



ASH WEDNESDAY

Ash Wednesday

February 22, 2023

7:00 pm

Ascension Lutheran Church

Unfinished: Discovering God's Call in the Not Yet
Ash Wednesday
Called to Renewal



Questions to ponder this evening:

What do you see in this image?

What are your favorite spiritual practices?

What spiritual practices have you tried, but struggle with?

What resets is God calling you to in your spiritual life?

What gets in the way of you focusing on the reign of God in the here and now?

Think about your daily life of faith. What do you learn by doing?

Think about this congregation. What are our primary spiritual practices?

When have you felt like you needed to “hit the reset button?”

Spiritual Practices to Consider this Lent:

Choose a spiritual practice for the season of Lent. Plan your practice. Practice your plan.

Keep a prayer journal.

Begin and end each day, marking yourself with the sign of the cross and saying these words, “I am God’s beloved child, cross-marked and Spirit-sealed.”

What spiritual practice might you try this Lent?

Prayer: Turn me toward you, O God, to Lenten practices that call me from death to life.
In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

+ GATHERING +

Prelude *O How He Loves You and Me* ~ by Kurt Kaiser/arr. J. M Rasley

Call to Worship

L: Living our lives in the space between the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and the final fulfillment of God's hope-filled promises, we come to this Lenten season, remembering our shared baptismal life and seeking to be renewed in our faith in God and in our love toward our neighbors. As we embark on this Lenten pilgrimage, we trust that God is with us, and God will lead us to discover again and anew God's call for each of us in daily life.

C: Create in us new and contrite spirits.

L: Examine us, O God

C: And know our hearts.

L: Test us and discover our thoughts,

C: Lead us in the way everlasting.

Opening Hymn

"Restore in Us, O God"

ELW 328



1 Re - store in us, O God, the splen - dor of your love; re -
2 O Spir - it, wake in us the won - der of your pow'r; from
3 Bring us, O Christ, to share the full - ness of your joy; bap -
4 Three - per - soned God, ful - fill the prom - ise of your grace, that



new your im - age in our hearts, and all our sins re - move.
fruit - less fear un - furl our lives like spring - time bud and flow'r.
tize us in the ris - en life that death can - not de - stroy.
we, when all our search - ing ends, may see you face to face.

The Invocation

P: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever.

C: Amen.

Prayer of the Day

P: Let us pray.

We hear you calling us to return to you with all our heart, O God.

Guide us in the in between times of our lives,
to a renewed and valuable sense of purpose.

Renew in us a right spirit.

Turn us toward you through Lenten practices
that call us from death to life.

In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

C: Amen.

+ WORD +

First Lesson

Isaiah 58:1-12

AM: A reading from Isaiah.

¹Shout out, do not hold back!

Lift up your voice like a trumpet!
Announce to my people their rebellion,
to the house of Jacob their sins.

²Yet day after day they seek me
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness
and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;
they ask of me righteous judgments,
they delight to draw near to God.

³“Why do we fast, but you do not see?
Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?”
Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day,
and oppress all your workers.

⁴Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to strike with a wicked fist.
Such fasting as you do today
will not make your voice heard on high.

⁵Is such the fast that I choose,
a day to humble oneself?
Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?
Will you call this a fast,
a day acceptable to the LORD?

⁶Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

⁷Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

⁸Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you,
the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

⁹Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,

¹⁰if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.

¹¹The LORD will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.

¹²Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.

L: The Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**



Gospel Acclamation "We are Turning, Lord to Hear You"



We are turn - ing, Lord, to hear you; you are mer - ci - ful and kind—



slow to an - ger, rich in bless - ing, and with love to us in - clined.

Holy Gospel

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the sixth chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said to the disciples: "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. "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. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

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. 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.

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. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 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.

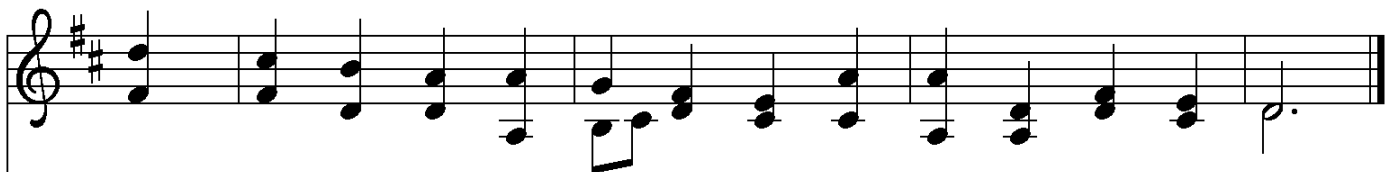
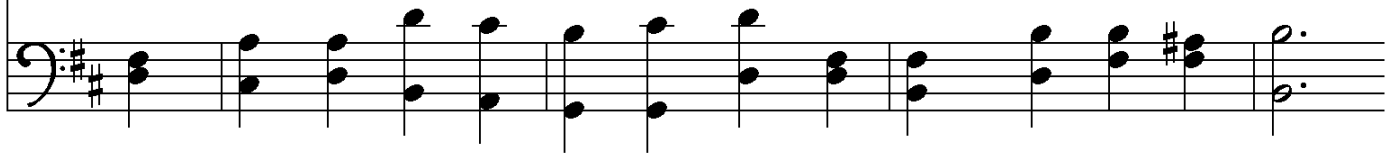
Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

P: The Gospel of our Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.



- 1 Lord, teach us how to pray a - right, with rev - 'rence and with fear.
- 2 We per - ish if we cease from prayer; oh, grant us pow'r to pray.
- 3 Give deep hu - mil - i - ty; the sense of god - ly sor - row give;
- 4 Faith in the on - ly sac - ri - fice that can for sin a - tone;
- 5 Give these, and then your will be done; thus strength-ened with all might,



Though dust and ash - es in your sight, we may, we must draw near.
 And when to meet you we pre - pare, Lord, meet us on our way.
 a strong de - sire, with con - fi - dence, to hear your voice and live;
 to cast our hopes, to fix our eyes on Christ, on Christ a - lone.
 we, through your Spir - it and your Son, shall pray, and pray a - right.



Invitation to Lent

P: 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 stand on the threshold of the holy season of Lent, acknowledging our need 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 sin separates us from God, our neighbors, and creation. We do not enjoy the life our Creator intended.

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to spiritual practices that contend against evil and resists whatever leads us away from love of God and neighbor. I invite you, therefore, to the disciplines of Lent - self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love - strengthened by the gifts of word of sacrament. Let us journey together through these forty days, renewing our life in Christ and remembering Jesus's passover from death to life.

Confession of Sin

P: Let us confess our sins in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence is kept for reflection and self-examination.

P: God of renewal,

**C: We confess that in this unfinished life,
we have turned away from you.**

**Our practices can be self-serving,
and our motivations can be self-centered.**

**Turn us again to you
in our being and in our doing
so that cross-marked and Spirit-sealed,
we may be renewed in your call for our lives,
Through Jesus Christ,
Our Savior and Lord.**

P: God who is rich in mercy, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love has come to us in Jesus, who by his holy cross has redeemed the world. Buried with Christ by baptism into death,
Your sins are forgiven in +Jesus' name.

Cross-marked and Spirit-sealed

You are raised to new life.

Almighty God strengthen you in faith

To live each day renewed in God's call for your life.

C: Amen.

Imposition of Ashes



P: Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth.
May these ashes be a sign of our mortality and penitence,
and of your loving and forgiving embrace,
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.

*People may come forward to receive the ashes.
The Pastor marks the forehead of each person with a cross of ashes, saying:*

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

Hymn

“Sundays Palms are Wednesdays Ashes”

Verse 1

Sunday's palms are Wednesday's ashes
As another Lent begins
Thus we kneel before our Maker
In contrition for our sins
We have marred baptismal pledges
In rebellion gone astray
Now returning seek forgiveness
Grant us pardon God this day

Verse 2

We have failed to love our neighbors
Their offences to forgive
Have not listened to their troubles
Nor have cared just how they live
We are jealous proud impatient
Loving over much our things
May the yielding of our failings
Be our Lenten offerings

Verse 3

We are hasty to judge others
Blind to proof of human need
And our lack of understanding
Demonstrates our inner greed
We have wasted earth's resources
Want and suffering we've ignored
Come and cleanse us then restore us
Make new hearts within us Lord

After those who desire ashes have received them, the Pastor continues.

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

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

P: By the cross and passion of your Son, our Savior,

C: **bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.**

P: 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

A: Drawn close to the heart of God, we offer these prayers for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

A: Renew your church, O God. When we have drifted from our call to proclaim repentance and to guide your people toward justice, lead us back to you. Encourage believers who hold the church's doors open to those who have felt excluded. Merciful God,

C: **receive our prayer.**

A: Renew our civic life, O God. Teach those in authority to advocate for the liberation of all who are oppressed and grant them courage to make difficult decisions. Merciful God,

C: **receive our prayer.**

A: Renew our lives, O God. Spare your people from diseases of the body, mind, or spirit and send healing to those overcome by illness or grief (*especially...*). Support caregivers who attend to all in need. Restore to us the joy of your salvation. Merciful God,

C: **receive our prayer.**

A: Renew this congregation, O God. During these forty days of Lent, confirm our sense of mission and expand our imagination for ministry. Deepen our faith, increase our love, and draw us into your unfolding work of healing and restoration. Merciful God,

C: **receive our prayer.**

A: As we mark ashes on our foreheads, we give you praise, O God, for all the saints who died and yet are alive with you (*especially...*). Receive us with them into your eternal embrace. Merciful God,

C: **receive our prayer.**

A: Accept the prayers we bring, O God, on behalf of a world in need, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

C: **Amen.**

Sharing of Christ's Peace

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: **And also with you.**

Chancel Choir Anthem *Gentle Shepherd* ~by W. J. Gaither/arr. Livingston

+ MEAL +

Holy Communion

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: **We lift them to the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

C: You are indeed holy, almighty and merciful God. You are most holy, and great is the majesty of your glory.

You so loved the world that you gave your only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.

We give you thanks for his coming into the world. to fulfill for us your holy will and to accomplish all things for our salvation.

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.

Remembering, therefore, his salutary command,
his life-giving passion and death, his glorious resurrection and ascension,
and the promise of his coming again,
we give thanks to you, O Lord God Almighty,
not as we ought but as we are able;
we ask you mercifully to accept our praise and thanksgiving
and with your Word and Holy Spirit to bless us, your servants,
and these your own gifts of bread and wine,
so that we and all who share in the body and blood of Christ
may be filled with heavenly blessing and grace,
and, receiving the forgiveness of sin,
may be formed to live as your holy people
and be given our inheritance with all your saints.

To you, O God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be all honor and glory in your holy church, now and forever.

Lord's Prayer

P: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**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.**

Invitation to Communion

P: Here is food and drink for the journey.

Take and be filled.

Please be seated to take the elements.

Sharing of the Bread and Cup

All who seek God and a deeper life in Christ are welcome to participate in Holy Communion. Those who have not received instruction and desire to do so, please see the pastor. You are invited to receive the elements at this invitation with the words from the pastor: "The body of Christ given for you. The blood of Christ shed for you." Communion cups are on the back table.

All things of dust to dust return
on earth and in the sky.
The hottest, brightest suns that burn
in time grow dim and die.
The fish that leap, the birds that soar,
the newborn young that play,
the leaves that fill the forest floor
revert to dust and clay.

Lord, mark with dust and ash my brow
so I may comprehend
that ev'ry moment here and now
links me to that same end
I share with all that breathe and burn,
that flare and fade and tire
yet by their waning light discern
your own undying fire.

Lord, mark upon my brow this sign:
a stark and barren cross
reminding me that though divine
you know my pain and loss,
and at the touch of dust and ash
awake my heart to view
how death itself is but a flash
that dies away in you.



Prayer after Communion

P: Blessed Jesus,
in this rich meal of grace,
you have fed us with your body, the bread of life.
Now send us forth to bear your life-giving hope
to a world in need.

C: **Amen.**

+ SENDING +

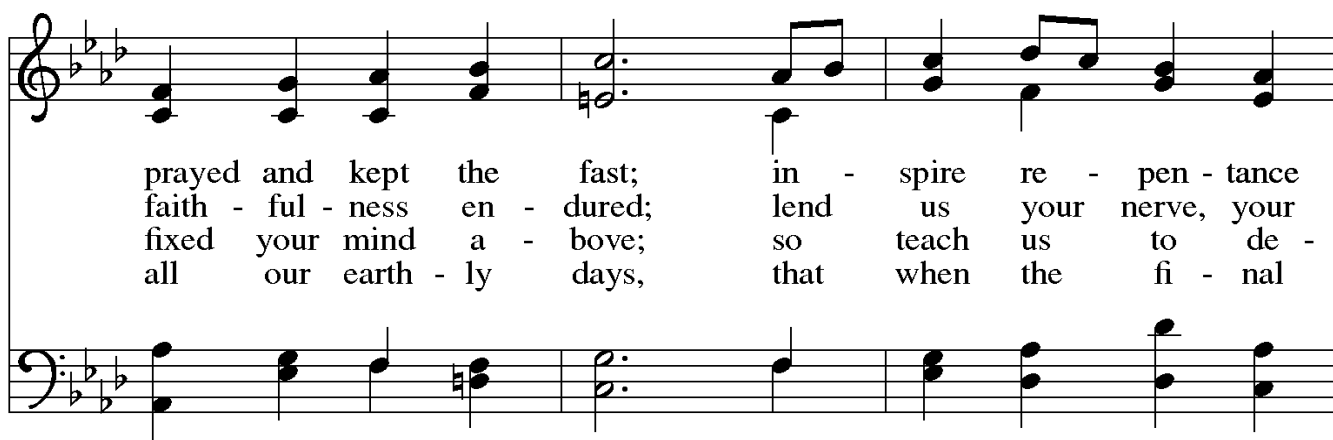
Hymn

"O Lord, Throughout These Forty Days"

ELW 338



1 O Lord, through - out these for - ty days you
2 You strove with Sa - tan, and you won; your
3 Though parched and hun - gry, yet you prayed and
4 Be with us through this sea - son, Lord, and



prayed and kept the fast; in - spire re - pen - tance
faith - ful - ness en - dured; lend us your nerve, your
fixed your mind a - bove; so teach us to de -
all our earth - ly days, that when the fi - nal



for our sin, and free us from our past.
skill and trust in God's e - ter - nal word.
ny our - selves that we may know God's love.
Eas - ter dawns, we join in heav - en's praise.

Sending Prayer

P: 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 our Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Benediction

P: Almighty God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

Dismissal

P: 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.**

Postlude *O Wondrous Image, Vision Fair* ~Traditional English/arr. by T. Shaw

Please leave your offering in one of the plates as you depart.

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Serving in Worship

Presiding Minister: Pastor Karen Asmus-Alsnauer

Assisting Minister: Jan Dahlstrom

Organist: Dr. Ed Duling

Ushers: Alan Dahlstrom, Mike Fitak

Tech Crew: Oscar Kamazima, Dave Holzapfel, Joel Kratzer

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Welcome to the holy season of Lent.

Lent 2023

The space between. The now and the not yet. We can probably all think of a host of experiences from our own lives in which we occupy the space between no longer and not yet. The space between no longer pre-pandemic life and not yet what will settle into post-pandemic life. The space between before and after a medical diagnosis, before and after living with a loss, before and after navigating a relationship change, a job change, a move. The space between childhood and adulthood, young adulthood and midlife, midlife and the autumn years. The space between yesterday and tomorrow, your comfort zone and uncharted territory. The space between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday. This year for Lent, we'll consider our calling to serve God and others in this in-between time. Our Ash Wednesday and Sunday worship will follow a theme entitled: *"UNFINISHED – Discovering God's Call in the Not Yet."*

Ash Wednesday and Sundays in Lent and Easter

Join us as we consider God's call in the "not yet".

Called to Renewal Called to Values
Called to Openness Called by God
Called to Attentiveness Called to Regret
Called to Experience God's Presence
Called to Resurrection



Midweek Lent Devotions – A Lenten Journey to Easter

Wednesdays, March 1 – 29

We hear the Old Testament stories (Creation, Flood, Red Sea, Valley of the Dry Bones, Jonah) that tells the story of our salvation.

Facebook only, posted by 12:00 noon each Wednesday.

@AscensionLutheranChurch

Services for Holy Week

April 6: Maundy Thursday

We remember Jesus' last meal with his disciples.

7:00 p.m.

April 7: Good Friday

We gather at the foot of the cross to wonder at the depth of Jesus' love.

7:00 p.m.



Printed copies of "Unfinished: A Lenten Devotional" will be available in the back of the church or the church office during the season of Lent, for you to use individually or in small groups. (They will also be in your 2023 Lenten bags).

Ascension Lutheran Church

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