

KOUNTZE MEMORIAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

A CITY-WIDE CHURCH WITH A WORLD-WIDE MINISTRY

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February 18, 2026

12:15 PM & 6:30 PM

ASH WEDNESDAY

DUST TO DAWN:

A LENTEN JOURNEY TO THE EASTER VIGIL



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.

PRELUDE

GATHERING

Please stand and face the back as the Sanctus bells are rung

HYMN

As the Winter Days Grow Longer

ACS 924



1 As the win - ter days grow long - er, draw - ing short the hours of night;
2 As the vines burst in - to blos - som, fra - grant in the morn - ing air,
3 As we jour - ney through this sea - son, pil - grims through a thirst - y land,



as our ea - ger ex - pec - ta - tion waits for Eas - ter's dawn - ing light—
lift - ing spir - its with their sweet - ness, lur - ing hearts to thank - ful prayer—
quench us with your liv - ing pres - ence; guide us with your lov - ing hand.



yearn - ing peo - ple, here we gath - er, turn - ing watch - ful eyes to you:
Lent - en peo - ple, here we gath - er, seek - ing lives re - fresh - ed from sin.
Wan - d'ring peo - ple, here we gath - er, called to rest a - long our way.



God who bless - es earth with spring - time, shine with - in our world a - new!
God who bless - es earth with spring - time, bloom with - in our hearts a - gain!
God who bless - es earth with spring - time, grant us sab - bath joy this day!

Text: Mary Louise Bringle, b. 1953
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INVITATION TO LENT

- ☒ 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 neighbors, 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 neighbor. 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

- ☒ Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence is kept for reflection and self-examination.

- ☒ 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.**

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

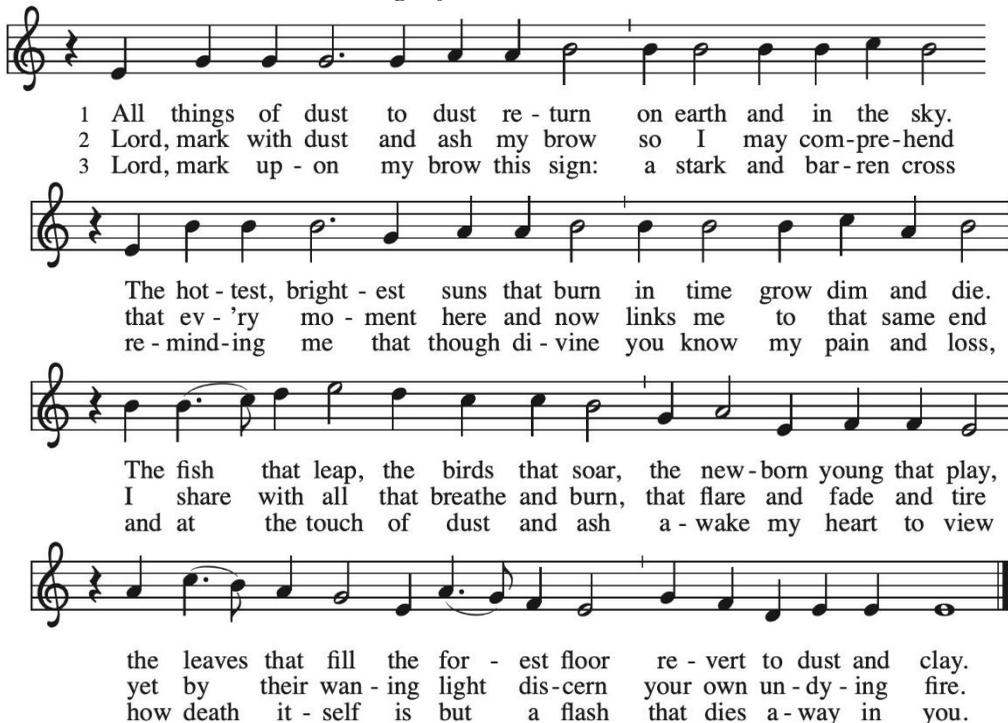
All are welcome to come and receive ashes.

The ashes will be used to make a cross on your forehead and the words “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return” will be said.

During the imposition of ashes we sing:

All Things of Dust to Dust Return

ACS 920



1 All things of dust to dust re - turn on earth and in the sky.
 2 Lord, mark with dust and ash my brow so I may com-pre-hend
 3 Lord, mark up - on my brow this sign: a stark and bar-ren cross

The hot - test, bright - est suns that burn in time grow dim and die.
 that ev - 'ry mo - ment here and now links me to that same end
 re - mind - ing me that though di - vine you know my pain and loss,

The fish that leap, the birds that soar, the new-born young that play,
 I share with all that breathe and burn, that flare and fade and tire
 and at the touch of dust and ash a - wake my heart to view

the leaves that fill the for - est floor re - vert to dust and clay.
 yet by their wan - ing light dis - cern your own un - dy - ing fire.
 how death it - self is but a flash that dies a - way in you.

Text: Thomas H. Troeger, b. 1945
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- 1 **Out of the depths I cry to you;
O Lord God, hear me calling.
Incline your ear to my distress
in spite of my rebelling.
Do not regard my sinful deeds.
Send me the grace my spirit needs;
without it I am nothing.**
- 2 **All things you send are full of grace;
you crown our lives with favor.
All our good works are done in vain
without our Lord and Savior.
We praise you for the gift of faith;
you save us from the grip of death;
our lives are in your keeping.**
- 3 **In you alone, O God, we hope,
and not in our own merit.
We rest our fears in your good Word
and trust your Holy Spirit.
Your promise keeps us strong and sure;
we trust the cross, your signature,
inscribed upon our temples.**
- 4 **My soul is waiting for you, Lord,
as one who longs for morning;
no watcher waits with greater hope
than I for your returning.
I hope as Israel in the Lord,
who sends redemption through the Word.
Praise God for grace and mercy!**

Text: Martin Luther, 1483-1546; tr. composite
Text © 1978, 2006 Lutheran Book of Worship, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

- ℒ Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation,
☩ **that we may show forth your glory in the world.**
ℒ By the cross and passion of your Son, our Savior,
☩ **bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.**
ℒ Almighty God has mercy on us, forgives 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.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

- ℙ 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. Amen.**

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

Blow 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, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from punishment. 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; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; ¹⁶gather the people. Consecrate 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?' "

☒ The word of the Lord.

☑ Thanks be to God.

PSALM 51:1-17 (read responsively)

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 ever 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.**

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 purer than snow.

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

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 spirit within me.**

¹¹Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

¹²**Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.**

¹³Let me teach your ways to offenders,
and sinners shall be restored to you.

¹⁴**Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of my salvation,
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness.**

¹⁵O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth shall proclaim 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.

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.

We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. ^{6:1}As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. ²For he says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you." See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! ³We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, ⁷truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

℣ The word of the Lord.

☩ **Thanks be to God.**

(rise in body or spirit)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

☩ **Let your steadfast love come to us, O Lord.
Save us as you promised; we will trust your word.
Save us as you promised; we will trust your word.**

℣ The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew.

☩ **Glory to you, O Lord.**

HOLY 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.

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.”

☐ The Gospel of the Lord.

☑ Praise to you, O Christ.

(sit)

SERMON

Deacon Haitz

(rise in body or spirit)

HYMN OF THE DAY

Lord Jesus, Think on Me

ELW 599

- 1 Lord Jesus, think on me,
and purge away my sin;
from selfish passions set me free
and make me pure within.**
- 2 Lord Jesus, think on me,
by anxious thoughts oppressed;
let me your loving servant be
and taste your promised rest.**

- 3 Lord Jesus, think on me,
nor let me go astray;
through darkness and perplexity
point out your chosen way.**
- 4 Lord Jesus, think on me,
that, when the flood is past,
I may the eternal brightness see
and share your joy at last.**

Text: Synesius of Cyrene, 375-430; tr. Allen W. Chatfield, 1808-1896, alt.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

L With the whole church, let us confess our faith.

C **I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

THE PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

Response: **L** Hear us, O God.

C **Your mercy is great.**

THE PEACE IS SHARED

L The peace of Christ be with you always.

C **And also with you.**

MEAL

THE OFFERING IS RECEIVED

We glorify God in our giving. Our offering is an act of worship that makes the ministries of this church possible. We encourage everyone to give. If you are visiting with us today, please do not feel obligated to participate in this portion of worship. If you would like, use the QR code scanner on your smart phone to give online or place your offering in the plates that are located at the entrances to the Sanctuary. For those of you watching through our media outlets, if you are able, please mail in your offering or donate online. Thank you!



THE TABLE IS PREPARED

OFFERTORY ANTHEM (6:30 PM)

Here Marked Not with Water Only tune by Robert J Weaver
setting by Robert J Weaver & William A Pasch

1 We place upon your table, Lord,
where you by grace have bid us dine,
these tokens of our daily work,
the food of life, the bread and wine.

2 Within these simple things there lie
the height and depth of human life:
our pain and tears, our thoughts and toils,
our hopes and fears, our joy and strife.

3 Accept them, Lord; they come from you;
we take them humbly from your hand;
put these your gifts to higher use:
the holy meal that you command.

Text: M. F. C. Willson, 1884-1944, alt.

OFFERING PRAYER

- ☐ O God, maker of heaven and earth,
- ☑ **your steadfast love embraces all creation. You send rain and sunshine to nourish the earth and bring forth its bounty. Through these gifts of bread and wine, draw us into the death and life of your Son, who calls us to bear witness to his saving work. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.**

HOLY COMMUNION

The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

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

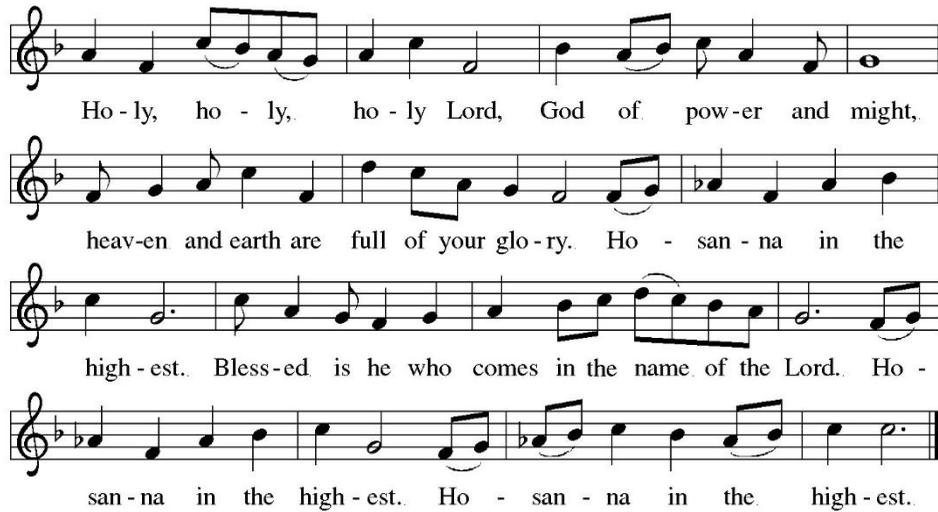
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE FOR SUNDAYS

- ☐ It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
... we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

SANCTUS



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might,
heav-en and earth are full of your glo-ry. Ho - san - na in the
high - est. Bless-ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -
san - na in the high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

- L** Blessed are you, O God of the universe. ...
... as we proclaim the mystery of faith.
- C** **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**
- L** O God of resurrection and new life ...
... Grace our table with your presence.
- C** **Come, Holy Spirit.**
- L** Reveal yourself to us in the breaking of the bread. ...
... Send us forth, burning with justice, peace and love.
- C** **Come, Holy Spirit.**
- L** With your holy ones of all times and places, ...
... we praise you, O God, blessed and holy Trinity, now and forever.
- C** **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

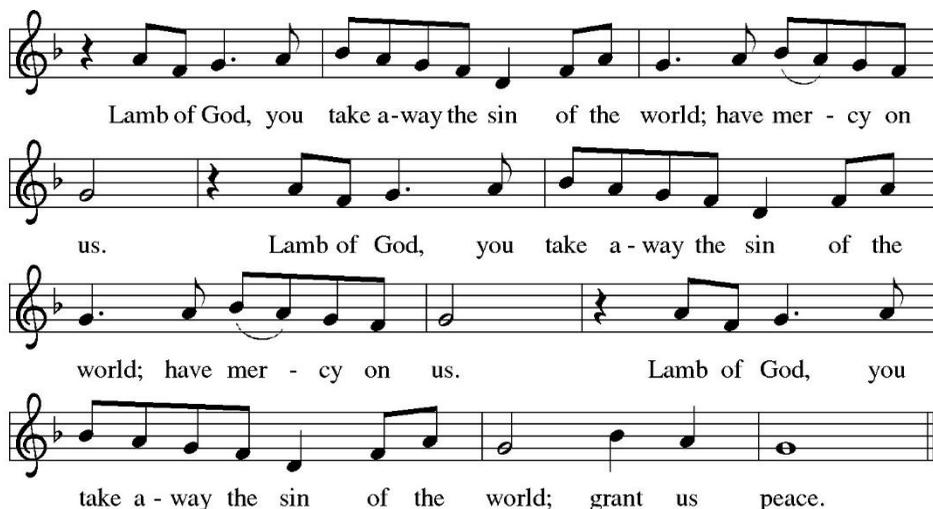
☐ Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us all to pray...

☑ **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.**

AGNUS DEI



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.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

☐ Come to the table.

☑ **Feast on God's goodness and mercy.**

(sit)

THE DISTRIBUTION

*All baptized Christians who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and his Real Presence in, with and under the bread and wine, are welcome to the Lord's Supper. We believe that this is the Lord's table and is he who invites you. So you who are strong in faith, come with gratitude. You who feel weak in faith, come to be strengthened. And you who feel you have no faith, come so that the God of steadfast love will touch your heart with hope and joy. **The form of distribution is intinction: you will receive the consecrated bread and then you may dip the bread into the wine.** Gluten free bread is available upon request. If you cannot or choose not to receive the wine, know that the sacrament and God's promised forgiveness are complete in either element.*

- 1** Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling,
calling for you and for me.
See, on the portals he's waiting and watching,
watching for you and for me.

Refrain

"Come home, (Come home,
come home! (come home!)
You who are weary, come home."
Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,
calling, "O sinner, come home!"

- 2** Why should we tarry when Jesus is pleading,
pleading for you and for me?
Why should we linger and heed not his mercies,
mercies for you and for me? *Refrain*
- 3** Oh, for the wonderful love he has promised,
promised for you and for me!
Though we have sinned, he has mercy and pardon,
pardon for you and for me. *Refrain*

Text: Will L. Thompson, 1847-1909

Come to the Table

ELW 481

**Come to the table of mercy,
prepared with the wine and the bread.
All who are hungry and thirsty,
come, and your souls will be fed.
Come at the Lord's invitation;
receive from his nail-scarred hand.
Eat of the bread of salvation;
drink of the blood of the Lamb.**

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Text: Claire Cloninger, b. 1942

(rise in body or spirit)

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

- L** God of our salvation,
- C** we give you thanks for this meal that restores our souls, reconciles us to you, and strengthens us for the journey. Through the body and blood of your Son, may we become Christ's body in the world, bearing witness to your love for all creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

SENDING

BLESSING

☐ Receive the blessing of the holy Trinity: God, who calls all things into existence, Jesus Christ, who redeems us, and the Holy Spirit, whose breath sustains creation, ✠ bless you now and always.

☑ Amen.

HYMN

O Lord, throughout These Forty Days

ELW 319

**1 O Lord, throughout these forty days
you prayed and kept the fast;
inspire repentance for our sin,
and free us from our past.**

**2 You strove with Satan, and you won;
your faithfulness endured;
lend us your nerve, your skill, and trust
in God's eternal word.**

**3 Though parched and hungry, yet you prayed
and fixed your mind above;
so teach us to deny ourselves
that we may know God's love.**

**4 Be with us through this season, Lord,
and all our earthly days,
that when the final Easter dawns,
we join in heaven's praise.**

Text: based on Claudia F. Hernaman, 1838-1898; para. Gilbert E. Doan Jr., b. 1930
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DISMISSAL

☐ Go in peace. Believe the good news.

☑ Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

✠ ✠ ✠

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Worship with us this Lenten Season!

Wednesdays in Lent

- 12:15 PM Lenten Worship
- 11:00 – Noon Lenten Lunch (free-will offering)
- 6:30 PM Lenten Worship (in person and Livestream)
- 5:00 – 6:30 PM Lenten Dinner (free-will offering)

