

Ash Wednesday

February 18, 2026; Noon & 7 p.m.



St John's
Lutheran Church

(Assembly gathers in silence; An usher rings the church bell 5 minutes prior to start)

Gathering Hymn (please stand)

ACS #1078; *There is a Longing*

Refrain — All

There is a longing in our hearts, O Lord,
for you to reveal yourself to us.
There is a longing in our hearts for love
we only find in you, our God.

- 1 For justice, for freedom,
for mercy: hear our prayer.
In sorrow, in grief:
be near; hear our prayer, O God. *Refrain*

- 2 For wisdom, for courage,
for comfort: hear our prayer.
In weakness, in fear:
be near; hear our prayer, O God. *Refrain*

- 3 For healing, for wholeness,
for new life: hear our prayer.
In sickness, in death:
be near; hear our prayer, O God. *Refrain*

- 4 Lord, save us, take pity,
light in our deepest night.
We call you; we wait:
be near; hear our prayer, O God. *Refrain*

Greeting

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray. Gracious God, you call us to repentance, and we have come. This Lent, let repentance be more than a feeling of obligation, a token phrase, or a good intention. Use repentance to draw us back to you, who always meet our wrongdoing with forgiveness and grace. We pray trusting in Jesus' mercy and might. Amen.

Reading: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 (*please sit*)

¹ 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—
² 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.

¹² Yet even now, says the Lord,
return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
¹³ rend your hearts and not your clothing.

Return to the Lord your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love,
and relenting from punishment.

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 aged;
gather the children,
even infants at the breast.
Let the bridegroom leave his room
and the bride her canopy.

¹⁷ 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?'"

Word of God. Word of Life.
Thanks be to God.

Psalm 51

Be Merciful, O Lord; Music by Marty Haugen

Refrain: (*Assembly sings following Cantor*)



Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned; be
mer-ci-ful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Gospel: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21 (please stand)

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew, the sixth chapter.
Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹ "Beware of practicing your righteousness 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.³ But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,⁴ so 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.⁶ 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.

¹⁶ “And whenever you fast, do not look somber, like the hypocrites, for they mark their faces to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face,¹⁸ 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.

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

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Homily (please sit)

“Practicing All in Again -- Pastor Christine Emerson

Hymn of the Day (please stand)

S415; *Dust and Ashes*

- 1 Dust and ashes touch our face, make our failure and our falling. Holy Spirit, come, walk with us tomorrow, take us as disciples, washed and wakened by your calling.

Refrain

Take us by the hand and lead us, lead us through the desert sands, bring us living water, Holy Spirit, come.

- 2 Dust and ashes soil our hands, greed of market, pride of nation. Holy Spirit, come, walk with us tomorrow, as we pray and struggle through the meshes of oppression. *Refrain*
- 3 Dust and ashes choke our tongue in the wasteland of depression. Holy Spirit, come, walk with us tomorrow, through all gloom and grieving to the paths of resurrection. *Refrain*

Invitation to Lent

Friends in Christ, the early church spent forty days in preparation before Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection. It was a season of baptismal renewal, of prayer, fasting, and giving.

We gather today in this same tradition to begin the season of Lent together.

We are reminded that as Christians, God calls us to a life of commitment and caring for our neighbors. The events of our lives and of the wider world can be grim, and optimism can be hard to find. It would be easier to detach from the need around us, to go numb and to care less as we try to protect our hearts and our expectations.

But God calls us to go all in, to be fully committed to the well-being of our planet and our neighbors. God knows that this is a challenge, so God goes all in first, showing us what it is like to bet it all on love.

God invests in human beings, even though we have a track record of sin that stretches from Adam and Eve to the present day. God invests in creation, even when we are bent on harming it. God commits to the unknown and to wonder when we want certainty and limits. God tends broken relationships. God goes all in on all the highs and lows that life brings, from moments of transcendent beauty to the deepest hopelessness.

And in Jesus, God pours out every last drop of love, all of it for the sake of a world that may never fully understand.

This Lent I invite you into a season of preparation, as always. This Lent in particular is a season of intentional preparation to go all in for the sake of the world. I urge you to commit to this preparation through worship, prayer, fasting, and giving. Even as you prepare to go all in, God has already gone all in for you.

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.

Blessing of Ashes

God of all, bless these ashes and those who receive them. Let them be a sign of our repentance and of your faithfulness. The mark of Jesus' cross will remind us of how you are all in for us and for the world. May that reminder stay with us even when these ashes are washed away. God of all, bless these ashes and those who receive them. **Amen.**

Imposition of Ashes

(Assembly is invited to receive ashes. Ministers mark the forehead of each person with a cross of ashes, saying, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.")

(12 p.m.) Linda Ranney, piano

(7 p.m.) ACS #1047; *What is the World Like*

1 What is the world like when God's will is done?

 Mustard seeds grow more than we can conceive:
 roots thread the soil; branches reach for the sun.
 This is how God moves us each to believe.

2 What is the world like when God's will is done?

 Witness the wandering child coming home;

watch as the parent breaks into a run.
This is how God longs for us when we roam.

- 3 What is the world like when God's will is done?
No more is neighbor just ally or friend;
peace thrives in places where once there was none.
This is how God works when rivalries end.

- 4 What is the world like when God's will is done?
Ready for feasting, we watch through the night,
tending our lamps till the new day's begun.
This is how God readies us for the light.

- 5 These are the stories that Jesus imparts,
filled with the Spirit who joins us as one.
Born through our voices, our hands, and our hearts,
this is a new world where God's will is done.

Prayer

Let us pray. 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 and 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.

Prayers of the People

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.

(Petition)

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.

Offering (please sit)

Linda Ranney

Prayer

Let us pray. Merciful God, **accompany our journey through these forty days. Renew us in the gift of baptism, that we may provide for those who are poor, pray for those in need, fast from self-indulgence, and above all that we may find our treasure in the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Benediction

Almighty God, Father, \pm Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

Amen.

Go forth into the world, to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to what is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honor all people; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thanks be to God.

Sending Hymn

(Acolytes extinguish the candles)

ELW #793 *Be Thou My Vision* vs. 1-3

1 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
naught be all else to me, save that thou art:
thou my best thought both by day and by night,
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

2 Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord.
Thou my soul's shelter, and thou my high tow'r,
raise thou me heav'nward, O Pow'r of my pow'r.

3 Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise,
thou mine inheritance, now and always:
thou and thou only, the first in my heart,
great God of heaven, my treasure thou art.

Sending

Go in peace. Live in hope.

Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Linda Ranney

Serving at Worship Today

Presider	Pastor Christine Emerson
Acolytes	
Ushers	
Media & Streaming	
Musicians	Linda Ranney, accompanist; Mark Lundin, Director of Music; St. John's Choir

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