



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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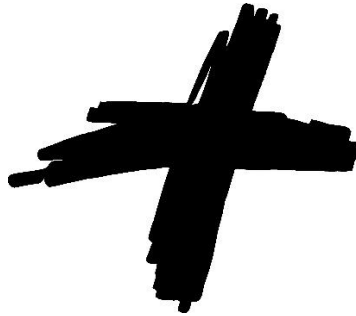
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**Ash Wednesday
February 18, 2026**

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.

We at Grace Lutheran Church strive to reflect and proclaim the love of God shown to us by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit by providing an inclusive and supportive environment through loving care and community service.

A warm welcome to all who are worshipping with us in person or online! We appreciate your contribution to the community today: with your voice, your presence, and just the blessing that you are. May you be nurtured by God's Word, empowered by the love of Christ, and stirred by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in this service this day, for the sake of God's mission in the world.

Grace Lutheran Church worships, prays, and serves on the traditional and unceded lands and territories of the hə́nq̓əmiṇə́m̓ (Musqueam) and Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) speaking peoples.

GATHERING

ANNOUNCEMENTS

KYRIE (p. 203) verse 1

PSALM: PSALM 51:1-8

- ¹ Have 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.**
- ³ For 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.**
- ⁵ Indeed, 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.**
- ⁷ Remove 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.**

KYRIE (p. 203) verse 2

PSALM: PSALM 51:9–17

- ⁹ Hide 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.**
- ¹¹ Cast 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.**
- ¹³ Let 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.**
- ¹⁵ O 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.**
- ¹⁷ The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit;
a troubled and broken heart, O God, you will not despise.

KYRIE (p. 203) verse 3

GREETING (p. 251)

The mercy of God,
The steadfast love of Christ,
And the great compassion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY (p. 251)

Almighty and ever-living God, you have made all things, 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.

HYMN: I Want Jesus to Walk with Me (#325)

WORD

FIRST READING: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

A reading from Joel.

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.

¹ 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—

² a 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.

¹² Yet even now, says the LORD,
 return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;

¹³ rend 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.

¹⁴ Who 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?

¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Zion;
 consecrate a fast;
call a solemn assembly;

¹⁶ gather 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.
¹⁷ Between 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.

SECOND READING: 2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10

A reading from 2 Corinthians.

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.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 142)

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

The holy gospel according to 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 righteousness 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. ³ But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so 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. ⁶ But 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 somber, like the hypocrites, for they mark their faces to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so 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, ²⁰ but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

May the light of your Word, O God, break forth like the dawn and illumine our hearts with your mercy and fill us with the love of your Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

This world can be infuriating, can't it?

Wars fuelled by greed; border disputes over disagreements on who is entitled to deserve what; prejudice and racial tensions between whole people groups stemming only from melanin levels and the so-called winners of the lottery of birthplace and DNA; and don't even get me started on the divisive politics that distract all of us from what is truly righteous and just. We look at all the evil around us and it's hard not to internalise it. We see and read about the situations that happen to others and might start to interpret our own situations through a lens of suspicion, cynicism, and pessimism. We might get trapped in this darkness and begin to label “them” as bad and “us” as victims of their badness. We might start to see every action against us as malicious hostility and we learn to allow that hate toward those that have wronged us to creep into our hearts as well.

I know, all this sounds pretty heavy for a Wednesday evening, when we're here anticipating a bit of ash on our foreheads. We might have been expecting some happy clappy Lenten hymns. Maybe we just wanted a nice light and perhaps joyful Ash Wednesday service reminding us that we're but dust and to dust we shall return. But we all we got was this morbid talk about hatred and division.

Well, I assure you, there is a point. Something happened to me last week that really took up a lot of space in my mind, and no, it wasn't my milestone birthday that shall never be mentioned again.

It started with my quest to find a new watch. My old watch was on its last legs, and I was getting sick of having to charge it at least once or twice a day, give or take. I had an idea what I wanted to get, but I also wanted to spend as little as possible because I'm frugal that way. So instead of looking at brand new in the stores, I decided to check what deals I could score in the used market.

As luck and my internet scouring prowess would have it, I found one listed at a killer price. My wife had reservations and felt it was a "too good to be true" type thing, but I assured her that I did my research on the watch and will be careful and make sure it's legit. Then I went to meet the guy. Well, in the heat of the moment and in the excitement of saving hundreds of dollars, I brought the watch home without checking for its authenticity thoroughly enough, as it turned out to be a replica, worth less than a fraction of what I paid. My heart sank. I grew angry.

I messaged the seller right away but he wouldn't take it back, even though he lied to my face about it being real. I have had stuff of questionable authenticity before and I normally don't care about that kind of thing, but this one just didn't sit well with me. Maybe it was the price. Maybe it was being lied to. Or maybe it was because my wife most definitely did tell me so. But, it isn't a bad watch, replica or not, it's just not what I had expected or hoped for, and not what I was promised it would be. So I felt duped. Like a total idiot for falling for such an obvious rouse. Like a victim, even.

I know, it's just a watch and I made a mistake to buy it so hastily. No one was physically hurt or worse. No real harm was done. My bank isn't broken and I can still afford to eat and feed my kids. And it was there that I realised what was happening, what was going on in my head, why I was making this into such a big deal.

It was all about me.

All I was thinking about was me: *my feelings, my situation, my wants and expectations*. I mean, there's nothing wrong with that per se, in fact it's important for us to consider, take care of, and watch out for ourselves. But because I was so caught up in me, me, me, I didn't think about the guy who sold me the watch. What he might be going through. Why he needed to rip people off like this. What he might be facing to get to this point?

I know, this doesn't excuse illegal activity and doesn't justify hurting others. But as we're reminded again and again, "hurt people hurt people." So maybe he has it way worse than me. Maybe this was his only way to get out of the hole he is in. Maybe my money inadvertently helped him in some way.

Perhaps this is just a stretch to reframe it this way and a desperate ploy for me to make myself feel better for my stupidity. But as I thought about it, I have no problem giving that amount to charity. I have no issues in paying that much for other fleeting things for others that don't benefit me at all. I am ok with losing that much money. So why should this bother me so much?

And now you might be thinking that this really has nothing to do with Ash Wednesday. But the thing is, the point of this day and the whole season of Lent is for us to learn to empty ourselves. To come down off those self-erected pedestals we plant ourselves on. To learn how to ease off those ego trips and consider the bigger picture. The bigger picture that includes others that God welcomes and loves, that humbles us to see we aren't the only ones that matter, that reminds us that we are but dust and to dust we shall return.

It's in that emptying of ourselves that we can truly have compassion for others. It's in that humility that we can truly see how much we are loved and forgiven. It's in the realisation of our mortality that we can truly recognise God with us, lifting us up out of our own shame, and graciously leading us into salvation.

But that's hard in this broken world. We often get in our own way. We often are fooled by our own sense of self-importance. We often fall into the trap of entitlement and assume we deserve more than we get. So I think we need to let go of the things that set up in us a false identity, the one that tells us that we're anything but a child of God. We need to learn to recognise our temptations as temptations, and not as flawed personality traits that feed us the lies that we're disqualified from God's embrace. We need to be able to hear God's call for us to return to God, who loves us, saves us, and leads us into the peace and community of this body of Christ.

You know, like what this season of Lent gives us space to do.

I get it though, this isn't comfortable. It's not normal for us to not expect ourselves to be the best and deserving and feel slighted when we aren't. It's not really in our nature to not let our left hand know what our right hand is doing. But as I learned last week with the whole watch fiasco, it's that exact nature that's holding us down. It's that mentality that we're deserving of more that's keeping us in disappointment, hurt feelings, and that victim mentality. This world has just become easier for us to hate.

That's why this season of Lent is so important. Not just to remind us who we are and where we're going, but in what ways we matter outside of what the world tells us. We're told to be right, to be respected, and to tell everyone about our accomplishments and exploits so they can look up to us, but God tells us to act and live not for ourselves with our egos in the center, but for the good of the community with Christ as its head.

This doesn't mean that we're worthless and should be unloved. This doesn't mean that we don't matter and our feelings are invalid. This doesn't even mean that we should be giving all our money to scammers willy nilly. But it does mean that even when we do fall for the ways of the world, God forgives us anyway. Even when we so often get tripped up in our notions of identity and loyalty, God continues to welcome us and bring us into community with all the saints anyway. Even when the world teaches us to feel this righteous indignation against those who disagree with our interpretations of life, God will always and eternally love and save us anyway.

Not because we have earned it, but because God gives it. Not because we have made ourselves worthy, but because God welcomes and calls us as God's people. Not because we are

deserving and mighty, but because God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say (#611)

INVITATION TO LENT (p. 252)

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 (p. 252)

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

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 (p. 254)

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.

HYMN: Ubi caritas et amor (#642)

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.

CONCLUDING PRAYER (p. 254)

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, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER (p. 112)

Together reminded of our mortality, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May the God who hears and listens to our calling out,
the God who reconciles us with grace and mercy,
the God whose power sustains us throughout these Lenten days and beyond,
bless you, keep you, and remain with you, now and always.
Amen.

SENDING HYMN: Healer of Our Every Ill (#612)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, give, pray, fast, and hold onto what is good.
Thanks be to God.