



ASH WEDNESDAY

March 5, 2025

7:00 PM

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH

4515 Dobie Road
Okemos, MI 48864
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WIFI: Faith Lutheran; Password: LutheranFaith

TREASURES AND HEARTS

Matthew 6:21 states that where our treasure is, our heart will follow—not the other way around. Passion, strength, and commitment—the giving of our heart—will follow what we hold dearest and what we most delight in. The heart listens closely to that which is deep within. The heart aligns itself with what it treasures, energy to energy, beat to beat.

Sometimes we think it is the other way, that our treasure follows our heart. But the heart needs to know what it values before it can give itself away. Are there beloved children treasured deep within? There, the heart will find its center. Is there a cherished talent to give, to share—a thirst to draw, to sing, to run, to lead? The heart will be drawn to these treasures.

It is Ash Wednesday. Jesus invites us to listen to him, and also to ourselves. He knows the cross is ahead. His heart can go no other way, given that his treasure is the Father, whose own treasure is the Son. So Jesus wants us to listen. What is it that we treasure? What is it that our heart beats for when all is still, when all we are left with is its most basic, raw rhythm?

Do we treasure personal attention? Religious affirmation? The sound of our own prayers? Our own goodness? Our own sense of righteousness? That kind of treasure doesn't cut it if Lent, or life itself, is to mean anything at all.

If we are to follow Jesus there can be only one great treasure within: Jesus himself. The word of hope before us today is this: Jesus is our treasure. From that treasure the heart moves, energy is released. Lenten discipline, Lenten focus, Lenten service, Lenten giving, springs forth.

Scripture counsels us, "Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love" (Joel 2:13, NRSV).

A sincere welcome to our Ash Wednesday service.

INTRODUCTION

Lent begins with a solemn call to fasting and repentance as we begin our journey to the baptismal waters of Easter. As we hear in today's readings, now is the acceptable time to return to the Lord. During Lent the people of God will reflect on the meaning of their baptism into Christ's death and resurrection. The sign of ashes suggests our human mortality and frailty. What seems like an ending is really an invitation to make each day a new beginning, in which we are washed in God's mercy and forgiveness. With the cross on our brow, we long for the spiritual renewal that flows from the springtime Easter feast to come.

GREETING

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

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, 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;
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: Psalm 51:1-17

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.

GOSPEL: 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.

The holy Gospel according to Matthew. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

[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. 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 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.**

The assembly is seated.

SERMON

Pastor Megan Floyd

The assembly stands.

HYMN OF THE DAY- Eternal Lord of Love, Behold Your Church (ELW 321)



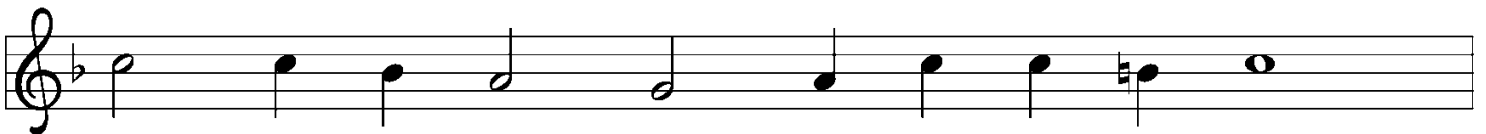
1 E - ter - nal Lord of love, be - hold your church
2 So dai - ly dy - ing to the way of self,
3 If dead in you, so in you we a - rise,



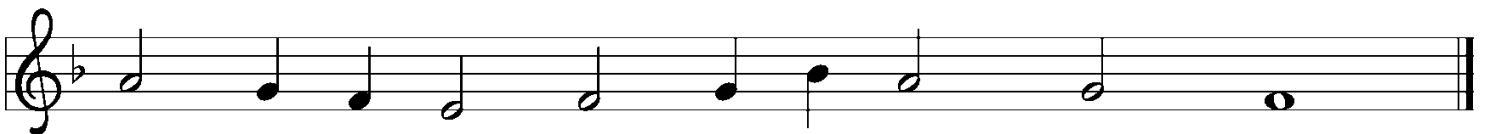
walk - ing once more the pil - grim way of Lent,
so dai - ly liv - ing in your way of love,
you the first - born of all the faith - ful dead;



led by your cloud by day, by night your fire,
we walk the road, Lord Je - sus, that you trod,
and as through ston - y ground the green shoots break,



moved by your love and toward your pres - ence bent:
know - ing our - selves bap - tized in - to your death:
glo - rious in spring - time dress of leaf and flow'r,



far off yet here— the goal of all de - sire.
so we are dead and live with you in God.
so in - to life and glo - ry shall we wake.

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

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

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 mercy on us, O God.

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 mercy on us, O God.

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

Have mercy on us, O God.

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

Have mercy on us, O God.

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

Have mercy on us, O God.

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

Have mercy on us, O God.

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

Have mercy on us, O God.

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

Have mercy on us, O God.

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

Hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.

The assembly is seated

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

The minister marks the forehead of each person with a cross of ashes, saying:

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

SONG- O Lord, hear my Prayer (ELW 751)



O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer: when I call, an - swer me.
OR *The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise: all my hope comes from God.*



O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer: come and lis - ten to me.
The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise: God, the well-spring of life.



Time for meditation and silent prayer

"Steal Away to Jesus"

arr. James Pethel

The assembly stands.

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**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Hearing the call to return to the Lord, let us join the whole people of God in prayer for all who cry out in pain and in hope.

Merciful Lord, where people ask, “Where is their God?” send your church. Equip us with compassion and boldness to listen to our neighbors. Make our speech and actions witness to your eternal presence. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Merciful Lord, where the soil cries for rain, send relief. Restore depleted water tables and cleanse waterways around the world. Teach us to treasure all creation as you do. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Merciful Lord, where terror shouts, send peace. Deliver all from the threat of bloodshed and the trauma of violence. Reconcile nation with nation and neighbor with neighbor. Wash us in your peace. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Merciful Lord, where bellies rumble, send food. Bless Lutheran World Relief and all who work to ensure no one goes to bed hungry. Provide for all who suffer in body, mind or spirit. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Merciful Lord, when hearts and minds call for you, send faithful disciples. Walk with all who prepare for baptism. Uphold them with a community rooted in your word and nourished by bread and wine. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Merciful Lord, where death stings, send comfort. Be with all who mourn. In the midst of their sorrow and pain, sustain their trust in the eternal life you give. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

To you, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your boundless mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior. **Amen**

OFFERING

An offering plate is provided at the entrance to the sanctuary for those who wish to give this evening.

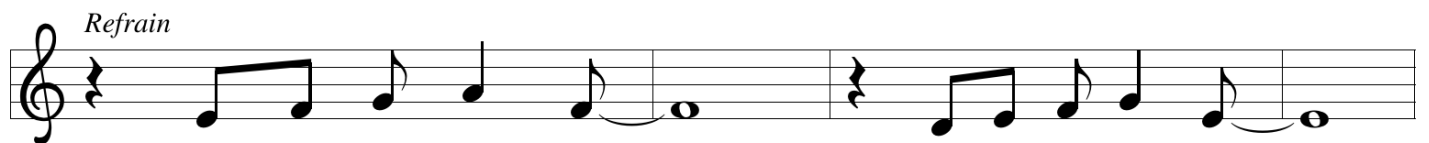
LITURGICAL HAND WASHING

Pastor and assisting ministers sanitize and wash their hands.

"I wash my hands in innocence, and go around your altar, O Lord, singing aloud a song of thanksgiving, and telling all your wondrous deeds." – Psalm 26:6-7

Please stand as you are able.

OFFERTORY- Change My Heart, O God (ELW 801)



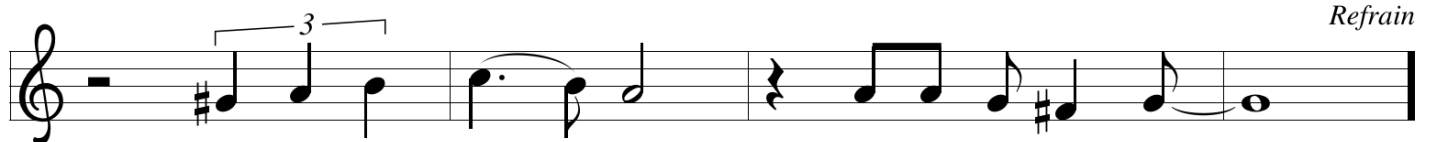
Change my heart, O God; make it ev - er true.



Change my heart, O God; may I be like you.



You are the pot - ter; I am the clay.



Mold me and make me; this is what I pray.

DIALOGUE

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

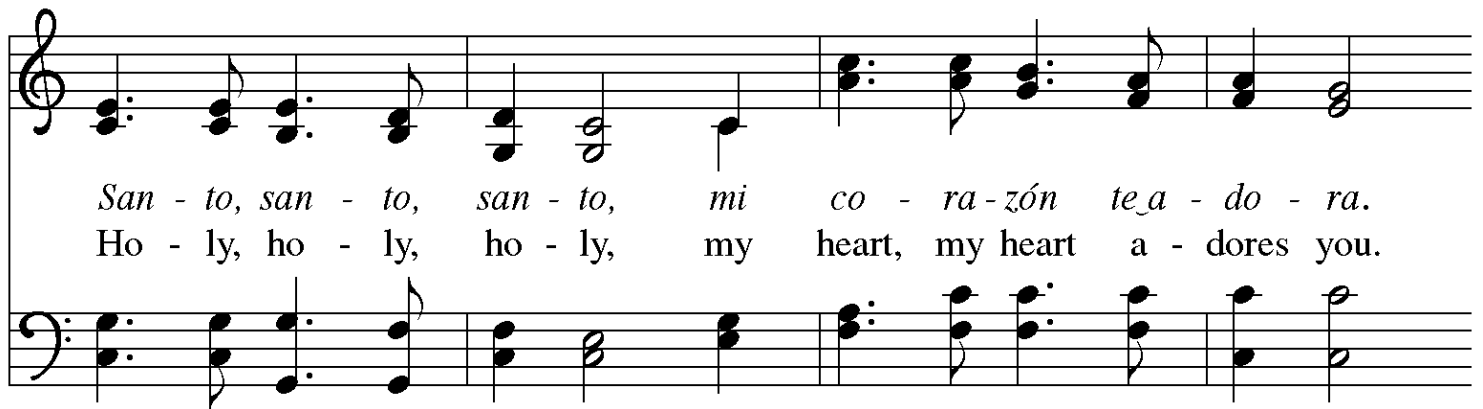
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

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:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (Sung in Spanish, then English)



San - to, san - to, san - to, mi co - ra - zón te_a - do - ra.
Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly, my heart, my heart a - dores you.



Mi co - ra - zón te sa - be de - cir: San - to_e - res Se - ñor.
My heart is glad to say the words: You are ho - ly, God.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

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**

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

All who thirst, all who hunger, come and be filled with the goodness of God.

The assembly is seated

COMMUNION

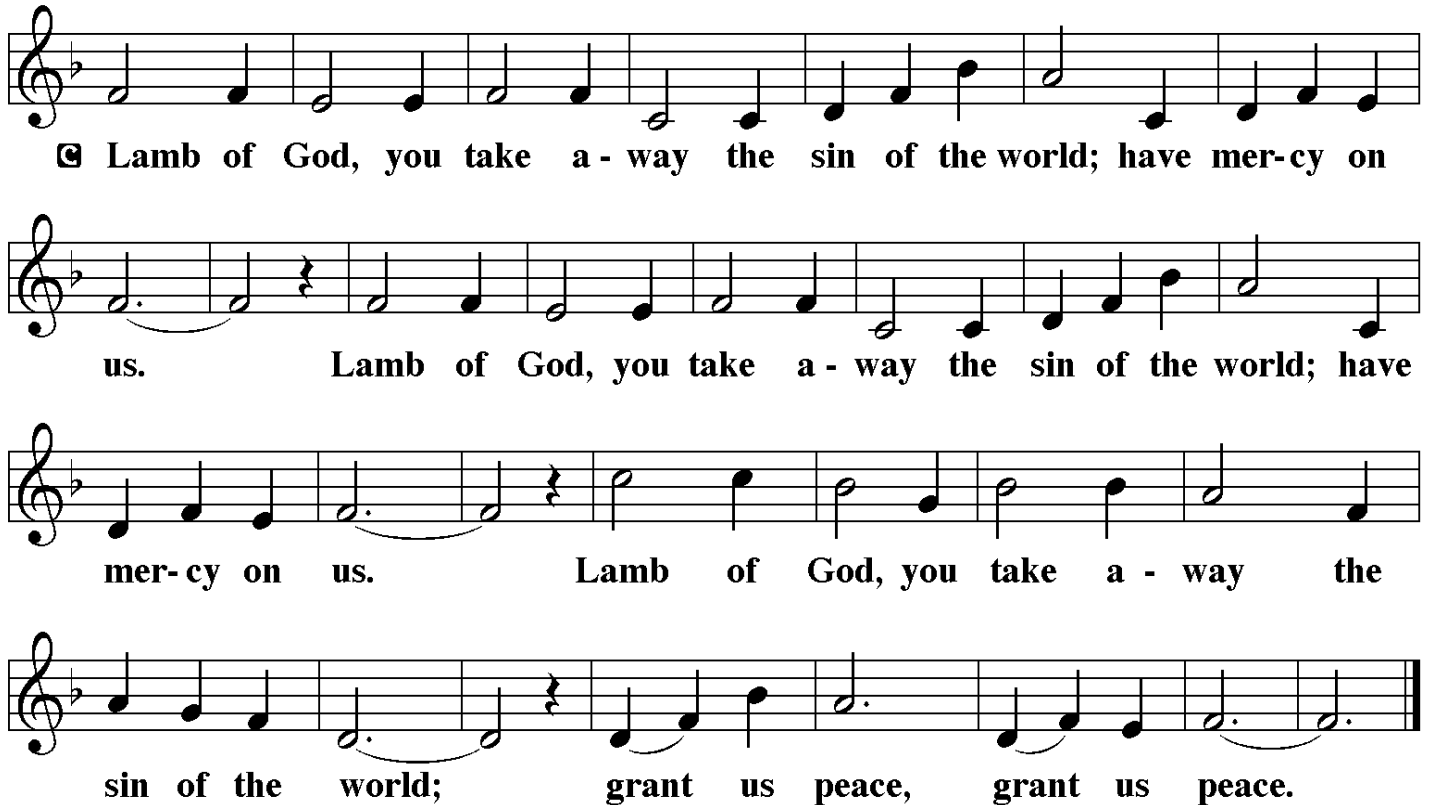
The joy of the Lord is our strength.
Come, eat this meal of gladness.

All are invited to come to the table to receive what the Lord offers. If, however, you would prefer not to receive communion, you may come to the table for a blessing. Gluten free wafers are available upon request when you come to receive communion at the altar rail.

Our trays have wine (darker liquid) in the outer part of the tray, and grape juice (lighter liquid) in the center. Please choose whichever you prefer.

If you have any further questions, please ask an usher.

COMMUNION SONG



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on

us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have

mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the

sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

“Call to Lent”

arr. J. Jerome Williams

Chancel Choir

The assembly stands

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace. **Amen**

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Let us pray.

O God, we thank you for gathering and feeding us as a mother hen embraces her young. Release us now to go on our way in these forty days, ready to see our work as prayer, ready to fast from complacency, and ready to share with those in need; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen**

BLESSING

The blessing of God Almighty,
the wisdom and power of + Christ Jesus,
and the light of the Holy Spirit be among
you and remain with you always.

Amen

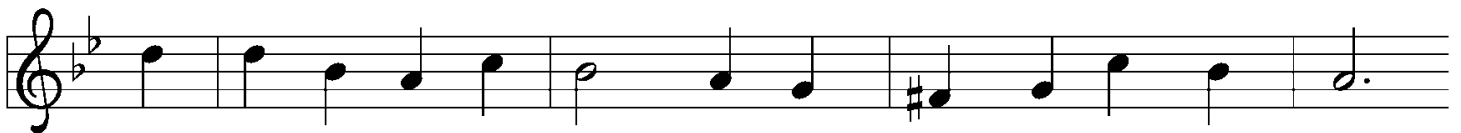
SENDING HYMN-Bless Now, O God, the Journey (ELW 326)



1 Bless now, O God, the jour - ney that all your peo - ple make,
2 Bless so - journ-ers and pil - grims who share this wind - ing way;
3 Di - vine e - ter - nal lov - er, you meet us on the road.



the path through noise and si - lence, the way of give and take.
your hope burns through the ter - rors, your love sus - tains the day.
We wait for lands of prom - ise where milk and hon - ey flow,



The trail is found in des - ert and winds the moun - tain round,
We yearn for ho - ly free - dom while of - ten we are bound;
but wait - ing not for plac - es, you meet us all a - round.



then leads be - side still wa - ters, the road where faith is found.
to - geth - er we are seek - ing the road where faith is found.
Our cov - e - nant is writ - ten on roads, as faith is found.

DISMISSAL

Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honor all people; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. **Thanks be to God.**

POST-SERVICE MUSIC

“I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say”

arr. Howard McKinney

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WILL YOU MEET US?
A Blessing for Ash Wednesday

Will you meet us
in the ashes,
will you meet us
in the ache
and show your face
within our sorrow
and offer us
your word of grace:

That you are life
within the dying,
that you abide
within the dust,
that you are what
survives the burning,
that you arise
to make us new.

And in our aching,
you are breathing;
and in our weeping,
you are here
within the hands
that bear your blessing,
enfolding us
within your love.

—Jan Richardson
from *Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the
Seasons*