



Lent

RETURN TO THE LORD
your God,
FOR HE IS
gracious and
MERCIFUL.

JOEL 2:13

ASH WEDNESDAY
FEBRUARY 18, 2026

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Ministers

Pastor

Visitation Minister

Minister of Music

Organist

Pianist

Ash Wednesday

February 18, 2026

PRELUDE

WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS

GATHERING HYMN 600: “Out of the Depths I Cry to You”

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 ACCLAMATION

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

SERMON

HYMN 592: “Just As I Am, without One Plea”

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 Bev, Jim, Wayne, Doris, Matthew, Marjorie, Bill, Marie, Jamie, Marleen, Nancy, Gwen, Jim, Jack, Diane, Gloria, Kathleen, Tony, Paul, Wendy, Devon, Hollice, Maria, Tom, Marian, Leanne, Isabelle, Al, 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: 605, 608

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 319: “O Lord, Throughout These Forty Days”

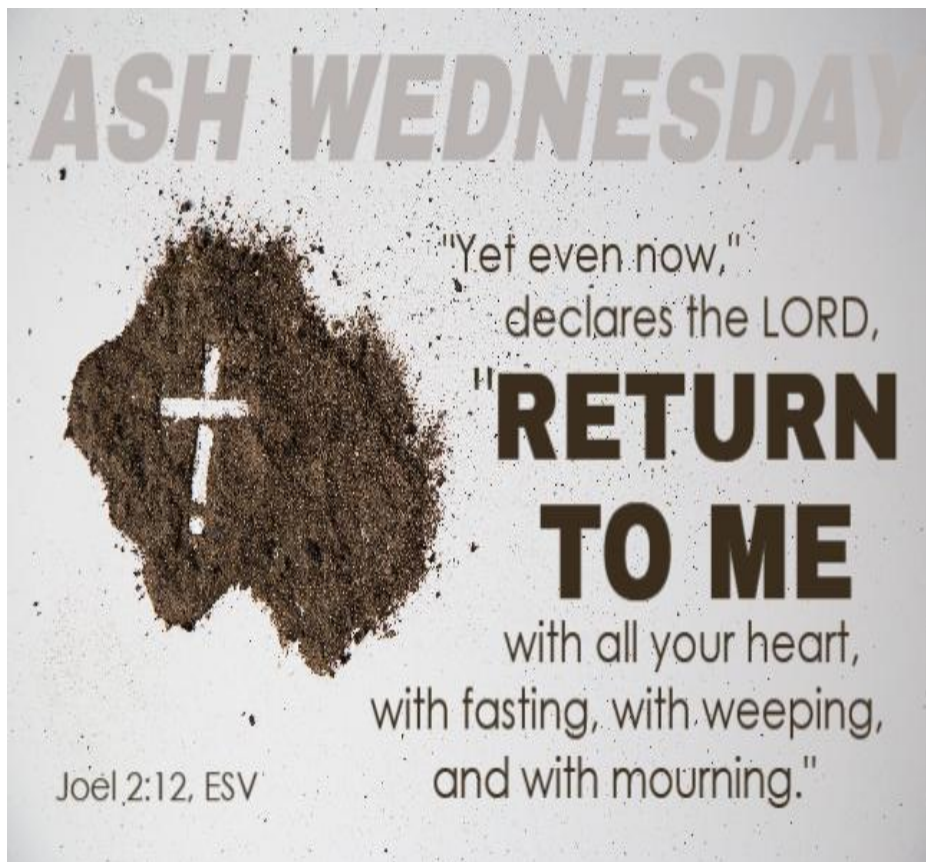
DISMISSAL

POSTLUDE



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."



5 Prayers to Prepare Your Heart for Lent

By: [Jennifer Waddle](#)

Preparing your heart to observe [Lent](#) is an important step in setting your mind on “things above, not on earthly things.” ([Colossians 3:2](#)) While there are many things you can put into practice, such as abstaining from certain habits, attending additional church services, or meditating on God’s Word, the most common component of [Lent](#) is prayer.

This year, I encourage you to seek the Lord with your whole heart, mind, soul, and strength. Admit things need to be addressed and commit them to the Lord. Allow Him to do mighty work in you as you focus on the centrality of the Lenten season - Jesus.

I hope that these prayers will usher you into a meaningful season of remembrance, refrain, and rest. Here are five prayers to prepare your heart for [Lent](#):

1. A Prayer of Thanksgiving

Heavenly Father, Thank You for giving me the most precious reason to observe Lent. Jesus is my focus as I enter this season with gratitude and praise. Thank You for sending Him to be my Savior and Redeemer. I am continually humbled at the love You displayed through the sacrifice of Your Son on the cross, and I commit to remembering the price He paid as I offer my own sacrifices for Lent. In remembrance of Him, I commit to refraining from certain things that have stolen my affection. I turn my focus to You now in adoration and praise. My heart is full of deep gratitude for how You’ve worked in my life, and in the days leading up to Resurrection Sunday, help me recall the many blessings You’ve given. I purpose to let this season of Lent be a time of thanksgiving - rejoicing in my soul to the God who saves me. In the mighty name of Jesus, Amen.

2. A Prayer of Reflection

Gracious God, as I practice Lent this year, let it be a time of deep reflection on your goodness and faithfulness. Help me carve out time to meditate on Your Word and journal about how You have come through for me. As I reflect, please remind me that even in my worst moments, You were with me. You have never left me nor forsaken me. Show me the ways in which You have turned what the enemy meant for evil into something for my good. Remind me of Your precious promises that never fail. Please

fill me with a sense of oneness with You as I abide in Jesus and remain in His fold. Thank You for being the Lord of my life - past, present, and future. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

3. A Prayer of Repentance

Holy God, in preparation for Lent, I come before You in humble repentance. I know I've stepped outside of Your will in certain areas of life, and I am truly sorry, Lord. Whatever needs to change in me, please make it clear during these days of Lent. Press on my heart the things that need to go. I am ready and willing to live wholeheartedly for You, and I no longer want to be bound by what my flesh desires. Thank You for your Word that says You are "faithful and just, cleansing me from all unrighteousness." ([1 John 1:9](#)) I am grateful for Your forgiveness and the cleansing power of Your Spirit. Thank You for Your faithfulness as I commit my life to You once again. In Jesus' holy name, Amen.

4. A Prayer of Hope

Lord, one of the reasons I am observing Lent this year is to have my hope restored. With everything going on in the world, I need an infilling of Your precious promises to carry me through. Please, God, let this be a time of strengthening so that I will not falter in the coming days. Fill my heart with good and pleasant things, reminding me there is always hope. Help me see things as You see them - on Your eternal timeline. Most of all, remind me that You are the God of all hope, and all things are possible with You. Indeed, my hope is in You, today, tomorrow, and always. In Jesus' name, Amen.

5. A Prayer of Renewal

Lord God, in this space reserved for Lent, a time for renewal and restoration, I pray for Your mighty hand to work in my life. Oh, how I need the presence of Your Spirit! Please, God, as I look forward to Easter and the newness of spring, let it be a time of personal growth. Prune the branches in me that are not bearing fruit and cultivate the parts that are ready to flourish. I know that in Jesus, I have fullness of life, and it is in His fullness I long to live. Thank You for the abundance You provide. Fill my heart with an overflowing sense of Your presence and purpose. In Jesus' precious name, I pray, Amen.