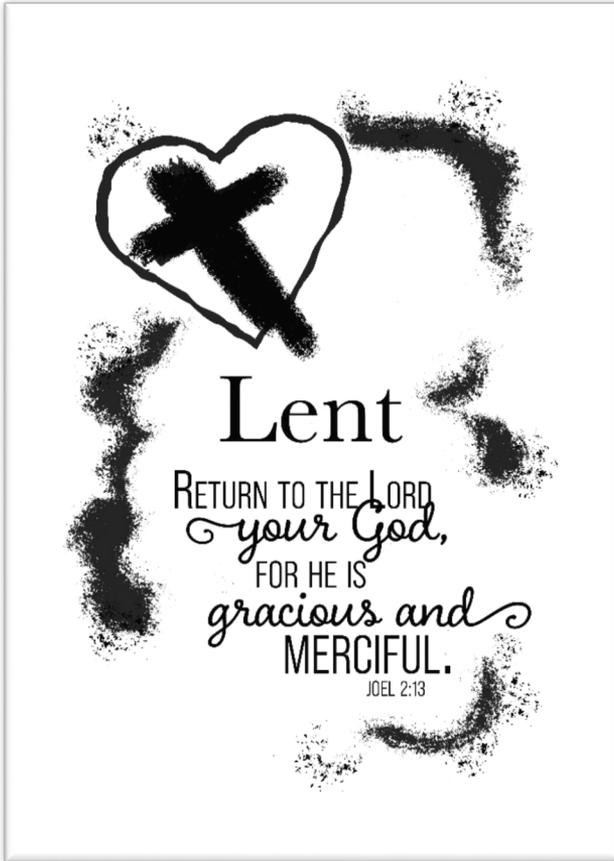


Messiah Lutheran Church

GATHER, EMPOWER, SERVE



✠ Holy Communion ✠

Ash Wednesday

February 18, 2026



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.

GATHERING

The congregation gathers in silence. When the pastor enters, please stand.

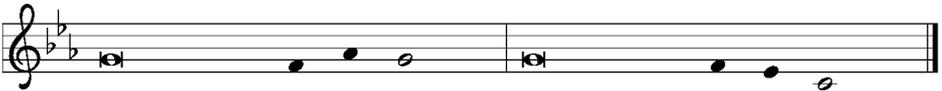
Psalmody: PSALM 51:1-17

The cantor sings the refrain; the congregation repeats it.



Have mer-cy on me, O God, ac-cord-ing to your stead-fast love.

Sung responsively between the cantor and congregation.



- ¹Have 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.**
- ³For I know | my offenses,
and my sin is ev- | er 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. R**
- ⁵Indeed, 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.**
- ⁷Remove my sins with hyssop, and I | shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be pur- | er than snow.
- ⁸**Let me hear | joy and gladness;
that the body you have broken | may rejoice. R**
- ⁹Hide your face | from my sins,
and blot out | all my wickedness.
- ¹⁰**Create in me a clean | heart, O God,
and renew a right spir- | it within me.**

- ¹¹Cast me not away | from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spir- | it from me.
- ¹²**Restore to me the joy of | your salvation
and sustain me with your boun- | tiful Spirit. R**
- ¹³Let me teach your ways | to offenders,
and sinners shall be re- | stored to you.
- ¹⁴**Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of | my salvation,
and my tongue shall sing | of your righteousness.**
- ¹⁵O Lord, o- | pen my lips,
and my mouth shall pro- | claim your praise.
- ¹⁶**For you take no delight in sacrifice, or | I would give it.
You are not pleased | with burnt offering.**
- ¹⁷The sacrifice of God is a | troubled spirit;
a troubled and broken heart, O God, you will | not despise. R

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P 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

Sit

WORD

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 declares that God is gracious and asks God to spare the people lest the nations doubt God's power to save.

A: A reading from Joel:

- ¹Blow 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—
- ²a 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.

¹²Yet even now, says the LORD,
return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;

¹³rend 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.

¹⁴Who 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?

¹⁵Blow the trumpet in Zion;
sanctify a fast;

call a solemn assembly;

¹⁶gather 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.

¹⁷Between 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?'"

A: The word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

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

The ministry of the gospel endures many challenges and hardships. Through this ministry, God's reconciling activity in the death of Christ reaches into the depths of our lives to bring us into a right relationship with God. In this way, God accepts us into the reality of divine salvation.

A: A Reading from Second Corinthians:

^{20b} We entreat you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God. ²¹ 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.

^{6:1} As we work together with him, we entreat you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. ² 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! ³ We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴ but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: in great endurance, afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵ beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶ in purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, ⁷ truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸ in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors and yet are true, ⁹ as unknown and yet are well known, as dying and look—we are alive, as punished and yet not killed, ¹⁰ as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing everything.

A: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Stand

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.

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

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said to the disciples: ¹ “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.

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 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. 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.”

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sit

SERMON.....Pastor Amme

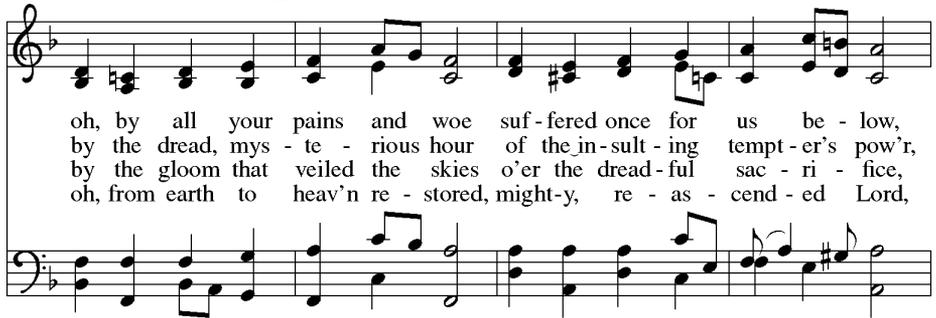
Stand

HYMN OF THE DAY *Savior, When in Dust to You*

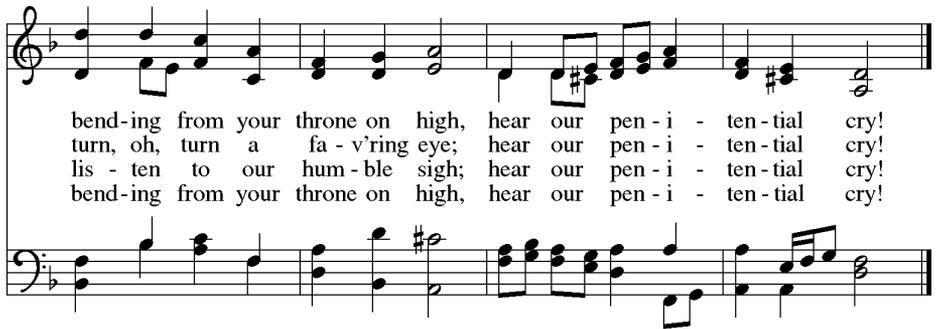
1 Sav - ior, when in dust to you low we bow in hom - age due;
 2 By your help - less in - fant years, by your life of want and tears,
 3 By your hour of dire de - spair, by your ag - o - ny of prayer,
 4 By your deep ex - pir - ing groan, by the sad se - pul - chral stone,



when, re - pen - tant, to the skies scarce we lift our weep - ing eyes;
 by your days of deep dis - tress in the sav - age wil - der - ness,
 by the cross, the nail, the thorn, pierc - ing spear, and tor - turing scorn,
 by the vault whose dark a - bode held in vain the ris - ing God,



oh, by all your pains and woe suf - fered once for us be - low,
 by the dread, mys - te - rious hour of the in - sult - ing tempt - er's pow'r,
 by the gloom that veiled the skies o'er the dread - ful sac - ri - fice,
 oh, from earth to heav'n re - stored, might - y, re - as - cend - ed Lord,



bend - ing from your throne on high, hear our pen - i - ten - tial cry!
 turn, oh, turn a fa - v'ring eye; hear our pen - i - ten - tial cry!
 lis - ten to our hum - ble sigh; hear our pen - i - ten - tial cry!
 bend - ing from your throne on high, hear our pen - i - ten - tial cry!

Text: Robert Grant, 1779–1838, alt.
 Music: ABERYSTWYTH, Joseph Parry, 1841–1903

INVITATION TO THE LENTEN DISCIPLINE

P Friends in Christ, Lent is a time to renew our life in the paschal mystery of Jesus' death and resurrection, in which we participate through the sacramental life of the church.

We begin this holy season by acknowledging our need for repentance and for the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We show our resolve to amend our lives with the sign of ashes, which speak of our mortality and symbolize our repentance.

I invite you, therefore, to observe a holy Lent, committing yourselves to self-examination and penitence, prayer and fasting, almsgiving and works of love; and to attend to the word of God and receive the sacraments of Christ as we journey through these forty days to the great Three Days of Jesus' death and resurrection.

CONFESSION OF SIN

P: Let us kneel before God, our Creator and Redeemer, and confess our sin.

Kneel

P Most holy and merciful God,

C **we confess to you and to one another,
and to the whole communion of saints
in heaven and on earth,
that we have sinned by our fault, by our own fault,
by our own most grievous fault,
in thought, word, and deed.**

P 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.**

P We have not listened 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.**

P We confess to you, O God, all our past unfaithfulness, the pride, envy, hypocrisy, and apathy that have infected our lives.

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

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

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

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

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

P We confess to you our neglect of human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

P: Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. Bless these ashes and those who receive them. May this sign of our mortality and penitence remind us that only by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ are we given eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

C: **Amen**

Sit

Those who desire to receive ashes come forward by the center aisle and return by the side aisles. The pastor applies ashes to the forehead of each person with the words:

P Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

After all who desire ashes have received them, the pastor leads the congregation in the conclusion of the confession.

Kneel

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 Lord,

C **bring us with all your saints to the joy of Christ's 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**

Stand

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

A brief silence is held after the introduction.

P: Reconciled by God’s mercy and sustained by God’s presence, let us pray for the world and its needs.

After each petition:

P: Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

The prayers conclude:

P: Receive our prayers, O God, through Jesus Christ, our strength and salvation.

C: Amen

PEACE

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

*The pastor and congregation greet one another in the name of the Lord.
Peace be with you. B: Peace be with you.*

Sit

MEAL

OFFERING

The Offering is received as the Lord’s table is prepared.

ANTHEM

Softly and Tenderly Calling.....Patti Drennen

Stand

OFFERTORY

As the gifts are presented, the Offertory is sung

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.

OFFERING PRAYER

A: Let us pray:

C: **Jesus, you are the bread of life
and the host of this meal.**

**Bless these gifts that we have gathered
that all people may know your goodness.**

**Feed us not only with this holy food
but with hunger for justice and peace.**

We pray this in your name.

Amen

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

P: We give you thanks, Father,

through Jesus Christ, your beloved Son,
whom you sent in this end of the ages
to save and redeem us and to proclaim to us your will.

He is your Word, inseparable from you,
through whom you created all things,
and in whom you take delight.

He is your Word, sent from heaven to a virgin's womb.

He there took on our nature and our lot
and was shown forth as your Son,

born of the Holy Spirit and of the virgin Mary.

He, our Lord Jesus, fulfilled all your will
and won for you a holy people;

he stretched out his hands in suffering
in order to free from suffering those who trust you.

He is the one who, handed over to a death he freely accepted,
in order to destroy death, to break the bonds of the evil one,
to crush hell underfoot, to give light to the righteous,
to establish his covenant, and to show forth the resurrection,
taking bread and giving thanks to you, said:

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

In the same way 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, then, his death and resurrection,
we take this bread and cup,
giving you thanks that you have made us worthy
to stand before you and to serve you as your priestly people.

Send your Spirit upon these gifts of your church;
gather into one all who share this bread and wine;
fill us with your Holy Spirit to establish our faith in truth,
that we may praise and glorify you through your Son Jesus Christ;
through whom all glory and honor are yours, almighty Father,
with the Holy Spirit, in your holy church, both now and forever.

C: Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

**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: Bread for the journey.
A feast for hungry hearts. Come!

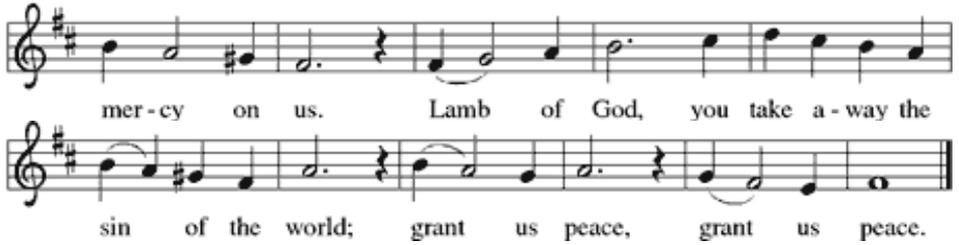
C: Thanks be to God.



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.

Sit

COMMUNION

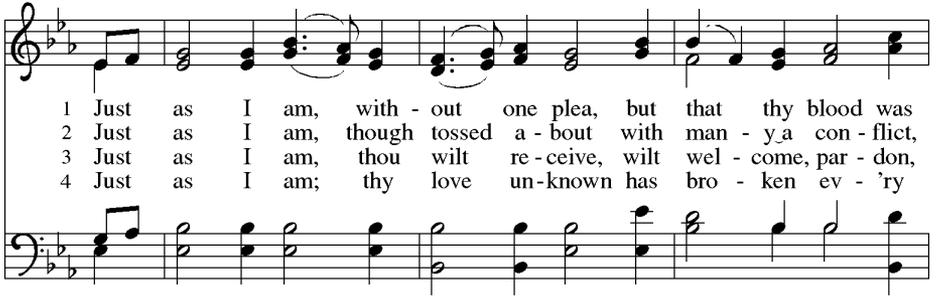
All baptized believers are invited to this holy meal. Those not communing are invited for a blessing. Please follow the instructions of the ushers to gather at the altar table. As the ministers give the bread and wine, they say these words to each communicant:

The body of Christ, given for you. The blood of Christ, shed for you.

The communicant may say: Amen

COMMUNION HYMN

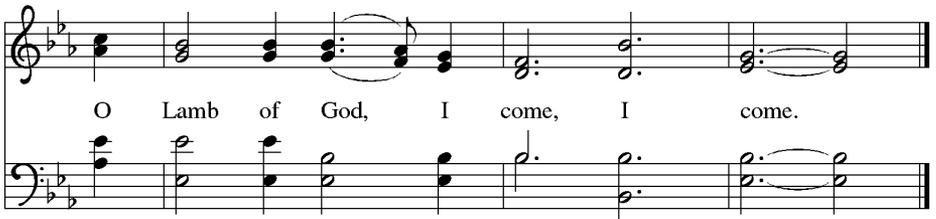
Just as I Am, without One Plea



1 Just as I am, with - out one plea, but that thy blood was
2 Just as I am, though tossed a - bout with man - ya con - flict,
3 Just as I am, thou wilt re - ceive, wilt wel - come, par - don,
4 Just as I am; thy love un - known has bro - ken ev - 'ry



shed for me, and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
man - ya doubt, fight - ings and fears with - in, with - out,
cleanse, re - lieve; be - cause thy prom - ise I be - lieve,
bar - rier down; now to be thine, yea, thine a - lone,



O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Stand

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

C Amen

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

A: Let us pray.
Generous God,
at this table we have tasted your immeasurable grace.
As grains of wheat are gathered into one bread,
now make us one loaf to feed the world;
in the name of Jesus, the Bread of life.

C: Amen

SENDING

BLESSING

P: Beloved,
we are God's own people,
holy, washed, renewed.
God bless you and keep you,
shower you with mercy,
fill you with courage,
and † give you peace.

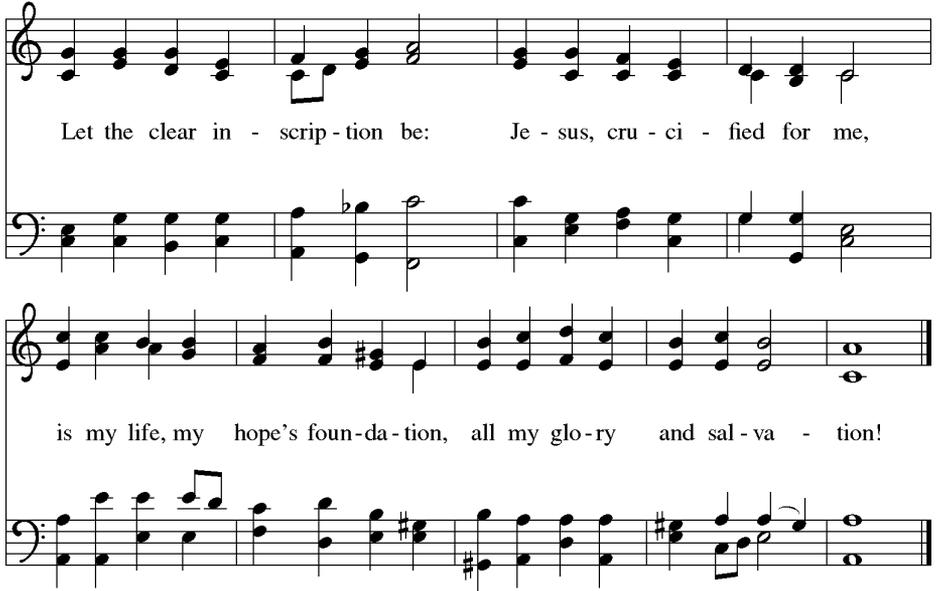
C: Amen.

SENDING HYMN *On My Heart Imprint Your Image*

On my heart im - print your im - age, bless - ed Je - sus, king of grace,

that life's trou - bles nor its plea - sures ev - er may your work e - rase.

The musical score consists of two systems of music. Each system has a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are placed between the vocal and piano lines.



Let the clear in - scrip - tion be: Je - sus, cru - ci - fied for me,

is my life, my hope's foun-da-tion, all my glo-ry and sal - va - tion!

Text: Thomas H. Kingo, 1634–1703; tr. Peer O. Strömme, 1856–1921, alt.
 Music: DER AM KREUZ, Johann B. König, 1691–1758

DISMISSAL

A: Go in peace. Share your bread.

C: Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE



SERVICE ASSISTANTS

Ushers: Jody Fullmer, Rhonda Koch, Mike Larson

Lay Assistant: Susan Bryan; **Communion Assistant:** Mandoy Feinberg

Altar Guild: Alice Morrison, April Gardner

MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH
REV. A. BRUCE AMME, PRESIDING AND PREACHING
JARED GIST, ORGANIST
324 South Howard Street | South Williamsport, PA 17702
(570) 326-9171 | www.messiahsouth.org

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome to Messiah Church! It is our joy to have you worship with us. If you are visiting, please make yourself known and leave your name & information to a congregation member. *We hope to see you again.*

Every Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. during Lent there will be Lenten Vespers held in the Chapel led by Janet Stroble. *All are welcome!*

Lenten Devotional Booklet and **Lenten Self-Denial Folders** are now **available** in the Narthex and in the office. All donations will benefit Habitat for Humanity.

It Should Be No Secret

Just about anyone who reaches their ninetieth birthday has been asked at least once, "What is the secret to a long life?" The answers will vary: A good diet. Staying active. Not stressing over the little things. Even making your bed every morning or keeping a tidy house has been linked with a longer lifespan! Fostering good habits and living with intention can go a long way.

But what is the secret to a rich spiritual life? In a sense, this is precisely the question Jesus addresses at length in his Sermon on the Mount. "Blessed are the poor in spirit" is just the beginning of a sermon that goes on to address such topics as prayer, wealth, worry, judgment, and daily needs. His advice about practices like charity, prayer, and fasting speaks to the importance of the intentions and motivations we bring to our common life.

There's nothing wrong with praying with others or public acts of charity. Churches, synagogues, and religious communities in general engage in these activities. The issue is whether we shine light on ourselves or on God's mercy and on people and places in need.

Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent with a reminder to turn to God. Where are our lives going? Where is the church going? The light of the world is not meant to be kept hidden or secret. Where and upon whom will we choose to direct the light of God's mercy and love? The reward of this examination and turning to God is the treasure we choose to share freely with others rather than keep for ourselves.

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