



SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS LUTHERAN CHURCH

ASH WEDNESDAY WORSHIP

LITANY OF TRUST, HOLY COMMUNION,

LITANY OF WHOLENESS & IMPOSITION OF ASHES

FEBRUARY 18, 2026 — 5:30 P.M.

WELCOME

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And on the whole world, peace!**

Friends in Christ: The holy season of Lent has begun, by God's grace and mercy. It is with that mercy that we begin this season in this way, together. Now, more than ever, we need each other — each others' faith, each others' presence, each others' compassion.

Lent is a time of conversion; a time when, with the Spirit's help, we open ourselves to change. We ask the Spirit to turn our lives around, orienting us towards God and towards the good of our neighbor. We contemplate the temptations and suffering of Jesus, and humble ourselves with him, as he travels the way of the cross, bearing in his own body the weight of human grief and need.

On this Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, we are asked to face without flinching the unyielding realities of human experience: That we are creatures made from the stuff of earth, beautiful and good in God's sight; but that we are not God — we are mortals, and we shall one day die.

That none of us comes to the end of our lives without having done something regrettable that contributes to the great abyss of suffering; and no one comes to the end of life without having been wounded by the sin of another.

Sobered by these things, but not alone, we will make our way through this season with truth and gratitude, until the light of resurrection breaks. Let us begin the journey, then, with Jesus, with each other, and with the whole church everywhere.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Jesus calls us to worship. **We know his voice.**

Jesus calls us to worship. **We respond with joy.**

Jesus calls us to worship. **We will follow where he leads.**

SACRED WORDS: PSALM 23

¹The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. ²He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; ³he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. ⁴Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff — they comfort me. ⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

ASH WEDNESDAY LITANY OF TRUST

Jesus is our good shepherd, we have all we need.

Help us to recognize your voice, O God.

Our good shepherd restores our soul.

Help us bring restoration to a world in pain.

Our good shepherd prepares a table before us.

Help us to love our enemies and dine gladly with them.

Our good shepherd gives goodness and mercy all the days of our lives.

Help us live in gratitude for the sake of all that God has made.

SACRED WORDS: JOHN 10:1-18

“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. ²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.”

⁶Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. ⁷So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

¹¹“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away – and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep.

¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

ASH WEDNESDAY SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Come, as we embark on the dawn of this new season.

Come, as we reflect upon the dusk of our lives.

Come, as we set aside our distractions and the concerns of our minds.

Come, as we focus on the heart of the matter.

God of light and dust be with you. **And also with you.**

Open wide our hearts. **We open them up to our God.**

Let us give thanks to God our creator.

Even in the midst of the wilderness, we give God our praise.

We give thanks for God's steadfast love for all humankind reflected in the servant leadership of Jesus the Christ. We give thanks for each other, for all the saints who have come to the table throughout history, and to those who will gather here after we have returned to dust.

We give thanks to the hands who have harvested the grapes and grains before us, committing ourselves as servants to God's children, finding new ways of bringing justice, righteousness, and love to the shadows on this earth.

May the Spirit come upon these elements, filling our hearts with love, kindness, and acceptance. May the Spirit continue to aid us in our work in the world and as we cross boundaries of denominations and faith differences. May the Spirit empower us as we walk through these 40 days in the wilderness, in anticipation of resurrection.

As Jesus continued on his journey, he could see that his time was drawing nearer, knowing that his love and leadership would take him to the cross. As the final night was upon him, he drew close to his friends to embrace their loved by sharing one last meal.

Embracing the bread in his weathered hands, Jesus blessed and broke it, and gave it to his friends, saying, "This is my body, broken for you."

Clasping the cup containing the fruit of the vine, he gave thanks and gave it to all to drink, saying, "This is blood of the new covenant, poured out for all for the sake of the world."

Jesus asks us to remember him through his body and blood and the prayer he gave us:
Our Father...

This is the bread of life and the cup of the new covenant, given to us to share as we remember our servant-leader, Jesus the Christ.

We come to this table with dust on our heads, remembering our human frailty.

We come to this table, drawn by trust, and made whole by God's grace and love.

We come to this table, embracing the new life in Christ given for all of humanity.

We come to this table, seeking to be awakened to the ways we can bring Jesus the Christ's servant leadership to our world as we journey through these 40 Days.

Amen.

LITANY OF WHOLENESS

O Holy One, hear our prayers as we begin this Lenten Journey of 40 Days:

When we become disagreeable in the midst of our brokenness...

Mend the broken places and make them stronger.

When our lives are void of those who were once a part of us...

Help us to put aside the past hurts, to reach out, to reconnect, to reconcile.

When we are lost and cannot find our way home...

Come and find us; rescue us from the frightening places.

When life is just too much, and we find ourselves feeling anxious...

Infuse peace and serenity in our hearts.

When pride in our accomplishments cause us to ignore You as the source of all gifts...

Open our eyes to the wonders of our brothers and sisters and remind us that you empower all of us.

When we find ourselves locked up in cells of our own making and prisons created by our culture...

Free us, liberate us, and release us from the bondage that limits our fullest expression of faith and love.

When our fasts make us think about what we miss rather than pointing us to You...

Lavish us with grace so that we may accept your bounty.

When we feel the impact of all that is not as You created it to be...

Remind us that You have claimed the world as Your own.

Remind us that we are good, beloved, and redeemed. Amen.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

The tender and solemn act of receiving ashes touches our common life as a reminder of God's care of humanity. The gifts these ashes bear is that they are meant for everyone, because their truth applies to all of Creation. Please come forward to receive a reminder of the cross that claims you for new life.

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

BENEDICTION & SENDING

Created from dust, we are held together by God's love. Remembering we are dust, we repent, turning our hearts and minds back to the One who gives us life. Let us leave this evening, embracing God's amazing grace, given in love.

*After receiving the ashes, you are invited to return to your seat for a time of silent meditation.
Please go out in silence.*