

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Durham

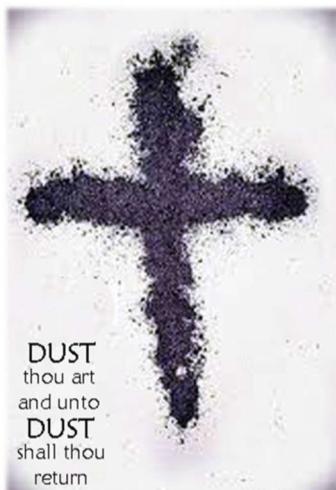
P.O. Box 100, Durham PA, 18039 ♦ 610-346-8500

durhamlutheran.org

Rev. James Heckman, Pastor
Cell: 267-664-3160

February 18, 2026

Ash Wednesday 12:30 PM



Introduction to Worship

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.

You can find the live stream at the following locations:

www.youtube.com/@DurhamLutheran

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GATHERING

P: The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

INVITATION TO LENT

P: Friends in Christ, the early church spent forty days in preparation before Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection. It was a season of baptismal renewal, of prayer, fasting, and giving. We gather today in this same tradition to begin the season of Lent together. We are reminded that as Christians, God calls us to a life of commitment and caring for our neighbors. The events of our lives and of the wider world can be grim, and optimism can be hard to find. It would be easier to detach from the need around us, to go numb and to care less as we try to protect our hearts and our expectations. But God calls us to go **all in**, to be fully committed to the well-being of our planet and our neighbors. God knows that this is a challenge, so God goes **all in** first, showing us what it is like to bet it all on love.

God invests in human beings, even though we have a track record of sin that stretches from Adam and Eve to the present day. God invests in creation, even when we are bent on harming it. God commits to the unknown and to wonder when we want certainty and limits. God tends broken relationships. God goes all in on all the highs and lows that life brings, from moments of transcendent beauty to the deepest hopelessness. And in Jesus, God pours out every last drop of love, all of it for the sake of a world that may never fully understand. This Lent I invite you into a season of preparation, as always. This Lent in particular is a season of intentional preparation to go **all in** for the sake of the world. I urge you to commit to this preparation through worship, prayer, fasting, and giving. Even as you prepare to go **all in**, God has already gone **all in** for you.

Prayer of the Day

L: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

L: Gracious God, you call us to repentance, and we have come. This Lent, let repentance be more than a feeling of obligation, a token phrase, or a good intention. Use repentance to draw us back to you, who always meet our wrongdoing with forgiveness and grace. We pray trusting in Jesus' mercy and might.

C: Amen.

(Please be Seated)

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.

L: A reading from the second chapter of 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?'".

L: The Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm: Psalm 51:1-17

L: ¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions

C: ²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin

L: ³For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me

C: ⁴**Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment**

L: ⁵Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me

C: ⁶**You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart**

L: ⁷Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow

C: ⁸**Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice**

L: ⁹Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities

C: ¹⁰**Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me**

L: ¹¹Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me

C: ¹²**Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit**

L: ¹³Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you

C: ¹⁴**Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance**

L: ¹⁵O LORD, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise

C: ¹⁶**For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased**

L: ¹⁷The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite 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.

A reading from the fifth chapter of 2 Corinthians:

²⁰So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; 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.

¹As 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.

L: The Word of the Lord.

C: THANKS BE TO GOD.

Gospel Acclamation (Please stand if you are able)

C: We are turning, Lord, to hear you; you are merciful and kind—slow to anger, rich in blessing, and with love to us inclined.

The 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 Matthew the sixth chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord

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.

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

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

Children's Sermon / Sermon (please be seated)

CONFESSiON OF SIN

P: God knows our hearts, the guilt we carry, the heartache that keeps us awake, the burdens we bear. God knows that "happy are they who are forgiven," and so we confess in confidence of God's forgiveness.

(Silence is kept for reflection)

Good and gracious God,

C: **We have sinned and fallen short of the good you desire for us and for all creation. We have seen the earth as resources to extract and forgotten to marvel at its beauty. We have doubted your ability to provide and hoarded more than we need. We have ignored the needs of the vulnerable, and when you called us to follow you to greater wonders, we remained where we were and clung to control. Forgive our sin and our selfishness. Draw us out of ourselves, more deeply into your love, and more fully into a world in need.**

P: God knows our sin before we do and meets every confession with abundant grace. In Christ we are alive and completely forgiven. God's goodness has the final word. May this gift renew our faith and lighten our load so that we are prepared to care for the world God so loves.

C: Amen.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

P: God of all, bless these ashes and those who receive them. Let them be a sign of our repentance and of your faithfulness. The mark of Jesus' cross will remind us of how you are all in for us and for the world. May that reminder stay with

us even when these ashes are washed away. God of all, bless these ashes and those who receive them.

C: Amen.

People may come forward to receive the ashes. Ministers mark the forehead of each person with a cross of ashes, saying:

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

After those who desire ashes have received them, the minister 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.

Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

The pastor will read the first and last prayer, those in the congregation are invited to read the other prayer aloud as they feel called. The congregation may turn and face the aisle.

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

A brief silence.

Guide your church, O God. Accompany all Christians in this season of repentance, and renew our faith in the riches of grace you give to us in baptism. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

Heal this earth, O God. Satisfy the needs of every parched place, every diverse ecosystem, every suffering creature. Though all return to dust, grant beauty and purpose to each living thing. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

Restore the nations, O God. Let your healing spring up quickly across the world. Give all in authority the will to loose the bonds of injustice and let any who are oppressed go free. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

Deliver your people, O God. Comfort any whose hearts are rent by grief, uphold any who are sick, bring food to those who hunger, and give housing to all without shelter. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

Bless this assembly, O God. Reconcile us to one another and to you. Strengthen our resolve to fast from evil, open our hands in sharing, and quicken our prayer. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

Hold us forever, O God. We thank you for all who now know their treasure in heaven, and for Martin Luther and all who on earth proclaimed your abounding, steadfast love. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered

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

C: Amen.

OFFERING

Presentation of the Gifts

Offering Prayer

P: 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.

C: Amen.

THE HOLY COMMUNION

The Great Thanksgiving

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.

Preface:

P: We have to praise you, we have to thank you, God, because the whole universe is filled with your wonders. On this very day you overcome the powers of death and destruction forever, and so, in thankfulness, we join the song of the angels:

C: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heav'n and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest.

Eucharistic Prayer (said by Pastor)

P: Creator, you made a wondrous world and called it good. You planted a garden, and in it, you crafted your creatures, even our ancestors. When sin, pain, and death entered the world, you did not leave us but remained a lover and friend of humanity. You made outrageous and hope-filled promises to Abram and Sarai, you brought water from a rock when your people wandered in the wilderness, you saw the possibilities in least and lowly, and you knew that life could come even from dry old bones.

When at last the time was right, you were born to be with us in Jesus and joined us in the highs and lows of human existence. You met Nicodemus in his nighttime wondering, you welcomed the questions of the woman at the well, you witnessed the rejection of the man born blind, you wept at the grace of Lazarus, and you even went through death for us.

On the night of his betrayal and arrest, knowing it was time to give all of himself, Jesus took bread, 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.

And so we remind each other and the world:

C: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

P: Pour out your Spirit on us, your gathered people, and on this meal, your gifts of bread and cup. Through a holy mystery, let this become for us the body and blood of Christ. Let it remind us of the unending feast for which we are bound. Let it strengthen us, that we will become the body of Christ for the world you so love.

C: Amen.

P: Let us pray with confidence in the words our Savior gave us:

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: Come to the table. Feast on God's goodness and mercy.

**C: O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world away;
you suffered death our lives to save: have mercy now, we pray.
O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world away;
you set us free from guilt and grave: have mercy now, we pray.
O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world away;
eternal peace with God you made: give us your peace, we pray.**

Distribution of Bread & Fruits of the Vine (please follow ushers)

Prayer after Communion

P: God, you have revealed yourself to us again in the holy mystery of bread and cup. Strengthen us by your presence, draw us closer to one another as the Body of Christ, and send us to reveal you in our all our words and ways.

C: Amen.

Announcements

BLESSING

P: As you have met God in this place, go now to meet God beyond this place. As you have received the love of Jesus, go now to give the love of Jesus. As the Creator has been all in for you, go now and be all in for the sake of the world. Gracious God, Parent, Sibling, and Spirit, bless you as you go.

C: Amen.

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Believe the good news.

C: Thanks be to God.

Worship

Preacher	Rev. James Heckman
Altar Guild	Ben and Barb Naska and Scott Gaun
Greeter(s)	
Acolyte	Kathryn Wagner
Lector	Kathryn Wagner
Head / Communion Usher	
Council Counting Team	
Technology/ Streaming	Ken Anderson
Administration	Kathryn Wagner
Custodian	Dawn Margeson