

ASH WEDNESDAY



*You are dust,
and to dust you shall return*

Genesis 3:19

Wednesday, February 18, 2026
BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH, SPENCER IA

GATHERING

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

PRELUDE: *"Confession and Surrender"* Mark Edwards, Whiter than Snow-
Tune: FISHER, by William G. Fischer

GREETING

HYMN: *"Chief of Sinner Though I Be"* vv. 1, 2, & 5 ELW #609

PRAYER OF THE DAY

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.

WORD

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

FIRST LESSON

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

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, and abounding in steadfast love,

and relents from punishing.

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;

to loose the bonds of injustice,

sanctify a fast;

call a solemn assembly;

¹⁶ gather 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.

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?'"

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM 51:1-13

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.**

³For 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.**

⁵Indeed, 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.**

⁷Remove 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.**

⁹Hide 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.**

¹¹Cast 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.**

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

SECOND LESSON

II 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.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *“Create in Me a Clean Heart”*

ELW #186

**Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore unto me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with your free Spirit.**

GOSPEL

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

[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. 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.**

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY: “*On My Heart Imprint Your Image*” ELW #811

INVITATION TO LENT

CONFESSION OF SIN

Let us confess our sin before God, who removes our guilt and blots out all offenses.

The assembly kneels or sits. 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.

PRAYER

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.**

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 good ness,
And by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life.
Amen.

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

GREAT THANKSGIVING, WORDS OF INSTITUTION AND LORD'S PRAYER

IMPOSITION OF ASHES AND HOLY COMMUNION

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

COMMUNION MUSIC: *"Just As I Am"* Larry Shackley

Tune: WOODWORTH by William B. Bradbury

SENDING

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

SENDING 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.

BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

HYMN: *"Cast Out O Christ"*

vv. 1, 4, & 5 ACS #1016

POSTLUDE: *"If You But Trust in God to Guide You"* Craig Curry,

Tune: NEUMARK, by Georg Neumark

*Please leave the sanctuary in silence,
remembering that Ash Wednesday is the most
solemn and penitential day of the church year.*

Our Lenten journey has begun.

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For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- Matthew 6:21