



FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Third & Terry, Longmont, Colorado

(303) 776-2800 | www.firstluth.org

Pastor Garrett Struessel

Ash Wednesday—February 18, 2026

5:30 p.m.



GATHERING

WELCOME AND 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.



PSALM 51

Sung responsively, the cantor will sing the plain text; the congregation responds on the same tone with the bold text.

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

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

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

**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.**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

O Lord, o- | pen my lips,
and my mouth shall de- | clare your praise.

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

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

GREETING AND PRAYER OF THE DAY

Sisters and brothers in Christ, grace, mercy, and peace be with you all.

And also with you.

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.

Amen.

ANTHEM

"You Die For Me" by Patrick M. Liebergen

Chancel Choir

CONFESSION

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

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever.

Amen.

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

Silence is kept for reflection and self-examination.

Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For seeking worldly delights that deceive us and dishonor you:

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

All are welcome to come forward to receive the imposition of ashes with the words "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return." During the imposition, you are invited to sing the following chants.

"By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return" Genesis 3:19

Bless the Lord, my soul, who leads me in - to life.

This musical score is for a two-part setting of the first chant. It features a treble and bass staff in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody is simple and hymn-like, with lyrics written below the notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Our dark - ness is nev - er dark - ness in your sight: the

This musical score continues the two-part setting. It begins with a repeat sign. The melody and bass line are consistent with the first system. The lyrics are written below the notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

dee - est night is clear as the day - light. The

This musical score continues the two-part setting. It begins with a repeat sign. The melody and bass line are consistent with the first system. The lyrics are written below the notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

J. Berthier
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RESPONSE FOLLOWING 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.

WORD

READINGS

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.

¹Blow 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— ²a 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. ¹²Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; ¹³rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. ¹⁴Who 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? ¹⁵Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; ¹⁶gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her canopy. ¹⁷Between 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.

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.

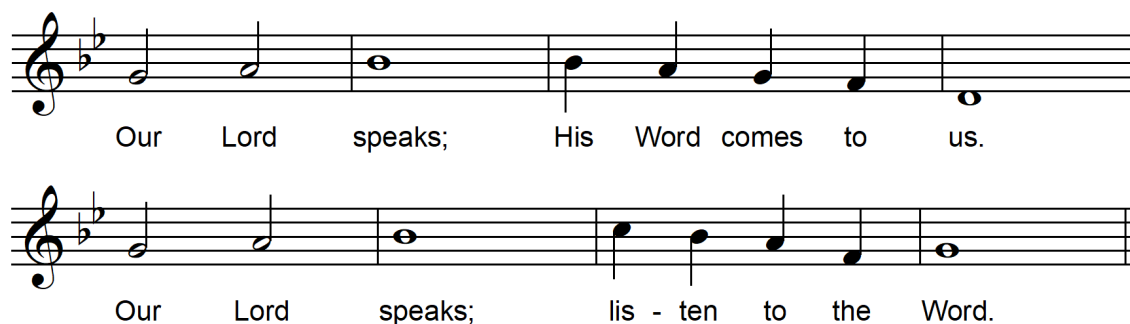
^{20b}We entreat you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake God made the one who knew no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

^{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.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



GOSPEL

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew the 6th chapter beginning at the 1st verse.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

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 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 oth-

ers. 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

Pastor Garrett Struessel

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Hear us, O God,

Your mercy is great.

MEAL

OFFERING

“If You Love Me” by John Ness Beck

Chancel Choir

OFFERTORY PRAYER

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. Amen

THE 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.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

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.

SHARING OF COMMUNION

All are welcome who come trusting in the gift of God's presence in the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation, shared in this meal. "The body of Christ, broken for you", and "the blood of Christ shed for you", include the promise of the forgiveness of sin, life and salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord. The ushers will invite you to come forward for communion. We invite everyone to receive communion if you so desire. The invitation to receive Holy Communion is from Christ Jesus; therefore "all are welcome". In our serving communion trays, wine is darker red on the outside, and grape juice is the lighter color in the center. We serve only gluten-free bread prepared in a kitchen excluding wheat flour, to include everyone regardless of wheat-gluten sensitivities. Come, taste and see, that the Lord is good.

Hear these words and partake of the bread/cracker and wine/juice, giving it to each other, if possible:

"The body of Christ given for you. The blood of Christ shed for you."

COMMUNION HYMNS

"Softly and Tenderly"

ELW 608

"Lord Jesus, Think on Me"

ELW 599

"Come, Ye Disconsolate"

ELW 607

Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling

ELW 608

1. Soft ly and ten - der - ly Je - sus is call - ing, call - ing for you adn for
 2. Why should we tar - ry when Je - sus is plead - ing, plead - ing for you and for
 3. Oh, for the won - der - ful love he has prom - ised, prom - ised for you adn for

me. See, on the por - tals he's wait - ing and watch - ing watch - ing for you and for
 me? Why should we lin - ger and heed not his mer - cies, mer - cies for your and for
 me! Though we have sinned, he has mer - cy and par - don, par - don for you and for

Refrain

me. "Come home, come home! You who are wea - ry, come home."
 me? Come home, come home!
 me.

Ear - nest - ly, ten - der - ly, Je - sus is call - ing, call - ing, "O sin - ner, come home!"

Text: Will L. Thompson, 1847-1909
 Music: Will L. Thompson

THOMPSON
 11 7 11 7 and refrain

Lord Jesus, Think on Me

ELW 599

1. Lord Je - sus, think on me, and purge a - way my sin; from
 2. Lord Je - sus, think on me, by anx - ious thoughts op - pressed; let
 3. Lord Je - sus, think on me, nor let me go a - stray; through
 4. Lord Je - sus, think on me, that, when the flood is past, I

self - ish pas - sions set me free and make me pure with - in.
 me your lov - ing ser - vant be and taste your prom - ised rest.
 dark - ness and per - plex - i - ty point out your cho - sen way.
 may the - eter - nal bright - ness see and share your joy at last.

Text: Synesius of Cyrene, 375-430; tr. Allen W. Chatfield, 1808-1896, alt.
 Music: W. Daman, *The Psalmes of David*, 1579, alt.

SOUTHWELL
SM

Come, Ye Disconsolate

ELW 607

1. Come, ye dis - con - so - late, where - e'er ye lan - guish;
 2. Joy of the des - so - late, light of the stray - ing,
 3. Here see the Bread of life; see wa - ters flow - ing

come to the mer - cy - seat, fer - vent - ly kneel.
 hope of the pen - i - tent, fade - less and pure;
 forth from the throne of God, pure from a - bove.

Here bring your wound - ed hearts, here tell your an - guish;
 here speaks the Com - fort - er, ten - der - ly say - ing,
 Come to the feast of love; come, ev - er know - ing

earth - has no sor - row that heav'n can - not heal.
 'Earth' has no sor - row that heav'n can - not cure.
 earth has no sor - row but heav'n can re - move.

Text: Thomas Moore, 1779-1852, sts. 1-2; Thomas Hastings, 1784-1872, st. 3
 Music: Samuel Webbe Sr., 1740-1816

CONSOLATOR
 11 10 11 10

COMMUNION BLESSING

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

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

BENEDICTION

SENDING

Go in peace. Believe the good news.

Thanks be to God!

The Assembly is invited to observe the solemnity of Ash Wednesday and depart in silence.

Preacher/Presider	The Rev. Garrett Struessel
Worship Assistant	Deacon Korra Looschen
Acolyte	Jonathan Leos
Usher	Holly Keenan Mike Shiveley
Reader	Fran von Hagel
Communion Assistants	Barb Mohr Stephanie Nieuwlandt
Choir Director	Sally Campbell
Pianist/Organist	Gary Elmquist

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