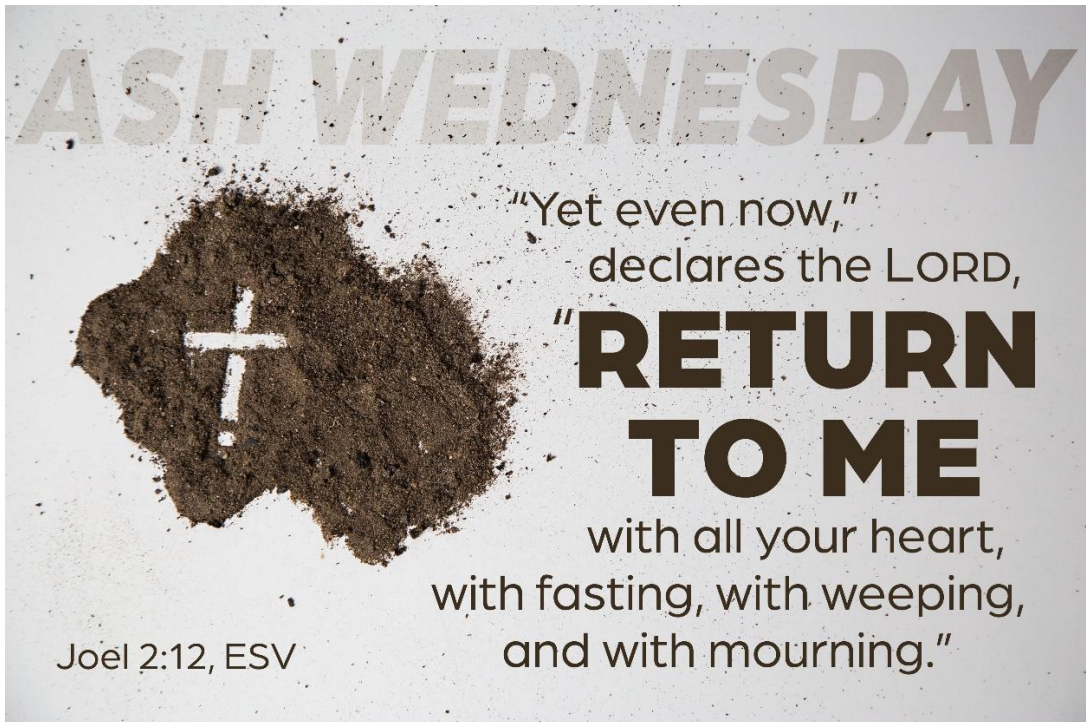
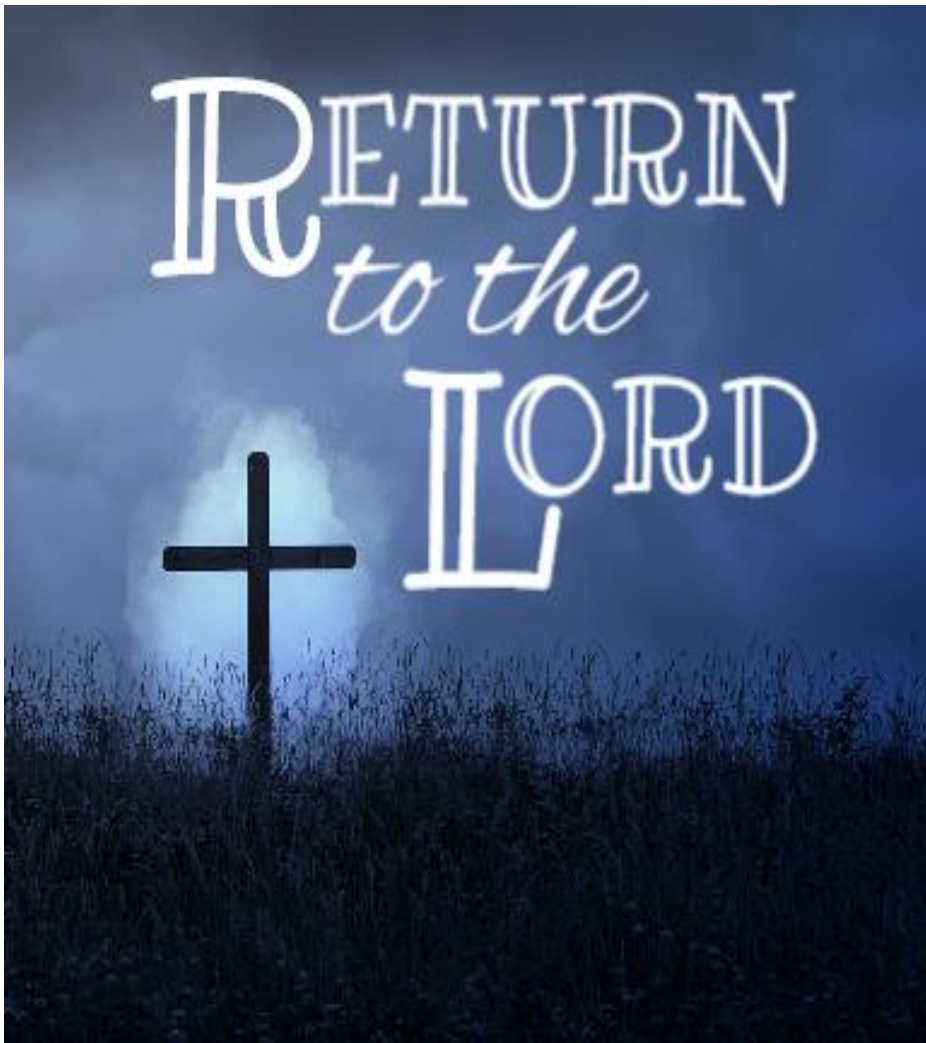

Lent begins with a solemn call to fasting and repentance as we begin our journey to the baptismal waters of Easter. As we hear in tonight's readings, now is the acceptable time to return to the Lord. During Lent the people of God will reflect on the meaning of their baptism into Christ's death and resurrection. 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.

"We adore you O Christ, and we praise you, because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world."





ASH WEDNESDAY
MARCH 5, 2025

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH

Stratford, Ontario

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People of Zion

Rev. Jeffrey Laustsen

Sister Jean Widmeyer

Andrew Elian

Laura Burton

Éric Charbonneau

Ministers

Pastor

Visitation Minister

Minister of Music

Organist

Pianist

Ash Wednesday

March 5, 2025

WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS

GATHERING HYMN 606: “Our Father, We Have Wandered”

GREETING

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

L: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

L: Let us pray:

C:. **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 Saviour 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

PSALM: 51:1-17

SECOND READING: 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

GOSPEL: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

SERMON

HYMN 793: “Be Thou My Vision”

INVITATION TO LENT

L: 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 neighbours, 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 neighbour. 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

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

Silence for reflection and self-examination

L: 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.

L: We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven.

C: Have mercy on us, O God,

- L: 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,**
- L: 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,**
- L: Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people, we confess to you.
- C: Have mercy on us, O God,**
- L: Our negligence in worship and prayer, and our failure to share the faith that is in us, we confess to you.
- C: Have mercy on us, O God,**
- L: 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,**
- L: Our false judgments, our uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbours, and our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us, we confess to you.
- C: Have mercy on us, O God,**
- L: 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,**
- L: Restore us, O God, and let your anger depart from us.
- C: Hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.**

THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES

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- L: 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 Saviour and Lord.
- C: Amen.**

The congregation is invited to come forward to receive the ashes on the forehead and to hear the ancient word: "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return."

L: Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation,

C: that we may show forth your glory in the world.

L: By the cross and passion of your Son, our Saviour.

C: bring us with all your saints to the joy of Christ's resurrection.

L: 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.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

L: Sustained by God's abundant mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

L: O Lord, our God, you gather your church and call us to return to you. Accompany us throughout our Lenten pilgrimage. Create in us clean hearts and renew all the baptized to declare your praise. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

L: Renew your creation, O God. Bring rains to parched places and heal lands affected by a changing climate, that all inhabitants of the earth experience your abundance. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

L: Renew the nations, O God. Give voice to those on the margins and resolve to world leaders who seek to protect those most vulnerable. Loosen the bonds of injustice and bring an end to all violence, oppression, and persecution. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

L: Renew your people, O God. Respond to those who cry out to you in secret or in seclusion. Equip us with compassion to care for those who experience homelessness, food insecurity, economic hardship, and illness (especially Marleen, Linda, Bonnie, Elaine, Garry, Glenn, Joy, Todd, Gwen, Jim, Dan, Mike, Jack, Cindy, Diane, Gloria, Kathleen, Tony, Katie, Paul, Wendy, Joan, Devon, Hollice, Joyce, Maria, Tom, Marian, Anne, Leanne, Isabelle, Al, Melinda, Brian, Paul, Nya, and Cathy). Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

L: Renew this congregation, O God. Inspire our faith formation ministries and those who teach and lead. Invigorate us with lifelong curiosity and wonder as we grow as your disciples. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

L: O Lord, our God, we give thanks for all your faithful ones of every time and place. Renew us by the example of their lives of prayer and service, and at the last, bring us with them into your everlasting presence. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

L: We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your steadfast love and your promise to renew your whole creation; through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

C: Amen.

SHARING THE PEACE

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OFFERING HYMN 186: “Create in Me a Clean Heart”

OFFERTORY PRAYER

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THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

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COMMUNION PRAYER

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THE LORD’S PRAYER

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DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Distribution Hymns: 460, 324

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

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BLESSING

L: May the peace of Christ bless your journey into Lent.

C: Now is the time, today is the day of salvation!

HYMN 592: “Just As I Am”

DISMISSAL