

Ash Wednesday

February 18, 2026

SAINT JAMES LUTHERAN CHURCH | stjamesgp.org | 313.884.0511
170 McMillan Rd. Grosse Pointe Farms, MI 48236
Pastor Denise M. Grant

WELCOME

Welcome to Saint James, a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Southeast Michigan Synod. Thank you for being part of this gathered assembly as we worship God, and receive the sacrament. If this is your first time worshipping with Saint James, we extend a special greeting to you and invite you to introduce yourself to your neighbor in the pew. If you have questions about Saint James or are looking for a spiritual home, please reach out to Pastor Grant (pastor@stjamesgp.org).

TODAY'S SCRIPTURES

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 today'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.

ASHES

The sign of ashes suggests our human mortality and frailty (see page 11). 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.

The ASH WEDNESDAY LITURGY marks the beginning of the solemn season of Lent. The mood of this liturgy and of the Lenten season is one of penitence and reflection upon the quality of one's faith and life; it's goal is not to make us feel bad about ourselves, or make us sad and gloomy, but it's aim is to enlist participation in the Lenten discipline which, by its focus upon the mystery of our redemption, strengthens us by bringing us anew to the gift of our Baptism.

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

*silence for
reflection*

SILENCE

GATHERING

STAND

*The sign of the cross
is made in
remembrance of
Holy Baptism.*

ENTRANCE HYMN *Out of the Depths*

ELW 600

WORD

SIT

INVOCATION AND PRAYER

THE FIRST LESSON

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 reminds God of his gracious character and asks God to spare the people, lest the nations doubt God's power to save.

The Word of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 51:1-17

*The cantor sings the
refrain; the assembly
repeats it.*

Have mer - cy on me, O

God, ac - cord - ing to your stead - fast love.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;

*The congregation
responds with the
bold font verses, and
joins the refrain.*

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your ¹steadfast love;
in your great compassion blot out ¹my offenses.

²**Wash me through and through ¹from my wickedness,
and cleanse me ¹from my sin.**

³For I know | my offenses,
and my sin is ev- | er before me.

⁴Against 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.

Refrain

⁵Indeed, I was born | steeped in wickedness,
a sinner from my | mother's womb.

⁶Indeed, 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.

⁸Let me hear | joy and gladness;
that the body you have broken | may rejoice. *Refrain*

⁹Hide your face | from my sins,
and blot out | all my wickedness.

¹⁰Create 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.

¹²Restore to me the joy of | your salvation
and sustain me with your boun- | tiful Spirit. *Refrain*

¹³Let me teach your ways | to offenders,
and sinners shall be re- | stored to you.

¹⁴Rescue 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.

¹⁶For 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.

Refrain

*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 rela-
tionship with God.
In this way, God
accepts us into the
reality of divine
salvation.*

THE SECOND LESSON

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.

The Word of the LORD.


Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION


Restore in Us, O God

ELW 328

STAND & SING



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.

Text: Carl P. Daw Jr., b. 1944

Music: BAYLOR, Hal H. Hopson, b. 1933

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HOLY GOSPEL

MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-21

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commends almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, but emphasizes that spiritual devotion must not be done for show.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹“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.

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. ³But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so 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. ⁶But 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 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. ¹⁷But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so 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; ²⁰but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

SIT

The Gospel of our LORD.

Praise to you, O Christ.

INVITATION TO LENT

CONFESSION

Let us come before God, our creator and redeemer, and confess our sin.

Most holy and merciful God,
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.

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.

Have mercy on us, O God.

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.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our past unfaithfulness,
the pride, envy, hypocrisy,
and apathy that have infected our lives,
we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

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

Have mercy on us, O God.

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

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our neglect of human need and suffering,
and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,
we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

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

Have mercy on us, O God.

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

Have mercy on us, O God.

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

Hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.

*The ash cross echoes
our baptismal
anointing, when we
were buried with
Christ. The ash is a
chilling reminder of
our mortality, but
because our death is
now in Christ, our
endings are
beginnings.*

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

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 Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

*Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return. **Amen.***

*Those who desire are invited to come forward to receive ashes.
Come forward by the center aisle and return by the side aisle.*

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Accomplish in us, O God,
the work of your salvation,
that we may show forth your glory in the world.

By the cross and passion of your Son, our Savior,
bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.

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. **Amen.**

STAND

TABLE SETTING

Once We Sang and Danced

ELW 701



- 1 Once we sang and danced with glad-ness, once de-light filled ev-'ry breath;
- 2 All the wil-lows bow in weep-ing, all the riv-ers rage and moan,
- 3 God, who came to dwell a-mong us, God, who suf-fered our dis-grace,
- 4 Come, O Christ, a-mong the ash-es, come to wipe our tears a-way,



now we sit a-mong the ash-es, all our dreams de-destroyed by death.
as cre-a-tion joins our plead-ing: "God, do not leave us a-lone."
from your own heart, grieved and wound-ed, come the rich-es of your grace.
death de-destroy and sor-row ban-ish; now and al-ways, come and stay.

TITHES & OFFERINGS

*Instead of
'passing the plate,'
Saint James receives
offerings in the
stationary offering
plates near the
sanctuary
entrances, via
online giving at
stjamesgp.org, and
via Zelle app (QR
code below). Your
gifts support the
ministry
of the church.*



PRAYER

The Great Thanksgiving is understood as an act of praise and thanksgiving. Following Jewish customs, the emerging Christian liturgies blessed God (that is, thanked God) for his kindness and love.

In the Eucharistic Prayer, the church gives thanks for God's mighty works in the past, in creation and redemption through Jesus Christ, and thereby proclaims its faith in the blessings that come in the future both in this life and in eternal life yet to come.

MEAL

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

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.

the prayer continues

Through him all glory and honor are yours, Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit, in your holy Church both now and forever. **Amen.**

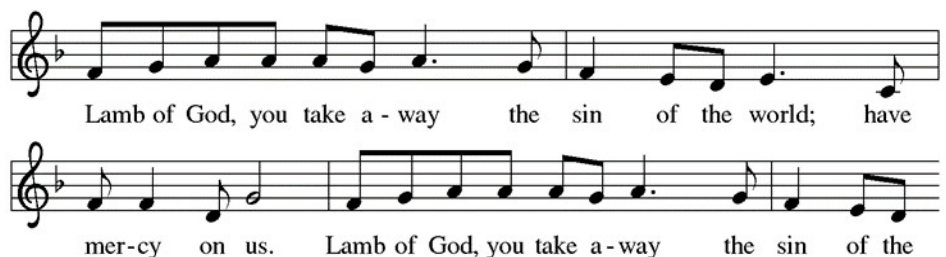
LORD'S PRAYER

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

This is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world; our peace and reconciliation.

**Lord, I am not worthy to receive you,
but only say the word and I shall be healed.**

LAMB OF GOD



[illegible]

Within the gathered assembly, at Jesus' invitation, we feast on his body and blood. Lutherans use the term 'real presence' to talk about our Lord being truly present with us as we celebrate this holy meal.

DISTRIBUTION

HYMN *Just As I Am Without One Plea* **ELW 592**

POST COMMUNION BLESSING

SAINT JAMES COMMUNION PRACTICE

Distribution

Come forward via the central aisle.

Communion Distribution is offered by **intinction**.

Receive the host (bread/Jesus' body) in the hand, hold it an then **dip it** into the cup with wine (Jesus' blood). Or consume it and take an individual cup of wine (purple) or juice (golden). *Dip don't sip.*

A gluten free host is offered by saying “gluten free” to the pastor.

If mobility keeps you from coming forward to receive, you may receive the sacrament in the pew. Please let an usher know, before worship, that this is your preference.

Return to your place via the outside aisles for private prayer.

SENDING

*Our Lenten journey
has begun.*

*Let us endeavor to put
the traditional
disciplines of Lent:
prayer, fasting, and
works of love, into
practice that our
words and deeds
would reveal our
Savior to the world.*

SENDING PRAYER

Merciful God, accompany our journey through these forty days.
Renew in us the gift of baptism,
that we may provide for those who are poor,
pray for those in need, and fast from self-indulgence,
that we may find our treasure in the life of your Son,
Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

BENEDICTION

HYMN

On My Heart Imprint Your Image

ELW 811

DISMISSAL

Let us go forth in the name of Christ.
Thanks be to God.

SILENCE

*May this season be a
time of spiritual
renewal, that creates
a greater sense of
God's presence with
each person and with
this community.*

WELCOME TO LENT

LENT is a special, sacred time for Christians: a time of grace, a time of conversion, a time of renewal. Today YOU are invited to enter into the sacred time of the season of Lent and commit yourself to faith stirring renewal.

The word 'lent' comes from the old English word 'lencten,' which means lengthen. This lengthening is reflected in creation as we enter Spring. As the earth sees a rebirth and renewal of plants and flowers during this season, so Lent is a time for Christians to consider our rebirth in Baptism.

THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES

ASHES are a good symbol for this day for at least three reasons:

- 1) Wearing ashes has long been a sign of repentance, as the regular Biblical references to 'sackcloth and ashes' indicates.
Job 42:6 & Lamentations 2:10
- 2) Ashes, as the remnant of what had once been a living organism, are a reminder of our own death and mortality.
- 3) Ashes are, paradoxically, useful for cleaning, because they are both gritty and caustic. It is in the sign of the cross, signed on our brow at our baptism, that is traced on our forehead in ashes.



FORTY SACRED DAYS

Each year the church thus sets aside 40 days (not counting Sundays) for repentance and renewal. Lent is 40 sacred & holy days within which to renew, refresh and reconnect with God and one another with ancient traditions (many the same as the earliest church) to guide us.

Those 40 days reflect

- Jesus' 40 days of fasting and prayer in the wilderness as he prepared for ministry (Mt. 4:1-2)
- Moses' 40 days on Mt. Sinai as he received the law from God
- Elijah's 40 days of prayer and fasting on his way to Mt. Horeb
- Jesus' appearance to the disciples for 40 days after the resurrection.

Lent is a 40 day, sacred gift for you.



Lent 2026

Stories that Shape Discipleship

Every Wednesday in Lent

Jesus' parables still challenge us—join this five-week Lenten study to explore grace, growth, and life in God's kingdom.

- The Sower
- The Mustard Seed & The Yeast
- Laborers in the Vineyard
- The Two Sons
- The Talents



Next Wednesday 2/25/26
at Saint James

5:30pm Simple Supper
6:30pm Evening Prayer
7:15pm Bible Study