

# Midweek Worship Service



Image: Church Art Online

## Ash Wednesday

February 15, 2026

**Bethel Lutheran Church**

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# ASH WEDNESDAY WORSHIP

February 15, 2026

9:30 A.M.

*The spirit of Ash Wednesday is most solemn, close to that of the Jewish Day of Atonement. The Ash Wednesday liturgy marks the beginning of a penitential discipline that climaxes in the absolution and peace of the Maundy Thursday liturgy. Ashes are an extraordinarily rich symbol rooted in ancient customs and practices. Ashes, in a Jewish and Christian context, suggest our total dependence upon God. They are a sign of repentance. We are reminded forcefully of the words of committal in the burial service, "...earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." Moreover, ashes suggest cleansing and renewal. Dear friends, we trust this service of penitence prepares you for this Lenten pilgrimage.*

*The liturgy is printed in the cranberry Evangelical Lutheran Worship, pages 251–255, found in the pew racks.*

**PRELUDE:**

Cindy Josephson

## **THE RITE OF PENITENCE**

**WELCOME**

**INVITATIONAL PRAYER**

**P** God of All the Souls who have ever traveled The Way of Life,  
you know the depth of ache we sometimes feel on the journey.  
We come seeking your guidance, as we consider the paths and directions of our lives.  
Help us to find our Way Back to you, to choose to turn towards you,  
as the Ultimate Companion on The Way.

**C Amen.**

**OPENING HYMN:**

"I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say"

ELW, #611

**P:** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**C: And with you also.**

**A TIME OF SILENCE, PRAYER, AND CONFESSION**

**P:** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

P: Dear God, this night help us feel as though we are kneeling with the saints of all ages, who discovered that it is only through honest confession of sin to you that one can become more than a sinner.

If our eyes can see beyond our innocence, then we are aware that your eyes see us for who we truly are. We thank you that your mercy encourages us. We thank you that your forgiveness cleanses and that your love saves.

May these forty days until Easter be a season in which we keep our promises to you, through Christ our Savior.

**All: Amen.**

**C: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.  
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!  
For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.  
Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight...  
Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.”  
(Psalm 51:1–4, 9)**

P: In this moment we hear your promise God: “You can just be you. It’s enough. You don’t have to ‘perform’ for me, or try to be anybody else except for who I created you to be.” You do not ask us to live up to the standards of the world’s version of success. We are your children, and you love us. Now we pray that you will create in us clean hearts. We pray that you would renew a right spirit within us.

We bring our petitions to you this day, O God. We bring before you the people and things we are worried about and yet know that we cannot control:

### **IMPOSITION OF ASHES**

*All are invited to come forward by way of the center aisle to receive the sign of penitence, a cross of ashes placed on the forehead and worn throughout the remainder of the service. After receiving the ashen cross, worshippers may wish to kneel at the altar rail for a time of meditation and reflection.*

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.**

## **THE LITURGY OF THE WORD**

**1<sup>ST</sup> READING:** Joel 2:1–2, 12–17

**PSALM** Psalm 51

**2<sup>ND</sup> READING:** 2 Corinthians 5:20b–6:10

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:** “Return to the Lord” ELW, p. 142

**GOSPEL:** Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21

*After the reading of the gospel*

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

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

**SPECIAL MUSIC:** “Amazing Grace” Choir

**SERMON** “The Way Back” Pastor Barb Lemke

**HYMN:** “Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross” (vv. 1, 2, refrain) ELW, #335

## **THE NICENE CREED**

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of The Father, God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God, begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.**

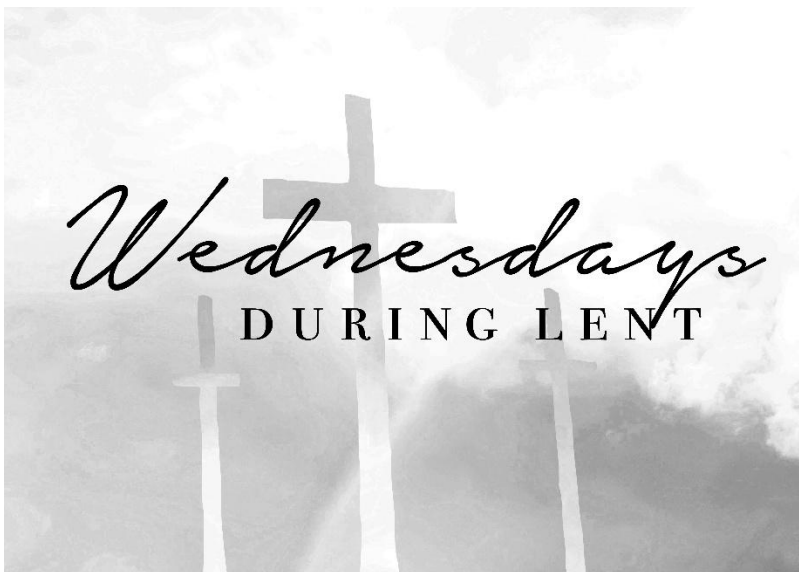
**For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven;  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,  
and became truly human.**

**For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.**





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**LENTEN SCHEDULE**

**Every Wednesday evening:**

**6:00 P.M.—Soup and Salad Supper**

**7:00 P.M.—Worship**

