

## February 18, 2026

### Ash Wednesday

### Service of the Word

*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!** We are glad to have you join us in worship this evening. Here are a few notes to help you feel more at home participating in our worship.

**Welcome Cards & Prayer Requests.** In the pew in front of you, are “Welcome Cards.” If you are a guest today or if you have a prayer request, please take a moment to fill out a card, and place it in the plate during the offering.

**Worshipping.** Today’s service is printed in this bulletin. Parts in **bold** indicate responses by everyone in which you are invited to participate.

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ST. STEPHEN’S LUTHERAN CHURCH  
270 South Broadway | Hicksville NY 11801  
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Mason Griffin, Minister of Music

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✠ GATHERING ✠

*ENTER IN SILENCE*

**GREETING**

**A** The Lord be with you.

**C** And also with you.

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

**A** 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.

**C** Amen.

✠ WORD ✠

**FIRST READING: JOEL 2:1-2, 12-17**

A reading from Joel.

<sup>1</sup> 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—<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; <sup>13</sup> rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from punishment. <sup>14</sup> 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?

<sup>15</sup> Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; <sup>16</sup> gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her canopy.

<sup>17</sup> 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.                      **C** Thanks be to God.

**PSALM: PSALM 51:1-17** (*PSALM WILL BE READ RESPONSIVELY*)

<sup>1</sup> Have mercy on me, O God, according to your <sup>1</sup> steadfast love; in your great compassion blot out <sup>1</sup> my offenses.

<sup>2</sup> **Wash me through and through <sup>1</sup> from my wickedness, and cleanse me <sup>1</sup> from my sin.**

<sup>3</sup> For I know <sup>1</sup> my offenses, and my sin is ev- <sup>1</sup> er before me.

<sup>4</sup> **Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil <sup>1</sup> in your sight; so you are justified when you speak and right <sup>1</sup> in your judgment. R**

<sup>5</sup> Indeed, I was born <sup>1</sup> steeped in wickedness, a sinner from my <sup>1</sup> mother's womb.

<sup>6</sup> **Indeed, you delight in truth <sup>1</sup> deep within me, and would have me know wisdom <sup>1</sup> deep within.**

<sup>7</sup> Remove my sins with hyssop, and I <sup>1</sup> shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be pur- <sup>1</sup> er than snow.

<sup>8</sup> **Let me hear <sup>1</sup> joy and gladness; that the body you have broken <sup>1</sup> may rejoice. R**

<sup>9</sup> Hide your face <sup>1</sup> from my sins, and blot out <sup>1</sup> all my wickedness.

<sup>10</sup> **Create in me a clean <sup>1</sup> heart, O God, and renew a right spir- <sup>1</sup> it within me.**

<sup>11</sup> Cast me not away <sup>1</sup> from your presence, and take not your Holy Spir- <sup>1</sup> it from me.

<sup>12</sup> **Restore to me the joy of <sup>1</sup> your salvation and sustain me with your boun- <sup>1</sup> tiful Spirit. R**

<sup>13</sup> Let me teach your ways <sup>1</sup> to offenders, and sinners shall be re- <sup>1</sup> stored to you.

<sup>14</sup> **Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of <sup>1</sup> my salvation, and my tongue shall sing <sup>1</sup> of your righteousness.**

<sup>15</sup> O Lord, o- <sup>1</sup> pen my lips, and my mouth shall pro- <sup>1</sup> claim your praise.

<sup>16</sup> **For you take no delight in sacrifice, or <sup>1</sup> I would give it. You are not pleased <sup>1</sup> with burnt offering.**

<sup>17</sup> The sacrifice of God is a <sup>1</sup> troubled spirit; a troubled and broken heart, O God, you will <sup>1</sup> not despise. **R**

**SECOND READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:20B—6:10**

A reading from 2 Corinthians.

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

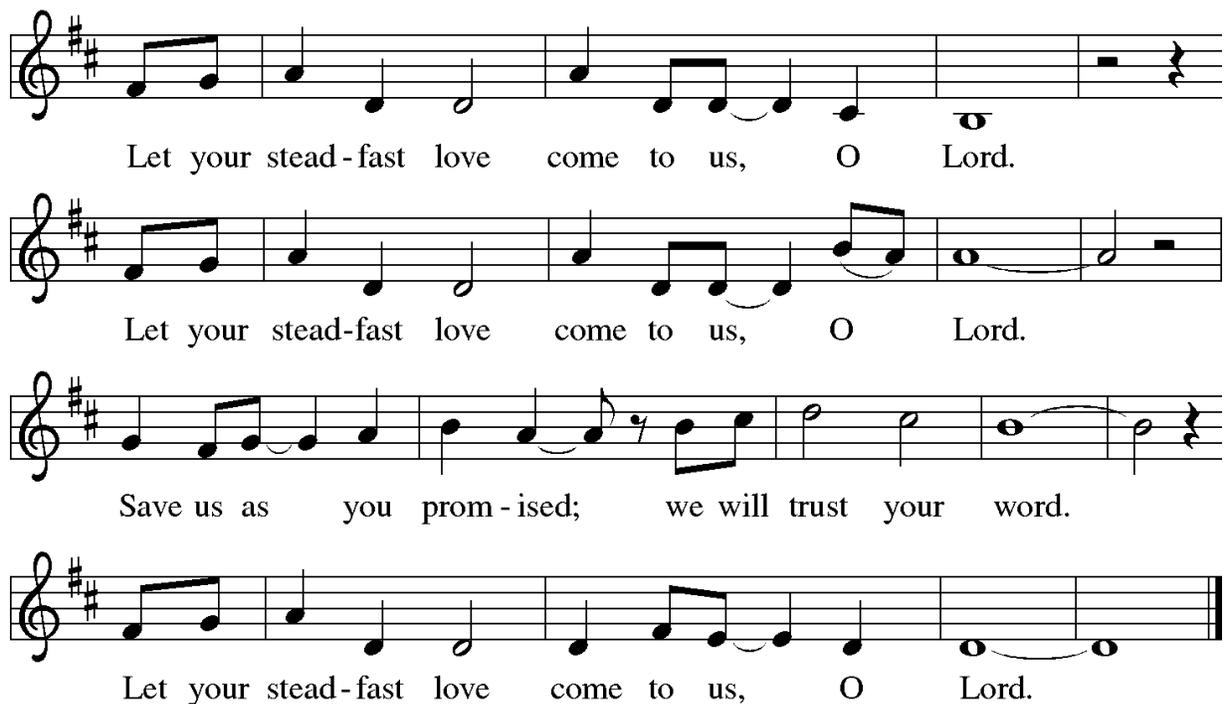
<sup>6:1</sup> As we work together with him, we entreat you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. <sup>2</sup> For he says,

“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! <sup>3</sup> We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, <sup>4</sup> but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: in great endurance, afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup> beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; <sup>6</sup> in purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, <sup>7</sup> truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the

left; <sup>8</sup> in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors and yet are true, <sup>9</sup> as unknown and yet are well known, as dying and look—we are alive, as punished and yet not killed, <sup>10</sup> as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing everything.

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

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



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

**A** The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**C** Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said to the disciples: <sup>1</sup> “Beware of practicing your righteousness before others in order to be seen by them, for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

<sup>2</sup> “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. <sup>3</sup> But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup> so that your alms may be done in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>5</sup> “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. <sup>6</sup> 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.

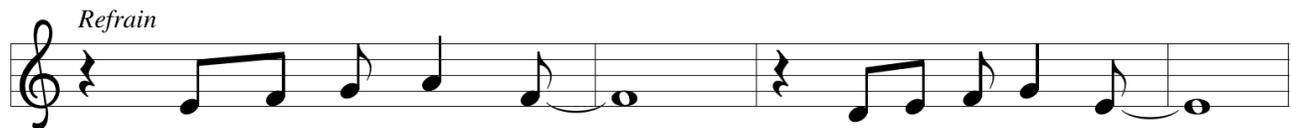
<sup>16</sup> “And whenever you fast, do not look somber, like the hypocrites, for they mark their faces to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. <sup>17</sup> But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup> so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>19</sup> “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup> but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

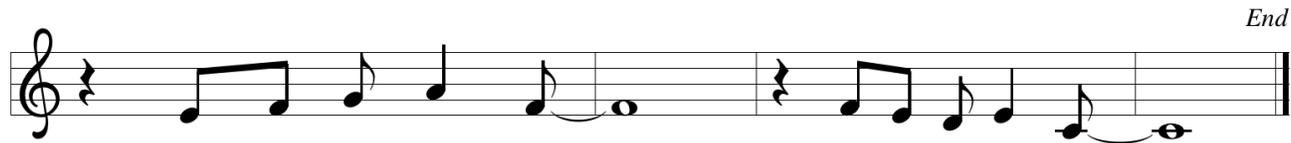
...The gospel of the Lord.

**C Praise to you, O Christ.**

**HYMN OF THE DAY: 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.

Text: Eddie Espinosa, b. 1953  
Music: CHANGE MY HEART, Eddie Espinosa  
Text and music © 1982 Mercy/Vineyard Publishing, admin. Music Services

## INVITATION TO LENT

A 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. We 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

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

A Most holy and merciful God,      **C 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.**

A 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.

**C Have mercy on us, O God.**

A 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.

**C Have mercy on us, O God.**

A Our past unfaithfulness, the pride, envy, hypocrisy, and apathy that have infected our lives, we confess to you.      **C Have mercy on us, O God.**

A Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people, we confess to you.      **C Have mercy on us, O God.**

A Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to share the faith that is in us, we confess to you.      **C Have mercy on us, O God.**

A Our neglect of human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty, we confess to you.      **C Have mercy on us, O God.**

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

**C Have mercy on us, O God.**

A Our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us, we confess to you.      **C Have mercy on us, O God.**

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

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

### **IMPOSITION OF ASHES**

A Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. May these ashes be a sign of our mortality and penitence, reminding us that only by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ are we given eternal life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**C Amen.**

A Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation,      **C that we may show forth your glory in the world.**

A By the cross and passion of your Son, our Savior,      **C bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.**

A 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.

**C Amen.**

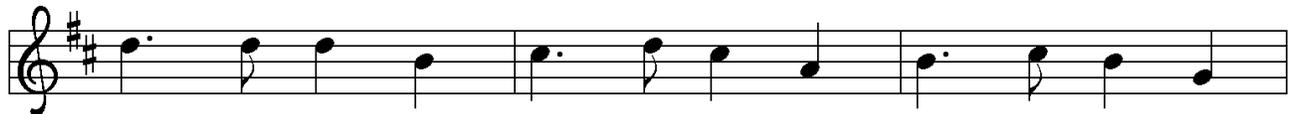
**SONG DURING THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES: HEALER OF OUR EVERY ILL (ELW 612)**



Heal - er of our ev - 'ry ill, light of each to - mor - row,



give us peace be - yond our fear, and hope be - yond our sor - row.



- 1 You who know our fears and sad - ness, grace us with your
- 2 In the pain and joy be - hold - ing how your grace is
- 3 Give us strength to love each oth - er, ev - 'ry sis - ter,
- 4 You who know each thought and feel - ing, teach us all your



peace and glad - ness; Spir - it of all com - fort, fill our hearts.  
 still un - fold - ing, give us all your vi - sion, God of love.  
 ev - 'ry broth - er; Spir - it of all kind - ness, be our guide.  
 way of heal - ing; Spir - it of com - pas - sion, fill each heart.

Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950  
 Music: HEALER OF OUR EVERY ILL, Marty Haugen  
 Text and music © 1987 GIA Publications, Inc., 7404 S. Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60638. www.giamusic.com. 800.442.3358.  
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**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

**A** Reconciled by God's mercy and sustained by God's presence, let us pray for the world and its needs.

**A** Guide your church, O God. Accompany all Christians in this season of repentance, and renew our faith in the riches of grace you give to us in baptism. Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.**

**A** Heal this earth, O God. Satisfy the needs of every parched place, every diverse ecosystem, every suffering creature. Though all return to dust, grant beauty and purpose to each living thing. Hear us, O God. **C Your mercy is great.**

A Restore the nations, O God. Let your healing spring up quickly across the world. Give all in authority the will to loose the bonds of injustice and let any who are oppressed go free. Hear us, O God.                   **C Your mercy is great.**

A Deliver your people, O God. Comfort any whose hearts are rent by grief, uphold any who are sick, bring food to those who hunger, and give housing to all without shelter. Hear us, O God.                   **C Your mercy is great.**

A Bless this assembly, O God. Reconcile us to one another and to you. Strengthen our resolve to fast from evil, open our hands in sharing, and quicken our prayer. Hear us, O God.                   **C Your mercy is great.**

A Hold us forever, O God. We thank you for all who now know their treasure in heaven, and for all who on earth proclaimed your abounding, steadfast love. Hear us, O God.  
**C Your mercy is great.**

A Receive our prayers, O God, through Jesus Christ, our strength and salvation.  
**C Amen.**

✠ MEAL ✠

**OFFERING SONG:** *CREATE IN ME A CLEAN HEART (CAPERS)* (ELW 185)

Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re - new a right  
spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a - way from your  
pres - ence, and take not your Ho - ly Spir - it from me.  
Re - store to me the joy of your sal - va - tion, and up - hold me  
with your free Spir - it. Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God,  
and re - new a right spir - it with - in me.

Music: *Liturgy of Joy*, James M. Capers, b. 1948  
Music © 1993 Augsburg Fortress.

**OFFERING PRAYER**

A 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. **C Amen.**

## LORD'S PRAYER

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

**C 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.**

✠ SENDING ✠

## DISMISSAL

A 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.           **C Thanks be to God.**

### *Serving at Worship this evening*

<b>Assisting Ministers</b> .....	Beth Feeney & Christel LaVorgna	<b>Usher</b> .....	Kevin Barcavage
<b>Lector</b> .....	Brianna Feeney	<b>Greeter</b> .....	Maureen O'Brien
<b>Acolyte</b> .....	Kiko Reyes	<b>Audio/Visual</b> .....	Tyler LaVorgna
<b>Music Director</b> .....	Mason Griffin	<b>Altar Guild</b> .....	Allison Barone & Jane Ebersberger

## Upcoming Commemorations

### **Martin Luther, renewer of the church, died 1546**

**Wednesday, February 18, 2026**

Though he began his adult church life as a simple Augustinian monk, Luther challenged the abuses he saw in the church, and his work eventually led to the Protestant Reformation. Luther's accomplishments included liturgical reform, translation of the Bible, and creation of the Small and Large Catechisms.

### **Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, martyr, died 156**

**Monday, February 23, 2026**

Because he is said to have been known by John, the author of Revelation, as well as the important early church fathers Irenaeus and Ignatius, Polycarp serves as a vital link in church history. He was burned at the stake at age 86 for refusing to renounce his faith.

### **Elizabeth Fedde, deaconess, died 1921**

**Wednesday, February 25, 2026**

Born in Norway and trained there as a deaconess, Fedde was asked to come and minister to the poor and to seamen in New York City. She established the Deaconess House in Brooklyn as well as Deaconess Hospital in Minneapolis.