace, and forgiveness abound.

Through faith, the free gift of God,

you have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

In the name of ✝ Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.

The Spirit of the One who raised Christ from the dead dwells in you,

pours God's love into your hearts,

and gives you life and peace.

Amen.

Imposition of Ashes

Please be seated. We invite you to come forward when you are ready to receive the Imposition of Ashes.

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

**Please stand to continue with the Imposition of Ashes.*

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 Savior,
bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.


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.

Amen.

*Gospel Acclamation

Marty Haugen

Refrain



Re - turn to God with all your heart, the
Source of grace and mer - cy; come seek the ten - der
faith - ful - ness of God.

***Gospel: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21**

The holy gospel according to St. Matthew, the 6th chapter.

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.**

Sermon



1 Just as I am, with - out one plea, but that thy blood was
2 Just as I am, though tossed a - bout with man - y_a con - flict,
3 Just as I am, thou wilt re - ceive, wilt wel - come, par - don,
4 Just as I am; thy love un - known has bro - ken ev - 'ry



shed for me, and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
man - y_a doubt, fight - ings and fears with - in, with - out,
cleanse, re - lieve; be - cause thy prom - ise I be - lieve,
bar - rier down; now to be thine, yea, thine a - lone,



O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Prayers of the People

Reconciled by God's mercy and sustained by God's presence, let us pray for the world and its needs.

A brief silence.

Guide your church, O God. **Accompany all Christians in this season of repentance, and renew our faith in the riches of grace you give to us in baptism.**

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Heal this earth, O God. Satisfy the needs of every parched place, every diverse ecosystem, every suffering creature. **Though all return to dust, grant beauty and purpose to each living thing.** Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Restore the nations, O God. Let your healing spring up quickly across the world. **Give all in authority the will to loose the bonds of injustice and let any who are oppressed go free.** Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Deliver your people, O God. Comfort any whose hearts are rent by grief, uphold any who are sick, bring food to those who hunger, and give housing to all without shelter, especially Dan & Mary Gleghorn, Todd, Roger, Donna, Janet Bergstrom, Carolyn Pogany, Bud Crookshank, Doris, Beth and all those we hold in our hearts.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Bless this assembly, O God. Reconcile us to one another and to you. **Strengthen our resolve to fast from evil, open our hands in sharing, and quicken our prayer.**

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Hold us forever, O God. We thank you for all who now know their treasure in heaven, **and for all who on earth proclaimed your abounding, steadfast love.**

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Receive our prayers, O God, through Jesus Christ, our strength and salvation.

Amen.

*Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

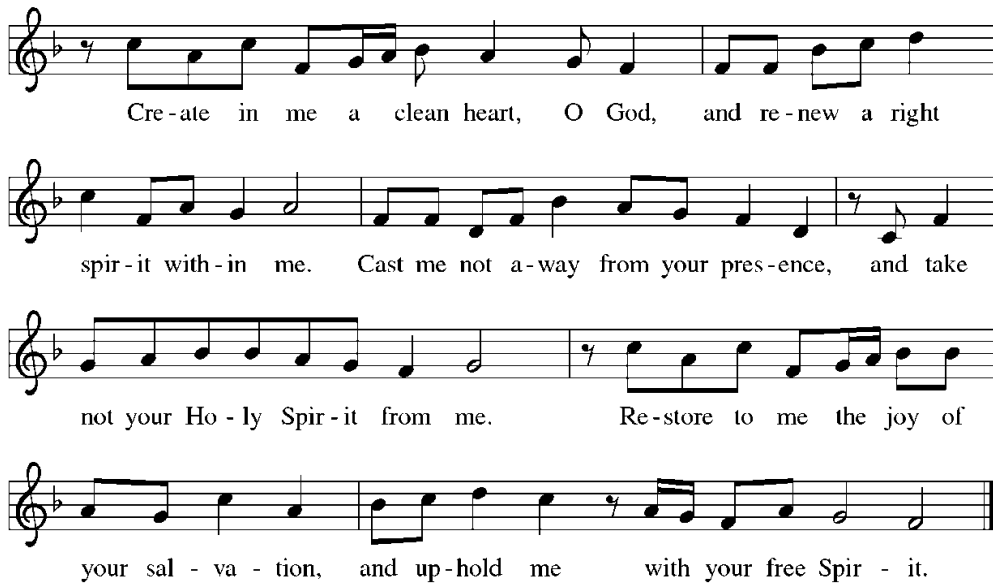
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

*Preface

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. In love you made us for yourself; and when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, your love remained steadfast. You bid your faithful people cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the Easter feast, that, renewed by your Word and Sacraments and fervent in prayer and works of justice and mercy, we may come to the fullness of grace that you have prepared for those who love you.

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



*Eucharistic Prayer

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.

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

*The 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 Communion

All baptized Christians are welcome to participate in Holy Communion. We ask children who have not had First Communion instruction, or adults who do not wish to receive communion, to keep their hands folded at the altar, and they will receive a blessing.



1 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
2 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
3 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;



you suf-fered death our lives to save: have mer-cy now, we pray.
you set us free from guilt and grave: have mer-cy now, we pray.
e - ter-nal peace with God you made: give us your peace, we pray.

*Prayer after Communion

God of our salvation,
we give you thanks for this meal that restores our souls,
reconciles us to you, and strengthens us for the journey.
Through the body and blood of your Son,
may we become Christ's body in the world,
bearing witness to your love for all creation,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

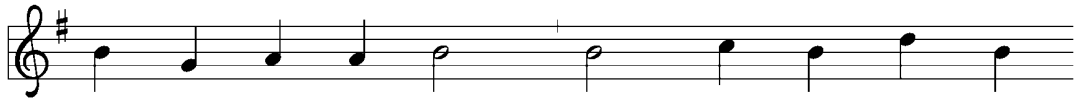
*Sending Song

The Glory of These Forty Days

ELW 320



1 The glo - ry of these for - ty days we cel - e -
2 A - lone and fast - ing Mo - ses saw the lov - ing
3 So Dan - iel trained his mys - tic sight, de - liv - ered
4 Then grant, O God, that we may, too, re - turn in



brate with songs of praise; for Christ, through whom all
God who gave the law; and to E - li - jah,
from the li - ons' might; and John, the Bride - groom's
fast and prayer to you. Our spir - its strength - en



things were made, him - self has fast - ed and has prayed.
fast - ing, came the steeds and char - i - ots of flame.
friend, be - came the her - ald of Mes - si - ah's name.
with your grace, and give us joy to see your face.

*Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.
The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

Thanks be to God.

*Dismissal

Go in peace. Care for others as God cares for you.

Thanks be to God.

Postlude