

ASH WEDNESDAY

February 18th, 2026



MARTIN LUTHER
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
St. Louis, MO

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Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, the Christian's 40-day journey with the Lord to the cross and tomb, preparing for the proclamation of Easter. The 40 days are reminiscent of several biblical events: Jesus' 40-day fast at the beginning of his ministry, Moses' stay on Mount Sinai at the giving of the Law, Elijah's fast on his way to the mountain of God.

Ash Wednesday begins the Christian's Lenten journey with a reminder of our mortality and a call to repentance (Genesis 18:27; Job 42:6; Jeremiah 6:26; Matthew 11:21). The ancient practice of imposing ashes on the foreheads of the faithful gives Ash Wednesday its name. The church father Tertullian (c. A.D. 160–215) writes of the practice as a public expression of repentance and of our human frailty that stands in need of Christ. The ashes remind us forcefully of our need for redeeming grace as they recall words from the rite for Christian burial: "... earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust..." words that will someday be spoken over us all. The imposition of ashes is a practice that is observed widely by Christians of many traditions. (Christian Worship: Occasional Services).

At Martin Luther we will observe the imposition of ashes for Ash Wednesday. After the confession of sins at the beginning of the service, the congregation will be invited to come forward to receive a mark of ashes in the shape of a cross. Traditionally this is done on the forehead, but if you wish you may receive this mark on the back of a hand instead. This is a reminder, not a sacrament. It is offered to anyone who wishes to participate and is not forced on anyone. Participants come forward one at a time, the minister marks the sign of



the cross, and says, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." The participant then returns to his/her seat and waits to hear the words of absolution. The ashes may be washed off right after the service is over, or they may be left as a reminder for the rest of the day.

ORDER OF SERVICE

With Broken Heart and Contrite Sigh

CW 303:1-3



1. With bro - ken heart and con - trite sigh, A trem - bling
2. I smite up - on my trou - bled breast, With deep and
3. Far off I stand with tear - ful eyes Nor dare up -



sin - ner Lord, I cry. Your par - d'ning grace is
con - scious guilt op - pressed, Christ and his cross my
lift them to the skies, But you can all my



rich and free - O God, be mer - ci - ful to me!
on - ly plea - O God, be mer - ci - ful to me!
an - guish see - O God, be mer - ci - ful to me!

Stand.

CONFESSION OF SINS

M: Most holy and merciful Father,

C: We confess to you and to one another that we have sinned by our own fault,

by our own grievous fault
in thought, word, and deed
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.

M: 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.

C: Have mercy on us, Lord.

M: We have been deaf to your call to serve as Christ served us.
We have not been true to the mind of Christ.
We have grieved the Holy Spirit.

C: Have mercy on us, Lord.

M: We confess to you, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness.
The pride, hypocrisy, and impatience in our lives

C: We confess to you, O Lord.

M: Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, our manipulation of other people

C: We confess to you, O Lord.

M: Our anger when our selfish aims are denied and our envy of those more
fortunate than ourselves

C: We confess to you, O Lord.

M: Our love of worldly goods and comforts and our dishonesty in daily life and
work

C: We confess to you, O Lord.

M: Our negligence in worship and prayer and our failure to show the faith that
is in us

C: We confess to you, O Lord.

M: Forgive us, Lord, for the wrongs we have done. For our blindness to human
need and suffering and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,

C: Forgive us, O Lord.

M: For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward others, and for our prejudice and contempt for those who differ from us,

C: Forgive us, O Lord.

M: For what we think or say or do that is at variance with your will,

C: Forgive us, O Lord.

M: Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us.

C: Hear us, Lord, for your mercy is great.

Be seated.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Those who desire to receive the sign of ashes come forward. Baptized children may come forward at their parents' discretion. The minister applies ashes to the forehead or the back of a hand of each in the form of a cross, saying:

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

After all who desire have received ashes, the congregation stands and the minister says:

M: Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation

C: That we may show forth your glory in the world.

M: By the cross and suffering of your Son, O Lord,

C: Bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.

ABSOLUTION

M: Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, does not desire the death of sinners but rather that they turn from their wickedness and live.

Therefore, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son † and of the Holy Spirit.

(During these...)

During these days of Lent, let us implore God to give us renewal and his Holy Spirit. May we continue to abide in the true faith and at the last be received by him through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

The congregation sings CW 303, stanzas 4 and 5:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 4. No gifts, no deeds that I have
done
Can for a single sin atone.
To Calvary alone I flee –
O God, be merciful to me! | 5. And when, redeemed from sin
and hell,
With all the ransomed souls I
dwell,
My joyous song shall ever be:
God has been merciful to me! |
|--|---|

M: Almighty and merciful God, you never despise what you have made and always forgive those who turn to you. Create in us such new and contrite hearts that we may truly repent of our sins and obtain your full and gracious pardon; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



Be seated.

First Lesson ----- Joel 2:12–19

Even now, declares the LORD,
return to me with all your heart,
with fasting and weeping and grief.
Tear your heart and not your clothing.
Return to the LORD your God,
for he is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and abounding in mercy,
and he relents from sending disaster.
Who knows?
He may turn and have pity and leave behind a
 blessing—
grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD
 your God.
Blow the ram’s horn in Zion.
Set aside a day for fasting.
Call a solemn convocation.
Gather the people.
Consecrate the assembly.
Bring together the elders.
Gather the children, even those nursing at the
 breast.

Let the bridegroom leave his room,
and the bride her chamber.
Let the priests, who minister before the LORD,
 weep between the temple porch and the altar.
Let them say:
 Have compassion on your people, O LORD.
 Do not subject the inheritance you have
 given us to the scorn of the nations.
 Do not make us notorious among the nations
 as an object of ridicule.
 Why should they say among the peoples,
 “Where is their God?”

The LORD is zealous for his land,
and he will take pity on his people.
The LORD will respond to them:
 I am sending you grain, new wine, and fresh
 oil,
 enough to satisfy you fully.
 Never again will I subject you to scorn among
 the nations.

For the hymn festival "Love beyond Forever" and for the choirs of Hope and Ascension
 Hope Ev. Lutheran Church, St. Louis, Missouri
 February 5, 2023

O Savior, Look upon the Tears

Lisa M. Clark

TEARS OF GRIEF

Jacob B. Weber



Choir 1 O Sav - ior, look up -
 Choir 2 O Sav - ior, hear our
 All 3 O Sav - ior, see our



on the tears We shed in deep - est grief. We
 anx - ious prayers That min - gle with our sighs. We
 bro - ken hearts That suf - fer with each pain. We



waste a - way through - out the years, A - wait - ing Your re -
 bow be - neath our weight - y cares As our pe - ti - tions
 ache with all our wound - ed parts As hard - ened scars re -



lief. Re - mind us, Lord, that You once cried And
 rise. Re - mind us, Lord, that You would call Up -
 main. Re - mind us, Lord, that You en - dured The



wept on Zi - on's road And longed to gath - er
 on Your Fa - ther's ear, And e - ven now, You
 whole world's ag - o - ny So our re - new - al



to Your side All with a heav - y load.
 speak for all Who hold Your name most dear.
 is se - cured: From ter - rors soon set free.

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Second Lesson ----- 1 John 1:5-9

This is the message we heard from him and proclaim to you: God is light. In him there is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him but still walk in darkness, we are lying and do not put the truth into practice. But if we walk in the light, just as he is in the light, we have fellow-

ship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Stand.

Gospel ----- Matthew 6:16-21

After the announcement of the Gospel, the congregation sings:



C: Glo - ry be to you, O Lord!

“Whenever you fast, do not make yourself look sad like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces to show everyone that they are fasting. Amen I tell you: They have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that it is not apparent to people that you are fasting, but only to your Father who sees what is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what

is done in secret, will reward you.

“Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures for yourselves in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. Because where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

After the Gospel, the congregation sings:



C: Praise be to you, O Christ!

Be seated.

Hymn of the Day ----- From Depths of Woe I Cry to You

CW 305

1. From depths of woe I cry to you; Lord, hear me, I implore you.
Bend down your gracious ear to me; My prayer let come before you.
If you kept record of my sin And held against me what I've been,
How could I stand before you?
2. Your love and grace alone avail To blot out my transgression.
The best and holiest deeds must fail To break sin's dread oppression.
Before you none can boasting stand, But all must fear your strict demand
And live alone by mercy.
3. Therefore my hope is in the Lord And not in my own merit;
It rests upon his faithful Word To them of contrite spirit.
That he is merciful and just-This is my comfort and my trust.
His help I wait with patience.
4. My soul is waiting for the Lord As one who longs for morning;
No watcher waits with greater hope Than I for his returning.
I hope as Israel in the Lord; He sends redemption through his Word.
We praise him for his mercy.

Sermon ----- Zechariah 1:1-6

In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berekiah, the son of Iddo.

The Lord was very angry with your forefathers. Therefore, now you are to tell this people that this is what the Lord of Armies says to them.

Return to me, declares the Lord of Armies, and I will return to you, says the Lord of Armies. Do not be like your forefathers, to whom the earlier prophets proclaimed, "This is what the Lord of Armies says. Return, return from your evil ways

and from your evil deeds."

But our forefathers did not listen, nor did they pay attention to me, declares the Lord. Your forefathers—where are they now? And those prophets—did they go on living indefinitely? But my words and my statutes, which I commanded to my servants the prophets, caught up with our forefathers, didn't they?

Then they returned and said, "Because of our ways and our deeds, the Lord of Armies has done to us just as he planned to do to us."

Return to Me!

Stand.

Luther's Explanation of the 1st Article of the Apostles' Creed

C: I believe that God created me and all that exists, and that he gave me my body and soul, my eyes, ears, and all my members, my mind and all my abilities

And I believe that God still preserves me by richly and daily providing clothing and shoes, food and drink, property and home, spouse and children, land, cattle, and all I own, and all I need to keep my body and life. God also preserves me by defending me against all danger, guarding and protecting me from all evil. All this God does only because he is my good and merciful Father in heaven, and not because I have earned or deserved it. For all this I ought to thank and praise, to serve and obey him.

This is most certainly true.

Be seated.

Offering

Stand.

Litany of Repentance

The congregation speaks the bold text.

Lord, **have mercy.**

Christ, **have mercy.**

Lord, **have mercy.**

God, compassionate and gracious Father, **have mercy on us.**

God, the Son, you bought us with your own blood, **have mercy on us.**

God, the Holy Spirit, present with the penitent, **have mercy on us.**

Online giving option:
mluther.org/give



Offerings support the spread
of the Gospel here and around the world.

Holy Trinity, merciful God, **have mercy on us.**

Holy Trinity, forgiving God, **have mercy on us.**

You created us in your image.

When our first parents lost your image,
you restored it with your promise.

You led and trained Abraham in faith.

You were patient with stubborn Israel through their desert journey.

You pronounced forgiveness for David's sin
and restored his soul, **have mercy on us.**

You sent your prophets to restore and guide your people.

You sent John the Baptist as a preacher of repentance.

You sent your only Son as the great Prophet to reveal your will.

You sent him also as our great High Priest who offered himself for our sins,
and he sits at your right hand, interceding for us, **have mercy on us.**

Forgive our worship of self,

our lack of reverence for your name,

our despising of preaching and your Word,

our dishonor of our parents and authorities,

our anger, hate and hurtfulness to our neighbors,

our impurity of thoughts, words and actions,

our misuse of our possessions and our abuse of our neighbors' possessions,

our carelessness in speaking of others,

our thoughts and desires for our neighbors' things,

our thoughts and desires for our neighbors' people.

Have mercy on us, God, according to your unfailing love;

according to your great compassion, blot out our transgressions.

Work in us fear, love and trust for you.
Cleanse our lips to pray, praise and give you thanks.
Lead us to regard your Word as holy, and gladly hear and learn it.
Move us to honor, serve and obey those who represent you.
Show the value of all human life,
 that we regard it as your most precious gift.
Teach us respect for marriage, the foundation of family and society.
Teach us to be good stewards of all your gifts.
Fill our words about others with care and love.
Increase holy desires in us,
to respect the roles and responsibilities you have given other people,
and to focus on our needs rather than our wants.

Create in us pure hearts, O God,
renew right spirits within us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; **have mercy on us.**
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; **have mercy on us.**
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; **grant us your peace.**

Our sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

O Lord, lift us, cleanse us and restore us, that we may know the joy of your salvation, bring glory to you in all things and serve our neighbors in love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

C: 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.**

THE SACRAMENT

M: The Lord be with you.



C: **And al - so with you.**

M: Lift up your hearts.



C: **We lift them up un - to the Lord.**

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.



C: **It is good and right so to do.**

M: It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who brought the gift of salvation to all people by his death on the tree of the cross, so that the devil, who overcame us by a tree would in turn by a tree be overcome.

Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

Holy, Holy, Holy

Sanctus



C: **Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of heav - en - ly hosts:**

heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san -

na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.

Bless - ed is he, bless - ed is he, bless - ed is he who

comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san -

na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.

Words of Institution

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always.



C: A - men.

O Christ, Lamb of God

Agnus Dei

C: O Christ, Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world;

have mer-cy on us. O Christ, Lamb of God,

you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on us.

O Christ, Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world;
grant us your peace. A - - men.

Be seated.

DISTRIBUTION

In Holy Communion we believe that Jesus gives us his own body and blood to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of our sins. We ask that, in keeping with God's Word, only confirmed members who are in confessional unity with our church (WELS and ELS) would come forward to receive this sacrament. If you have any questions or are interested in communicant membership, please speak with the pastor.

During the distribution, the congregation sings the following hymns:

Hymn ----- Jesus, I Will Ponder Now

CW 98

1. Jesus, I will ponder now On your holy passion;
With your Spirit me endow For such meditation.
Grant that I in love and faith May the image cherish
Of your suff'ring, pain, and death That I may not perish.

2. Make me see your great distress, Anguish, and affliction,
 Bonds and stripes and wretchedness And your crucifixion;
 Make me see how scourge and rod, Spear and nails did wound you,
 How for them you died, O God, Who with thorns had crowned you.
3. Yet, O Lord, not thus alone Make me see your passion,
 But its cause to me make known And its termination.
 Ah! I also and my sin Wrought your deep affliction;
 This indeed the cause has been Of your crucifixion.
4. If my sins give me alarm And my conscience grieve me,
 Let your cross my fear disarm; Peace of conscience give me.
 Help me see forgiveness won By your holy passion.
 If for me he slays his Son, God must have compassion!
5. Grant that I your passion view With repentant grieving.
 Let me not bring shame to you By unholy living.
 How could I refuse to shun Ev'ry sinful pleasure
 Since for me God's only Son Suffered without measure?
6. Graciously my faith renew; Help me bear my crosses,
 Learning humbleness from you, Peace mid pain and losses.
 May I give you love for love! Hear me, O my Savior,
 That I may in heav'n above Sing your praise forever.

Hymn ----- Jesus Sinners Does Receive

CW 304

1. Jesus sinners does receive; Oh, may all this saying ponder
 Who in sin's delusions live And from God and heaven wander.
 Here is hope for all who grieve-Jesus sinners does receive.
2. We deserve but grief and shame, Yet his words, rich grace revealing,
 Pardon, peace, and life proclaim; Here their ills have perfect healing
 Who with humble hearts believe-Jesus sinners does receive.

3. Sheep that from the fold did stray Are not by the Lord forsaken;
Weary souls who lost their way Are by Christ, the shepherd, taken
In his arms that they may live-Jesus sinners does receive.
4. Come, O sinners, one and all, Come, accept his invitation.
Come, obey his gracious call; Come and take his free salvation!
Firmly in these words believe-Jesus sinners does receive.
5. I, a sinner, come to you With a penitent confession.
Savior, show me mercy, too; Grant for all my sins remission.
Let these words my soul relieve-Jesus sinners does receive.
6. Oh, how blest is it to know, Were as scarlet my transgression,
It shall be as white as snow By your blood and bitter passion,
For these words I do believe-Jesus sinners does receive.
7. Jesus sinners does receive. Even I have been forgiven.
And when I this earth must leave, I shall find an open heaven.
Dying, still to him I cleave-Jesus sinners does receive.

After the distribution is finished the congregation stands and sings:

Song of Simeon

Nunc Dimittis

C: Lord, now you let your servant de - part in peace ac-cord-ing
to your word. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have pre-
pared be - fore the face of all people, a light to light - en the

Gen - tiles and the glo - ry of your peo - ple Is - ra - el.

M: O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

C: And his mercy endures for - ev - er.

M: O God the Father, source of all goodness, in your loving kindness you sent your Son to share our humanity. We thank you that through him you have given us pardon and peace in this sacrament. We also pray that you will not forsake us but will rule our hearts and minds by your Holy Spirit so that we willingly serve you day after day, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: A - men.

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.
 The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
 The Lord look on you with favor and † give you peace.

C: A - men. A - men. A - men.

Be seated.

Hymn ----- Glory Be to Jesus

CW 103

1. **Glory be to Jesus, Who in bitter pains
Poured for me the lifeblood From his sacred veins.**
2. **Grace and life eternal In that blood I find;
Blest be his compassion, Infinitely kind.**
3. **Blest through endless ages Be the precious stream
Which from endless torments Did the world redeem.**
4. **Abel's blood for vengeance Pleaded to the skies,
But the blood of Jesus For our pardon cries.**
5. **Oft as earth exulting Lifts its praise on high,
Angel hosts rejoicing Make their glad reply.**
6. **Lift we, then, our voices, Swell the mighty flood;
Louder still and louder Praise the precious blood!**

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