



St. Peter's Lutheran Church
Highspire
Ash Wednesday
February 18, 2026

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.

Overview

Smearred in Sin, Washed in Love

With ash and soot we begin this Lenten season with confession; we begin with Psalm 51; we begin on our knees. Today this ancient prayer placed on our lips becomes new again: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions." We speak our truths from the shadow of our sin, the very shadow that marks our mortality. Like ash traced upon our foreheads, we are marked with the reality of our frailties and failings. It is stark reminder that sin and death are smearred all over us. From this inevitable reality, we cry out for mercy! For as bold as it is to name our sin and sinful ways that lead to death, it is all the more audacious to summon our God! To summon the one who actually has the power to do something about sin and the ways of death! On this day of penitence, through the work and witness of Christ Jesus, we brashly summon God to come, to hear our prayer, and to listen to our confession.

So, with our truths laid bare, we confess our unfaithfulness to God, our lackluster love for our neighbors, our neglect of suffering and injustice in the world. In the same breath, we ask God to wash us, to purge us, and to create in us clean hearts. The smears of sin are washed clean through the love of Christ. And yet, we will leave worship this day still carrying the cross-shaped trace of sin and death upon us. It is a reminder that, even amid our confession, we continue this Lenten season to listen for the perpetual call to return to the Lord our God who is gracious and merciful, abounding in steadfast love (Joel 2:13).

WORDS OF WELCOME
PRELUDE

Juliette Mitton

The Gathering

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

*GATHERING HYMN O Lord, Throughout These Forty ELW #319

*GREETING

P The Lord be with you.

C And also with you.

*PRAYER OF THE DAY

P Gracious God, out of your love and mercy you breathed into dust the breath of life, creating us to serve you and our neighbors. Call forth our prayers and acts of kindness, and strengthen us to face our mortality with confidence in the mercy of 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.

The Word

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

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.

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?' "

L The word of the Lord

C Thanks be to God

PSALM: **51: 1-17** (read responsively)

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love. (Ps. 51:1)

1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
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 offenses,
and my sin is ever before me.

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

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

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

7 Remove my sins with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be purer than snow.

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

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

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

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

**12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.**

13 Let me teach your ways to offenders,
and sinners shall be restored to you.

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

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

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

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

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.

21 For our sake God made the one who knew no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

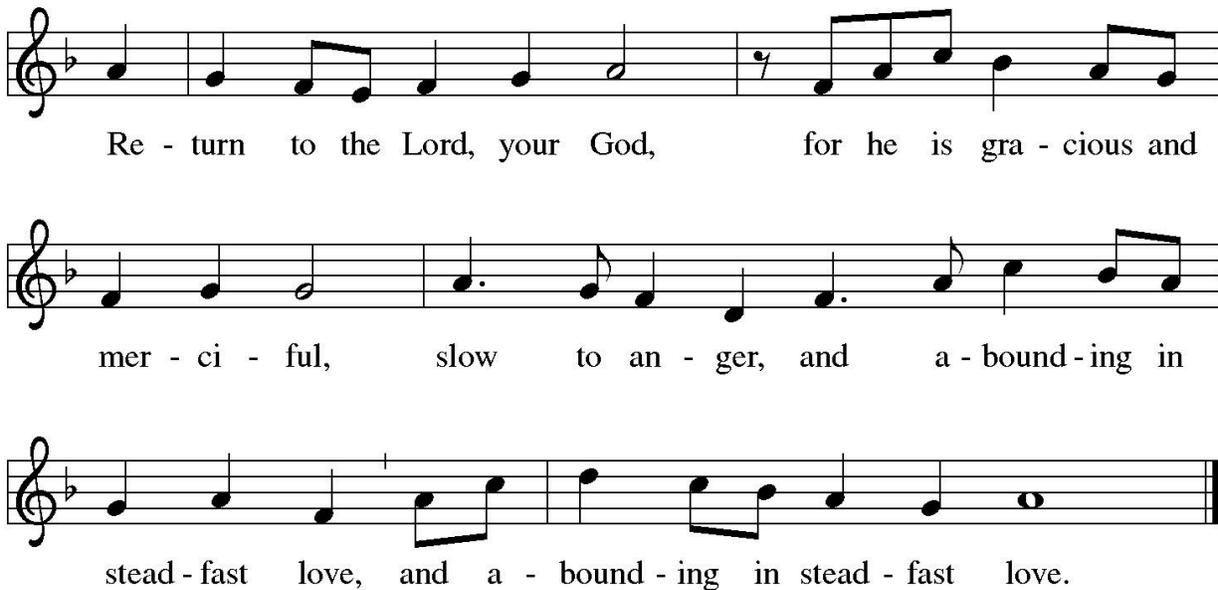
6:1 As we work together with him, we entreat you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. 2 For he says,

“At an acceptable time I have listened to you,
and on a day of salvation I have helped you.”

Look, now is the acceptable time; look, now is the day of salvation! 3 We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, 4 but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: in great endurance, afflictions, hardships, calamities, 5 beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; 6 in purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, 7 truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; 8 in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors and yet are true, 9 as unknown and yet are well known, as dying and look—we are alive, as punished and yet not killed, 10 as 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



Re - turn to the Lord, your God, for he is gra - cious and
mer - ci - ful, slow to an - ger, and a - bound - ing in
stead - fast love, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love.

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

P The holy gospel according to Matthew

C Glory to you, O Lord.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commends almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, but emphasizes that spiritual devotion must not be done for show.

[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."

P The gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Pastor Cindy Brommer

*HYMN OF THE DAY Create in Me a Clean Heart ELW # 188

INVITATION TO LENT

The assembly is seated. The presiding minister may invite the assembly into the discipline of 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

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.

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.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

When ashes are used in the service, the presiding minister may say the following prayer.

P Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. May these ashes be a sign of our mortality and penitence, reminding us that only by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ are we given eternal life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen.

People may come forward and kneel or stand to receive the 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.

During this time, hymns or penitential psalms may be sung, or silence may be kept. Psalm 51 may be sung if it has not been used earlier in the service.

After those who desire ashes have received them, all may kneel or sit, and the minister continues.

P Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation,
C that we may show forth your glory in the world.

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

The presiding minister addresses the assembly.

P 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.

C Amen.

*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.

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. 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.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

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.**

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

C Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC

Love One Another

Choir

The Meal

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

*OFFERTORY 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

*THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

ELW p.129

P The Lord be with you.

C And also with you.

P Lift up your hearts.

C We lift them to the Lord.

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. You call your people to cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast, that, renewed in the gift of baptism, we may come to the fullness of your grace. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er and might,
 heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the
 high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -
 san - na in the high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

P Blessed are you, O God of the universe. Your mercy is everlasting and your faithfulness endures from age to age.

Praise to you for creating the heavens and the earth.
 Praise to you for saving the earth from the waters of the flood.
 Praise to you for bringing the Israelites safely through the sea.
 Praise to you for leading your people through the wilderness to the land of milk and honey.
 Praise to you for the words and deeds of Jesus, your anointed one.
 Praise to you for the death and resurrection of Christ.
 Praise to you for your Spirit poured out on all nations.

*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.*

With this bread and cup we remember our Lord's passover from death to life as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

O God of resurrection and new life: Pour out your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and wine. Bless this feast. Grace our table with your presence.

Come, Holy Spirit.

Reveal yourself to us in the breaking of the bread. Raise us up as the body of Christ for the world. Breathe new life into us.

Send us forth, burning with justice, peace, and love.

Come, Holy Spirit.

With your holy ones of all times and places, with the earth and all its creatures, with sun and moon and stars, we praise you, O God, blessed and holy Trinity, now and forever.

Amen.

*THE LORD'S PRAYER

ELW p.134

P Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

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.

*SHARING THE MEAL

P Come to the table. Feast on God's goodness and mercy.

*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.

The Sending

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

*BENEDICTION

P Receive the blessing of the holy Trinity:

God, who calls all things into existence, Jesus Christ, who redeems us, and the Holy Spirit, whose breath sustains creation,
✠ bless you now and always.

C Amen.

*SENDING HYMN

Be Thou My Vision

ELW# 793

*DISMISSAL

A Go in peace. Believe the good news.

C Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Juliet Mitton

Thank you, Rev. Cindy Brommer for presiding over worship, you are a blessing to us.

We appreciate Juliet Mitton for sharing her musical talent with us this evening. Thank you.

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Prelude - Juliet Mitton

Gathering Hymn - "O Lord, Throughout These Forty Days" ELW #319
CONSOLATION words - @1978 LBW, Augsburg Fortress music -
PUBLIC DOMAIN

Gospel Acclamation - "Return to the Lord, Your God" ELW p.142

Hymn of the Day - "Create in Me a Clean Heart" ELW #188 PUBLIC
DOMAIN Music - J.A. Freylinghausen FRANCKE

Special Music - "Love One Another" words & music - Bobby Fisher
@1999 GIA Publications, Inc. - Choir

Sanctus - "Holy, Holy, Holy" p. 130, setting 2, ELW

Sending Hymn - "Be Thou My Vision" ELW #793 SLANE PUBLIC
DOMAIN

Postlude - Juliet Mitton

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ALTAR FLOWERS

Altar vases are presented to the Glory of God by the Altar Guild.

Worship Participants

Presiding Minister

Music Director

Worship Assistant

Musician

Lector

February 18, 2026

Pastor Cindy Brommer

Stephen Strauss

Patrick Hawkins

Juliet Mitton

Mary Hunt