

**ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN CHURCH**

120 N. Main St., Lewistown, PA 17044-1719

Main Office: 717-248-8780 Mon., Tues., Thur. 8 AM-4:00 PM Fri. 8-Noon
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Interim Pastor: Rev. Allen Hulslander 570-220-4402 (cell)

Office Hours: Tues. 9am-Noon and Thur. 9am-Noon *please call ahead.

Director of Music/Organist: Mrs. Patricia O. Loudenslager

**ASH WEDNESDAY
FEBRUARY 18th, 2026, at 7:00 P.M.**



The beginning of Lent gives us the occasion to admit that we will die and that we are sinners. On Ash Wednesday, we are marked with ashes – a sign of our death and of our sorrow for sin – but the ashes trace a cross on our foreheads, where the baptismal water first marked us with God's grace.

INTRODUCTION 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.

Assisting this evening:

Acolytes: Cora Rankin, Cooper Rankin
Altar Guild: Shaneen Gramley, Brenda Reeder, Joyce Tanner
Communion Assistants: Dave Ray, Sue Shawver, Ginny Ray
Lay Lector: Jum Rosenberry
Ushers: Tom Beaver, Norma Fisher, Hillary Worley

PRELUDE “Beneath the Cross of Jesus” (In the setting of “Meditation” by Jules Massenet)
Fredrick C. Maker, Arr. By Cindy Berry 2010 Pilot Point Music

GATHERING

INVITATION TO LENT

P: Friends in Christ, today with the whole Church, we enter the time of remembering Jesus’ Passover from death to life, and our life 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 – of 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.

Please stand as you are able.

CONFESSION OF SIN

P: Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

(Silent reflection and self-examination)

P: Most Holy and Merciful God,

C: 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.

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 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.

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

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

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

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

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

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

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

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

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

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

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

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

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

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

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

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

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

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.

Gathering Hymn

ELW #320 “The Glory of These Forty Days”

GREETING

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

And also with you.

Kyrie (spoken)

P: Hear our solemn prayer. We come to hear your living word: it saves us from despair.

C. Have mercy on us, Lord.

P: Wash away our sin. Pour out your grace and make us whole that new life may begin.

C. Have mercy on us, Lord.

P: Make sin and shame depart. Renew us with your saving power; create in us new hearts.

C. Have mercy on us, Lord.

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

First Reading - Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

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.

Psalms 51:1-17

- 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.

^{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.

L: The Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL - Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

P: The Gospel according to St. Mathew

C: Glory to you O Lord

[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.”

P: The Gospel of the Lord

C: Praise to you, O Christ

Please be seated.

SERMON

Pastor Allen Hulslander

Special Music

“Speak to Me in Ashes”

Douglas Nolan and Karen Crane, 2019 Hal Leonard

Chancel Choir

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

The petitions ends with: "Hear Us O God"

And the Congregational response is:

"your mercy is great"

SHARING of GOD'S PEACE

Share the Peace in a safe manner.

Simply say the words. *"Peace be with You."*

"And also with you."

OFFERING PRAYER

P: Together we pray:

C: Merciful God, receive the sacrifice of our praise and thanksgiving, and the offering of our lives, that following in the way of the cross, we may know the joy of the resurrection, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION

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.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ.

You call your people to cleanse their hearts
and prepare with joy for the paschal feast,
that, renewed in the gift of baptism,
we may come to the fullness of your grace.



THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

P: In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord 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, thanks, and gave it to 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."

The Lord's Prayer (spoken)

P: Together we pray:

C: Our Father, which 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

Come to the table.

Feast on God's goodness and mercy.

COMMUNION

All who are baptized are invited to come forward as directed from the front through the middle aisle. Children, if not already communing, may be brought forward for a blessing from the Pastor. Please hold both hands out to receive the wafer, then choose a cup from the Acolyte. Please dispose in a near waste basket.

Communion Music

"I Surrender All" (in the setting of Beethoven's Sonata No. 8 "Pathetique") Winfield S. Weeden,
Arr. Cindy Berry 1989 Pilot Point Music

"Worthy Is the Lamb" Don Wyrzten 1980 Singspiration

"I Want Jesus to Walk with Me" with Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake" Spiritual, Arr. Carolyne M.
Taylor 2004 Pilot Point Music

Please stand as you are able.

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

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

C: Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

P: God of our salvation, 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.

C: Amen.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

P: Together we pray

C: Merciful God, accompany our journey through these forty days. Renew us in the gift of baptism, that we may provide for those who are poor, pray for those in need, fast from self-indulgence, and above all, that we may find our treasure in the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, both now and forever. Amen

BLESSING

P: 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.

C: Amen.

Sending Hymn

ELW #712 "Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service"

DISMISSAL

P: Go in peace. Believe the good news.

C: Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE – "Bless Now, O God, The Journey" (#326 in our hymnal)

LENTEN & EASTER SERVICES

March 29th at 9:00 am - Palm Sunday

April 2nd at 7:00 pm - Maundy Thursday Service

April 3rd at 7:30 pm - Good Friday/Tenebrae Service

April 5th at 9:00 AM - Easter Sunday Service