

ASH WEDNESDAY

First Lutheran Church, Lynn, MA
February 17, 2021



**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.

Welcome to worship!

Yes, *this is worship!* It is not the way any of us *want* it to be, but God is alive and present in this virtual gathering. God's work will still speak to us through the Holy Spirit, and we are still the Body of Christ, joined together in a fellowship of love, even if it is not in person.

Prepare for this special liturgy.

On Ash Wednesday, the Church begins its journey from death to new life with a night of repentance. One way we do this ritually is through the imposition of ashes on the forehead -- a symbol of repentance, and a reminder that we are all mortal and will one day return to the dust.

If you have **palm branches** at home from a previous year, you can easily burn them and mix them with a drop of olive oil to prepare your own ashes. Ashes remind us of the earth from which we were formed. If the ground is warm enough, scoop some **soil** from outside and place it in a bowl near your home altar. You use this soil in the same way we use ashes to mark the sign of the cross on yourself or someone else in your home. Alternatively, you may choose to use a **bowl of water**, reminding you of your baptism. While not a symbol of mortality per se, it connects us to our dying and rising with Jesus Christ.

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God

PRELUDE

LITANY

After the minister sings a short phrase, the assembly responds, alternating between these two responses.

*Chorale Preludes on AUS TIEFER NOT
Gerald Near; Michael Joseph*

Leader Assembly
Hold us in your mer - cy. **Hold us in your mer - cy.**

Leader Assembly
Hold us in your mer - cy. **Hold us in your mer - cy.**

Cantor:

Maker's love poured out from heaven, **hold us in your mercy.**
Mercy's Word made flesh among us, **hold us in your mercy.**
Born as one of homeless pilgrims, **hold us in your mercy.**
Sent to bring the poor good news, **hold us in your mercy.**
You who shared the sinner's table, **hold us in your mercy.**
You who cleansed the leper's flesh, **hold us in your mercy.**

You who shared our life and labor, **hold us in your mercy.**
You who chose to walk our roads, **hold us in your mercy.**
You who silence raging demons, **hold us in your mercy.**
You who bid the storm be silent, **hold us in your mercy.**
You whose cross has gone before us, **hold us in your mercy.**
You who bear our cross with us, **hold us in your mercy.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

To mark the solemnity of this night, and to help draw us deeper into prayer, many of the prayers that are typically spoken by the minister are sung.

Innocent, you faced the guilty, **hold us in your mercy.**
One in death with us forever, **hold us in your mercy.**
Come and break the chains that bind us, **hold us in your mercy.**
Free us from addiction's prison, **hold us in your mercy.**
Break the power of the darkness, **hold us in your mercy.**
Let us rise to life with you, **hold us in your mercy.**



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.



WORD

God speaks to us in scripture readings, 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.

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 — 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.

Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; 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. 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?

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bride-groom leave his room, and the bride her canopy. 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

Psalm 51

In a society that all too often avoids apology and denies death, Christians assemble on a late winter Wednesday to confess their sins and face their mortality. Tradition says that when caught in his wickedness, King David composed Psalm 51, and now it accompanies our Lenten journey back to forgiveness and new life.

Cantors sing each phrase of the refrain first, then it is repeated by the assembly.

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

Refrain:

Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God,
Cre - ate in me a clean
and re - new a right spir - it with - in me.
heart, O God, and re -
Cast me not a - way from your
new a right spir - it with - in me.
pres - ence, and take not your
Cast me not a - way from your pres - ence,
Ho - ly Spir - it from me.
and take not your Ho - ly Spir - it from
Cantor + Assembly
me. Re - store to me the joy of your sal -
va - tion and sus - tain me with your boun - ti - ful Spir - it.

Verses (sung by the cantors)

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

For I know my offenses,
and my sin is ever 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 purer 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.

Repeat refrain

Let me teach your ways to offenders,
 and sinners shall be restored to you.
 Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of my salvation,
 and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness.
 O Lord, open my lips,
 and my mouth shall proclaim 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. Repeat refrain

SECOND READING

1 Corinthians 11:
 23-26

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.

We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For 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!

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

We stand to welcome Jesus, the living Word, in the holy gospel.

We fast from using the word "Alleluia" in worship during Lent so that we may sing it with renewed meaning and joy at Easter.

Let your stead-fast love come to us, O Lord.

Let your stead-fast love come to us, O Lord.

Save us as you prom-ised; we will trust your word.

Let your stead-fast love come to us, O Lord.

GOSPEL

Matthew 6:1-6,
16-21

From this excerpt from the Sermon on the Mount come the three classic disciplines of lent: giving alms, praying, and fasting. These behaviors are signs that what we most treasure is God, rather than the stuff of our selves. Jesus commends these practices, but emphasizes that spiritual devotion must not be done for show.



The ho - ly gos - pel ac-cord-ing to ____ . **Glo-ry to you, O Lord.**

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. 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. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

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. 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.

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. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 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.

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.



The gos - pel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON



HYMN OF THE DAY

We stand to proclaim the word of God in song.

All Things of Dust to Dust Return

All things of dust to dust re - turn on earth and in the sky. The
Lord, mark with dust and ash my brow so I may com - pre - hend that
Lord, mark up - on my brow this sign: a stark and bar - ren cross re -
hot - test, bright - est suns that burn in time grow dim and die. The
ev - 'ry mo - ment here and now links me to that same end I
mind - ing me that though di - vine you know my pain and loss, and
fish that leap, the birds that soar, the new - born young that play, the
share with all that breathe and burn, that flare and fade and tire yet
at the touch of dust and ash a - wake my heart to view how
leaves that fill the for - est floor re - vert to dust and clay.
by their wan - ing light dis - cern your own un - dy - ing fire.
death it - self is but a flash that dies a - way in you.

INVITATION TO LENT

CONFESSION OF SIN

We confess "to God and one another," for our sins harm our neighbors and all of God's creation.

Our confession is cast in the plural because we assist others in their confession, and they assist us. Only supported by the whole community can we face the truth about our failings.

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

A period of extended silence follows.

Most holy and merciful God,
**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.**

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.

Have mer - cy on us, O Lord.

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.

Have mer - cy on us, O Lord.

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



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



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



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



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



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



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



OFFERING

From the earliest days of Christianity, a collection for the poor and the needs of the community was an essential part of Sunday worship.

Lord Jesus, Think on Me
Georgiann H. Toole

Lord Jesus, think on me, and purge away sin;
From earthborn passions set me free and make me pure within.

Lord Jesus, think on me, amid the battle's strife;
In all my pain and misery, be thou my health and life.

Lord Jesus, think on me, nor let me go astray,
Through darkness and perplexity, point thou the heavenly way.

Lord Jesus, think on me, that, when this life is past,
I may eternal brightness see and share thy joy at last.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission for the world

BLESSING

SENDING SONG

Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross



1 Je - sus, keep me near the cross, there's a pre - cious foun - tain;
2 Near the cross, a trem - bling soul, love and mer - cy found me;
3 Near the cross! O Lamb of God, bring its scenes be - fore me;
4 Near the cross I'll watch and wait, hop - ing, trust - ing ev - er,



free to all, a heal - ing stream flows from Cal - v'ry's moun - tain.
there the bright and morn - ing star sheds its beams a - round me.
help me walk from day to day with its shad - ow o'er me.
till I reach the gold - en strand just be - yond the riv - er.



Refrain
In the cross, in the cross be my glo - ry ev - er;



till my ran - somed soul shall find rest be - yond the riv - er.

DISMISSAL

Be at peace. Live in love as Christ loved us.

Thanks be to God

POSTLUDE

Chorale Prelude on SOUTHWELL
J. Bert Carlson

WHAT SHALL I GIVE UP OR TAKE ON THIS LENT?

Borrowed from Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Chicago, IL

For many Lent is a time to "give something up" like sweets, meat or alcohol. This "fast" can be a balance to our over-indulgent lives and prepare us for the feast of Easter.

The traditional "disciplines" of Lent are fasting, almsgiving and prayer. You might want to consider your own ways to incorporate these aspects into your Lenten observance. Lent can also be a time to take something on for the season.

Fasting can help us identify with those who are hungry and otherwise needy in our world. It can help us reflect on our own needs and hungers as well. You may want to eat simpler meals during Lent, or give up one meal a week (Wednesdays and Fridays are traditional fast days). Or you might consider fasting from television or other electronics. Or you could fast from complaining, fast from talking ill of others, or fast from rushing through your day.

Almsgiving is what we give to others, especially those in need. Folks often begin with giving a financial gift that supports a cause such as world hunger, a food pantry, or many others. Consider also making a visit to someone who is sick, lonely or sad.

Prayer is a discipline that can be expressed in many ways. Perhaps you could commit to being more regular in Sunday worship or attending the Wednesday Lenten services. You could spend time in silence, read a devotional book, or doing something prayerfully that will refresh your soul.

Other things to give up or take on during Lent:

- Take a day or portion of a day to renew your spiritual life. Don't be concerned about accomplishing anything. Go for a walk. Read a book for pleasure. Spend time with a loved one.
- As you take something on find something else you can remove from your routine or schedule.
- Find ways to simplify your life. Focus on essentials.
- Turn off the TV, radio and computer (fast from screens) and do something more organic like cooking, writing, sewing, cleaning or crafts.
- Spend some time alone and learn how to be comfortable with solitude and silence.
- Consider balance in your life. Do you need to focus more on your physical, emotional, intellectual or social side?
- Read an entire book of the Bible, such as Matthew (the Gospel we read in the lectionary this year) or John. Or use psalms as part of your time of prayer and centering.
- Find ways to be generous and to give of your time, your financial resources, and your God-given talents and abilities.
- Use Lent to do something you have previously put off or procrastinated.
- Sign up to volunteer at My Brother's Table or another local ministry.

These are a few suggestions to get your creative juices flowing. Consider what is appropriate for you during this Lenten season. How might you grow in faith and love and also prepare for the feast of Easter?



LENT

A SEASON OF REFLECTION,
RENEWAL, AND PREPARATION

Wednesday Nights in Lent

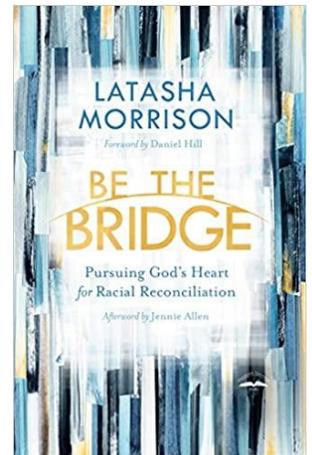
Our church family gathers on Wednesday nights during the season of Lent to mark this holy time with a simple meal, conversation, and prayer. You are invited to take a break in the midst of your busy week to spend some time with God and each other.

7:00 PM | Lenten Conversation Series

Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation

Lent is a season of repentance, healing, and moving toward reconciliation. It's a time to examine our relationships with God and with our neighbor, particularly where there is conflict, hurt, or misunderstanding. This year we will read Latasha Morrison's award-winning book *Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation* as a congregation.

Morrison is a speaker, author, reconciler, bridge-builder and leader, committed to educating people on cultural intelligence and racial literacy. Her book explores the topics of racism and racial justice through the lens of the gospel. She brings together both sociologists and theologians to help Christians approach the topic not from a purely academic or theoretical standpoint, but by engaging Biblical themes such as humility, lament, confession, and forgiveness.



We will gather on four Wednesday evenings in Lent (3/3, 3/10, 3/17, and 3/24) at 7:00 PM.

The book is available as a paperback or as e-Book, such as Kindle.

7:45 PM | Lenten Evening Prayer

Put the day away with a quiet, peaceful service of prayer. The service lasts about 30 minutes.

Pastor Jon is also available for private confession and forgiveness on any of these nights. Sometimes it is a good and healthy thing to say what needs to be said out loud and receive the assurance of God's unconditional love and forgiveness.

MUSIC NOTES

Both today's prelude and postlude are based on the melody of our offertory anthem, a hymn tune named SOUTHWELL. This tune was written William Damon (ca.1540 -1591), a foreign (no one living is confident in his country of birth) composer residing for most of his career in England. It is thought that he arrived in England around 1566 as a servant of Sir Thomas Sackville, later becoming a recorder player at the Court of Elizabeth I in 1576. This melody, along with 78 other tunes, was written at the request of a London goldsmith and psalm enthusiast, John Bull, for his own private use. However, Bull later published them without the composer's permission. Written for Psalm 45, it was later named after the cathedral city in Nottinghamshire by Thomas Ravenscroft, who published several psalters. The text that it is paired with today is one of the older hymns in our hymnal, having been written in Greek by Synesius of Cyrene (d.414), the Bishop of Ptolemais (ancient Libya), as well as a philosopher.

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***We are a Reconciling in Christ congregation,
welcoming and serving all people.***