

St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church



ASH

Wednesday

*Care for others
as God cares for you!*

Ash Wednesday

February 18, 2026

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.

Holy Communion

Evangelical Lutheran Worship

(ELW) Setting 9, page 193

† Congregation stands as able

GATHERING

Prelude

Sandra Nearhoof



P. Blessed be God, Father, +Son, and Holy Spirit.

C. And blessed be God's kingdom now and forever. Amen.

Gathering Hymn "O Lord, Throughout These Forty Days"

ELW #319

Kyrie

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Prayer of the Day:

P: 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.

C: **Amen.**

PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S WORD

First Reading

Isaiah 58:1-12

¹Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet!

Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins.

²Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God.

³"Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?" Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers.

⁴Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high.

⁵Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? ⁶Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? ⁷Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? ⁸Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

⁹Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, ¹⁰if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. ¹¹The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a

watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. ¹²Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

L: The word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God.

Psalm 51:1-17

Tone 8

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

²**Wash me through and through ¹from my wickedness,
and cleanse me ¹from my sin.**

³For I know ¹my offenses, and my sin is ev- ¹er before me.

⁴**Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil ¹in your sight;
so you are justified when you speak and right ¹in your judgment.**

⁵Indeed, I was born ¹steeped in wickedness, a sinner from my ¹mother's womb.

⁶**Indeed, you delight in truth ¹deep within me,
and would have me know wisdom ¹deep within.**

⁷Remove my sins with hyssop, and I ¹shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be pur- ¹er than snow.

⁸**Let me hear ¹joy and gladness,
that the body you have broken ¹may rejoice.**

⁹Hide your face ¹from my sins, and blot out ¹all my wickedness.

¹⁰**Create in me a clean ¹heart, O God, and renew a right spir- ¹it within me.**

¹¹Cast me not away ¹from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spir- ¹it from me.

¹²**Restore to me the joy of ¹your salvation
and sustain me with your boun- ¹tiful Spirit.**

¹³Let me teach your ways ¹to offenders, and sinners shall be re- ¹stored to you.

¹⁴**Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of ¹my salvation,
and my tongue shall sing ¹of your righteousness.**

¹⁵O LORD, o- ¹pen my lips, and my mouth shall pro- ¹claim your praise.

¹⁶**For you take no delight in sacrifice, or ¹I would give it.
You are not pleased ¹with burnt offering.**

¹⁷The sacrifice of God is a ¹troubled spirit;
a troubled and broken heart, O God, you will ¹not despise.

Second Reading

2 Corinthians 5:20b--6:10

^{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.

L: The word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God.



Gospel Acclamation

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Gospel

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

P: The Holy Gospel according to Matthew.

C: 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."

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

"A Reconciled Life"

Reverend Taylor Burton Edwards



Hymn of the Day

"I Come with Joy"

ELW #482

Invitation to Lent

Confession of Sin

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

The assembly kneels or sits. Silence is kept for reflection and self-examination.

P: Most holy and merciful God,

C: 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.

P: 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, O God.

P: 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.

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

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

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

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

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

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

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

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

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

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

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

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

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

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

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

THANKSGIVING OVER THE ASHES

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence, so that we may

remember it is by your gracious gift are we given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

You may come to the front to receive the ashes, then return to your seat and sit, stand or kneel for the prayers.

Prayers of Intercession

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

A brief silence.

A: 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.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: 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.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: 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.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: 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. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: 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,

C: Your mercy is great.

A: For all those who have asked us to pray for them...

C: Your mercy is great.

A: 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.

C: Your mercy is great.

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

C: Amen.

MEAL

Anthem

“Ashes”

Choir

The gifts may be brought forward.

Offering Prayer

A: O God, maker of heaven and earth, your steadfast love embraces all creation. You send rain and sunshine to nourish the earth and bring forth its bounty. Through these gifts of bread and wine, draw us into the death and life of your Son, who calls us to bear witness to his saving work. We ask this in Jesus’ name.

C: Amen.



Great Thanksgiving

See Insert

Holy, Holy, Holy

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Lord’s Prayer

“Our Father, who...”

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Lamb of God

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Communion

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

Each person may respond, Amen.

Table Blessing

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

C: Amen.



Prayer after Communion

A: 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.

C: Amen.

SENDING

Blessing

Sending Hymn

“Bless Now, O God, the Journey”

ELW #326

Dismissal

A: Go in peace. Fast as God intends.

C: Thanks be to God.

St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church Mission Statement



Reach in to grow in Christ
Reach up to worship God
Reach out to welcome and witness

Serving February 18, 2025

Opener/Closer	Allena Sperry
Worship Assistant	Rose Johnson
Lector	Dave Bonaker
Communion Assistant	Raymond Lawton
Ushers	Katherine Kelly and James Sperry
Altar Guild	Nancy Gates, Rose Johnson, Allena Sperry

ST. MATTHEW EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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A member congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,

Southeastern Synod

www.stmatthewcolumbusga.com

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@st.matthewlutheranchurch4457/streams>

The Rev. Taylor Burton Edwards, Pastor

Sandra Nearhoof, Minister of Music

Sonja Metcalf, Parish Administrator

Penny Davis, Nursery Director

Lisa Pettit, Sexton