



Ash Wednesday

It Is Finished: Return to me!
Emmanuel Lutheran Church
February 18, 2026

Welcome!

We are honored that you are with us today. May the Word of God that you hear strengthen your faith and increase your desire to serve the Lord! If you are a guest today, we are thankful you have joined us. We hope that you will join us again soon.

For your convenience

For your convenience, please take note of the following:

- **Restrooms** are to the left as you exit the sanctuary.
- **Nursery.** There is a room where children may be quieted to the left down the hall across from the bathrooms as you exit the sanctuary.
- **Children's worship notes** are available. Ask an usher.
- **Hearing assistance.** A hearing loop is available in the worship area for hearing aids equipped with a T-coil.



If there is any other way in which we can assist you, let us know.

The service is streamed live online at elctempe.org/worship.

For the latest information about services schedules, please visit elctempe.org.



Connection card

*During the offering
we ask that you
complete an online
connection card.*

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, the Christian's 40-day journey with the Lord to the cross and tomb, preparing for the proclamation of Easter. The 40 days are reminiscent of several biblical events: Jesus' 40-day fast at the beginning of his ministry, Moses' stay on Mount Sinai at the giving of the Law, Elijah's fast on his way to the mountain of God.

Ash Wednesday begins the Christian's Lenten journey with a reminder of our mortality and a call to repentance (Genesis 18:27, Job 42:6, Jeremiah 6:26, Matthew 11:21). The ancient practice of imposing ashes on the foreheads of the faithful gives Ash Wednesday its name. The church father Tertullian (c. A.D. 160-215) writes of ashes as a public expression of repentance and of our human frailty that stands in need of Christ. Ashes remind us forcefully of our need for redeeming grace as they recall words from the rite for Christian burial "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," words that will someday be spoken over us all.

We will offer the imposition of ashes in our Ash Wednesday service and reflect on our mortality and frailty. Our service is a penitential service, in which we contemplate our sin and our need for a Savior. We celebrate Holy Communion tonight for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life.

Ash Wednesday – February 18, 2026

It Is Finished: Return to me!



During this season of Lent we take extra time to contemplate our own sins and the price of our forgiveness. We repent of our sins, and with a broken heart we grieve over our offenses against God and our neighbor. In penitent trust we return to the Lord, where we find forgiveness and healing.

On the cross Jesus cried out, “It is finished!” With his sacrificial death on Calvary, the price for sin was paid. Forgiveness was achieved and won for every human being. Our debt of sin that was charged to Jesus as our Substitute was paid in full.

The prophet Zechariah foretold the suffering of the Messiah and his victory over sin, death and hell. Our midweek Lent services this year will explore the prophecies of Zechariah and their fulfillment in Jesus. Today we begin with God’s invitation spoken through the prophet: Return to me! God instructs us to turn from impenitence and unbelief and to return to him in repentance and faith.

Grieving over our sins and turning away from them, we look to Jesus for forgiveness, healing, and salvation.

Penitential Service

Please enter the sanctuary and meditate in silence before the service begins. This is a time for self-reflection, prayer and silent confession. Pre-service music is omitted on this solemn day. There is no pre-service welcome or announcement. The pastors will enter and take their seat in silence.

Anthem (3:30 p.m.)

Kyrie

John Armstrong

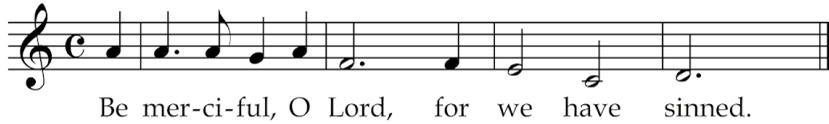
*Kyrie eleison. (Lord, have mercy.)
Christe eleison. (Christ, have mercy.)
Kyrie eleison. (Lord, have mercy.)*

Psalm

Psalm 51

The psalm is sung unaccompanied by all.

Refrain



Psalm tone



Refrain

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love.

Wash away all my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.

Refrain

Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight.

Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquity.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Refrain

Please stand.

Invocation

In the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

*During our services,
the congregation
speaks the responses
in bold.*

Introduction to Confession

Brothers and sisters in Christ, God created us to know joy in fellowship with him, to love all people, and to live in harmony with all creation. But sin separates us from God, our neighbors, and creation, and so we do not enjoy the life our Creator intended for us. By our sin we grieve our Father, who does not desire us to come under his judgment, but to turn to him and live. Therefore, God in his mercy has sent our Lord Jesus Christ to take our place under the law, to suffer for us, and to die the death we deserve. God made Jesus, who had no sin, to be sin for us so that in him, we might become the righteousness of God.

During the forty days of Lent, we fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of God. The time of Lent reminds us that to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, we must also know the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. As disciples of the Lord Jesus, we are called to struggle against everything that leads us away from love of God and neighbor.

Let us confess our sins, ask our Father for forgiveness, and recommit ourselves to this struggle.

Confession

Most holy and merciful Father,

we confess to you and to one another that we have sinned by our own fault,

by our own 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, Lord.

We have placed our wants before your will.

We have gratified the desires of our sinful nature.

We have merited your punishment now and forever.

Have mercy on us, Lord.

We confess to you, Lord, all our unfaithfulness.
The pride, hypocrisy, and impatience in our lives,
we confess to you, O Lord.

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, our manipulation of other people,
our anger when our selfish aims are denied, and our envy of those more
fortunate than ourselves,
we confess to you, O Lord.

Our love of worldly goods and comforts, and our dishonesty in daily life and
work, our negligence in worship and prayer, and our failure to show the faith
that is in us,
we confess to you, O Lord.

Forgive us, Lord, for the wrongs we have done. For our blindness to human
need and suffering and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,
forgive us, Lord.

For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward others, and for our
prejudice and contempt for those who differ from us,
forgive us, Lord.

For what we think or say or do that is at variance with your will,
forgive us, Lord.

Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us.
Hear us, Lord, for your mercy is great.

Be seated.

Imposition of Ashes

Refer to page 18 of this service folder for an explanation of Imposition of Ashes. *All worshipers of all ages are welcome to come forward up the **center** aisle at the direction of the ushers to receive the imposition of ashes. The pastor will place the ashes onto your forehead. Or, if you prefer, you may extend your right hand (closed fist, palm down), and the pastor will place the ashes onto the back of your hand.*

As he places the ashes onto your skin, he will say (and you may respond):

You are dust, and to dust you shall return.
Amen.

At the conclusion of the Imposition of Ashes, please stand.

Sentences

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

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

Absolution

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, does not desire the death of sinners but rather that they turn from their wickedness and live. He sent his only-begotten Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins and for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

During these days of Lent, let us implore God to give us renewal and his Holy Spirit. May we continue to abide in the true faith and at the last be received by him through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Be seated.

The Word

First Reading

¹²Yes, our rebellious deeds are many before you,
and our sins testify against us.

Our rebellious deeds are with us,
and as for our guilty deeds, we are aware of them.

¹³Those deeds are rebellion and treachery against the LORD.

We turn back from following our God.

We incite oppression and apostasy.

We conceive and mutter deceitful words from our hearts.

¹⁴Justice is turned back,

and righteousness stands far away,

for truth stumbles in the city square,

and honesty cannot enter it.

Isaiah 59:12–20

*Because I am
rebellious, I need a
Redeemer.*

¹⁵The truth is missing,
 and anyone who turns from evil makes himself prey.
 The LORD looked and saw something evil –
 there was no justice.

¹⁶He saw that there was no one.
 He was appalled that there was no one who could intervene.
 So his own arm worked salvation for him,
 and his own righteousness supported him.

¹⁷He clothed himself with righteousness like armor
 and wore a helmet of salvation on his head.
 He dressed in garments for vengeance,
 and he wrapped himself with zeal like a cloak.

¹⁸He will repay in full what they have earned,
 namely, wrath to his foes and full payment to his enemies.
 He will repay even the distant coastlands.

¹⁹From the west they will fear the LORD's name,
 and from the rising of the sun they will fear his glory,
 for he will come like a raging river,
 driven by the Spirit of the LORD.

²⁰Then a redeemer will come for Zion
 and for those in Jacob who turn from rebellion.
 This is the declaration of the LORD.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Hymn

579 His Mercy Is More

Second Reading

2 Corinthians 7:8–13a

*Godly sorrow results
 in repentance.*

⁸For even if I caused you sorrow with my letter, I do not regret it (even though I did regret it, for I see that my letter caused you sorrow – yet only for a little while). ⁹Now I rejoice, not because you were made to feel sorrow, but because this sorrow resulted in repentance. Yes, you were made sorry in a godly way. So you were not harmed in any way by us. ¹⁰In fact, godly sorrow produces repentance, which leads to salvation, leaving no regret. On the other hand, worldly sorrow produces death.

¹¹Yes, look what godly sorrow produced in you: what diligence, what eagerness to clear yourself, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what zeal, what correction! In every way you proved yourselves to be pure in this matter. ¹²So although I wrote to you, it was not because of the one who did what was wrong, or because of the one who was harmed by it. I wrote instead

so that your genuine concern for us would be revealed to you in the sight of God. ¹³For that reason we have been comforted.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Please stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Joel 2:13

The minister sings the verse. All sing each refrain.



Refrain



Praise to you, Lord Je - sus Christ, king of end - less glo - ry.

Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.

Refrain

Gospel

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

¹Be careful that you do not do your righteous works in front of people, so that they will notice. If you do, you have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. ²So whenever you perform acts of mercy, do not sound a trumpet for yourself, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets to be praised by people. Amen I tell you: They have received their reward. ³Instead, when you perform acts of mercy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. ⁴Then your acts of mercy will be in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

⁵Whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites. They love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by people. Amen I tell you: They have received their reward. ⁶But whenever you pray, go into your private room, close your door, and pray to your Father who is unseen. And your Father, who sees what others cannot see, will reward you.

¹⁶Whenever you fast, do not make yourself look sad like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces to show everyone that they are fasting. Amen I tell you: They have received their reward. ¹⁷But when you fast, anoint your head

When I recognize my need for forgiveness, I express my repentance with humility.

and wash your face, ¹⁸so that it is not apparent to people that you are fasting, but only to your Father who sees what is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

¹⁹Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up treasures for yourselves in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹Because where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise be to you, O Christ.

Be seated.

Anthem (6:30 p.m.)

I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say
Chaz Bowers

*I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto me and rest.
Lay down, O weary one, lay down,
Your head upon my breast."
I came to Jesus as I was,
So weary, worn, and sad;
I found in him my resting place,
And he has made me glad.*

*I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Behold I freely give
The living water, thirsty one,
Stoop down and drink and live!"
I came to Jesus and I drank,
From that life-giving stream
My thirst was quenched my soul revived,
And now I live in him.*

*I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"I am this dark world's light.
Look unto me thy morn' shall rise,
And all thy days be bright."
I looked to Jesus and I found,
In him my star, my sun.
And in that light of life I'll walk,
Till pilgrim days are done.*

Sermon

Zechariah 1:1–6

In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berekiah, the son of Iddo.

²The Lord was very angry with your forefathers. ³Therefore, now you are to tell this people that this is what the Lord of Armies says to them.

Return to me, declares the Lord of Armies, and I will return to you, says the Lord of Armies. ⁴Do not be like your forefathers, to whom the earlier prophets proclaimed, “This is what the Lord of Armies says. Return, return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.”

But our forefathers did not listen, nor did they pay attention to me, declares the Lord. ⁵Your forefathers—where are they now? And those prophets—did they go on living indefinitely? ⁶But my words and my statutes, which I commanded to my servants the prophets, caught up with our forefathers, didn’t they?

Then they returned and said, “Because of our ways and our deeds, the Lord of Armies has done to us just as he planned to do to us.”

Return to me!

Please stand.

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayer of the Church

Lord's Prayer

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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Be seated.

Offering

Musical Offering

In the Cross of Christ I Glory

David H. Hegarty

Personal Preparation for Holy Communion

As you prepare to receive the Sacrament today, you may use the Christian Questions on page 295 in your blue hymnal or Personal Preparation on page 19 of this service folder.

Please stand.

The Sacrament

Words of Institution

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my + body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my + blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always.



O Christ, Lamb of God

Agnus Dei

C: O Christ, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer - cy on us. O Christ, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer - cy on us. O Christ, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; grant us your peace. A - men.

Be seated.

Distribution

For our distribution today, you may approach the altar using the side aisles. The two sides will meet at the bottom step in the middle. For those who prefer a low-gluten wafer, please indicate such to the pastor when he distributes the host. The low-gluten wafers are in a soufflé cup on the paten. The grape-colored cups in each tray are alcohol-removed wine. We will dismiss down the center aisle.

Members and any guests who have spoken with a pastor prior to the service about receiving Communion may come forward at the direction of the ushers.

Distribution Hymns

798 I Lay My Sins on Jesus
657 Baptismal Waters Cover Me

Please stand.

Thanksgiving

Hear the prayer of your people, O Lord, that the lips which have praised you here may glorify you in the world, that the eyes which have seen the coming of your Son may long for his coming again, and that all who have received in his true body and blood the pledge of your forgiveness may be restored to live a new and holy life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

The Blessing

Brothers and sisters, go in peace. Live in harmony with one another.
Serve the Lord with gladness.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and + give you peace.

Amen.

Be seated.

Closing Hymn

949 In Peace and Joy I Now Depart



1 In peace and joy I now de - part as my Lord
2 Christ Je - sus brought this gift to me, my faith - ful
4 Christ is the hope and sav - ing light of those in
wills it; se - rene and qui - et is my heart;
Sav - ior, whom you al - lowed my eyes to see
blind - ness; he guides and com - forts those in night
glad - ness fills it. This the Lord has prom - ised
by your fa - vor. Now I know he is my
by his kind - ness. He is Is - rael's right - eous -
me, that death is but a slum - ber.
life, my friend when I am dy - ing.
ness, their joy, re - ward, and glo - ry.

Post-Service Music

And Can It Be that I Should Gain?

Lloyd Larson

Serving at Worship

Preaching minister

Presiding minister

Organ

Choir

Accompanist

Video streamer

Video captions

Sound

Pastor Gary Pufahl

Pastor Jon Buchholz

Kurt Rosenbaum

Junior choir (3:30 p.m.)

Adult choir (6:30 p.m.)

Kris Pufahl

Chris Wempner

Angie Keezer

Wes Wightman

Acknowledgments

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In our prayers

- Cherie Boeder – Receiving home hospice care.
- Karen Combs – Home recovering.
- Bonnie Delco – Recovering from the shingles virus.
- Ken Dins – Recovering at a rehab facility.
- Kaylee – Receiving treatment for cancer.
- Louise Sallquist – Recovering at a rehab facility.
- Wayne Score – Home recovering.
- Much-needed rain in the state of Arizona.
- That our hearts and minds stay focused on Jesus and the ultimate sacrifice and subsequent victory during this Lenten season and always.

Ushers

3:30 p.m.

6:30 p.m.

Dave Glodowski, Tor Henriksen, Mojo Krup

Will Meihak



*Emmanuel usher
sign-up.*

Communion

Thank you to Natalie Priebe and Brenda Rosenbaum for helping set up Communion for this evening.

This week at Emmanuel

Wednesday

Ash Wednesday worship service 3:30 and 6:30 p.m.
Lenten supper in the MEC 4:45-6:15 p.m.
Adult choir in the MEC No practice

Thursday

Thursday Bible study at Denny's 6:00 a.m.
21st Century Lessons from the Life of Jacob
Led by Pastor Dan Pautz at
Denny's (Broadway and Priest in Tempe)
God's Ways Bible study in the MEC 6:00 p.m.
Led by Pastor Gary Pufahl
Bible Basics in the MEC 6:30 p.m.
Led by Pastor Jon Buchholz

Friday

Chapel 8:30 a.m.
ELS early release 1:50 p.m.

Sunday, February 22

Worship services 8:00 and 10:30 a.m.
In-person Bible study, Sunday school, teen study 9:15 a.m.
Public School Catechism 12:00-1:30 p.m.

Looking ahead

February 25 Wednesday Bible study 8:30 a.m.
Drive through the Gospels
Led by Pastor Gary Pufahl
Midweek Lent worship service 3:30 and 6:30 p.m.
Lenten supper in the MEC 4:45-6:15 p.m.
Adult choir in the MEC 7:30 p.m.
February 26 Thursday Bible study at Denny's 6:00 a.m.
21st Century Lessons from the Life of Jacob
Led by Pastor Dan Pautz at
Denny's (Broadway and Priest in Tempe)
God's Ways Bible study in the MEC 6:00 p.m.
Led by Pastor Gary Pufahl
Bible Basics in the MEC 6:30 p.m.
Led by Pastor Jon Buchholz
February 27 Chapel 8:30 a.m.
ELS early release 1:50 p.m.
Fish Fry 4:00-7:00 p.m.
March 1 Worship services 8:00 and 10:30 a.m.
Bible study, Sunday school, teen study 9:15 a.m.
Public School Catechism 12:00-1:30 p.m.

Notes and News



Connection cards

The connection cards have a valuable purpose in helping us serve you better. We ask all our worshipers to help us serve you by scanning the QR code, by going to elctempe.org/connect, or by filling out one of the cards in the pews. Thank you!

Connection card

During the offering we ask that you complete an online connection card.

Call for a new pastor

Pastor Patrick Freese has declined our call to serve as associate pastor. We wish him the Lord's blessings, as he continues to serve Trinity Lutheran Church in Abita Springs, Louisiana.

The next call meeting to extend a call for a pastor to serve in the area of youth and family ministry will be held on Tuesday, March 3, at 6:30 p.m.

Peace Lutheran Church open house and dedication service

We are invited to join in the celebration of Peace Lutheran Church opening their new church building. Open house will be this Saturday, February 21, 12:00-4:00 p.m. with tours, food, drinks, bounce house, and face painting. On Sunday, February 22, at 4:00 p.m. there will be a dedication service with a potluck dinner to follow. Peace Lutheran Church is located at 15317 E. Riggs Road in Gilbert.

Donuts for Dollars - Teen fundraiser

The Emmanuel teens will be holding a fundraiser this coming Sunday, February 22. They will sell donuts beginning after first service and continue to sell until they run out. Donuts are \$1 each but extra donations are welcomed and appreciated! The proceeds will offset the cost of our Emmanuel teens attending the WELS International Youth Rally.

Lenten meals and fellowship

Enjoy a meal and fellowship on Wednesday nights (between the services) for the six weeks during Lent. Bring your family, friends and dish to share. If you plan to attend and/or provide a dish, please RSVP using the provided QR code, link or paper sign-up in the Ministry and Education Center (MEC).

Ash Wednesday, February 18 - Chili and corn bread

Setup and cleanup for tonight's meal is led by the Emmanuel Church Council. The Church Council is providing chili, corn bread, fruit, veggies, condiments, and desserts. Please join us in the MEC between services!

Wednesday, February 25 - Mac-n-Cheese

Setup and cleanup next Wednesday is led by Emmanuel's ladies' group (*Women of the Word, WOW*). WOW will provide macaroni and cheese. The congregation will bring veggies and dip, fruit, and desserts. You can sign-up [here](#) or scan the QR code to the right.



*Lenten meal
(2/25) sign-up*

Explanation of the Imposition of Ashes

Tonight's worship includes an ancient Church rite known as *Imposition of Ashes*. All worshipers of all ages are welcome to receive the ashes, but it is entirely optional.

- Using ashes as a sign of repentance is a common Biblical theme. (See 2 Samuel 13:19, Esther 4:1, and Jeremiah 6:26 for just a few examples.)
- The imposition of ashes goes back centuries in the Christian Church. Like other church traditions that have been handed down through the centuries, the imposition of ashes represents another connection that we have with believers of all times.
- Many of our members, who grew up in churches that used imposition of ashes, have asked if we could include it on Ash Wednesday, since they found the practice meaningful and a special part of their Lenten preparation.
- The imposition of ashes has become quite common in congregations of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). More congregations appreciate the practice as entirely appropriate for Ash Wednesday.
- The symbolism is rich. The ashes remind us of so much: Because of sin, our bodies will turn to dust. Because of Christ, our guilt has been carried to the cross and turned to ash.
- Holy Communion is a Sacrament that is only for communicants who can examine themselves (1 Corinthians 11:28), who are united in faith and confession (1 Corinthians 10:17,18), and who have been instructed in the Sacrament, so they do not eat and drink judgment upon themselves (1 Corinthians 11:29-31). It offers forgiveness and strength in the true body and blood of Jesus.

The imposition of ashes is *not* a Sacrament. It is a meaningful tradition that leads us to reflect seriously on our sin and consequent mortality.

- Receiving the imposition of ashes does not make one's repentance more real, nor one's faith more sincere. Like folding your hands and bowing your head in prayer, it is neither commanded nor forbidden, neither good nor bad. If receiving the sign of the cross in ash upon your forehead or hand is a meaningful reflection of your devotion and repentance, then come forward and participate. If it is not a practice you prefer to participate in, you are not obligated to come forward and receive the ashes. We are not bound in our consciences; we are free in Christ!

Personal preparation for Holy Communion

The following questions for self-examination (adapted from various sources) may be helpful as you prepare to receive the Sacrament.

As we prepare to partake of the Holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is appropriate that we diligently examine ourselves, as St Paul exhorts us. For this Sacrament has been instituted for the special comfort and strengthening of those who humbly confess their sins and hunger and thirst for righteousness.

But if we thus examine ourselves, we find nothing in ourselves but sin and death, from which we can in no way set ourselves free. Therefore our Lord Jesus Christ has had mercy upon us and has taken upon himself our nature, so that he might fulfill the whole will and law of God and for us and for our deliverance suffer death and all that we by our sins have deserved. In order that we should more confidently believe this and be strengthened in faith and cheerful obedience to his holy will, he has instituted the holy Sacrament of his Supper, in which he feeds us with his body and gives us to drink of his blood.

Therefore, whoever eats this bread and drinks this cup firmly believing the words of Christ, lives in Christ and Christ in him, and has eternal life.

We should also do this in remembrance of him, proclaiming his death – that he was delivered over for our sins and raised to life for our justification. Then with thankful hearts we commit ourselves again to take up our cross and follow him, keep his commandments, and love one another as he has loved us.

As you examine yourself, consider these questions before God, who searches the heart:

Q: Do you sincerely confess that you have sinned against God and deserved his wrath and punishment?

A: *Truly you should confess, for Holy Scripture declares, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."*

Q: Do you heartily repent of all your sins committed in thought, word, and action?

A: *Truly you should repent, as did the penitent sinners: King David, who prayed for a contrite heart; Peter, who wept bitterly; the woman caught in adultery; the prodigal son; and others.*

Q: Do you sincerely believe that God, by his grace, for Jesus' sake, forgives you all your sins?

A: *Truly you should believe, for Holy Scripture declares, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."*

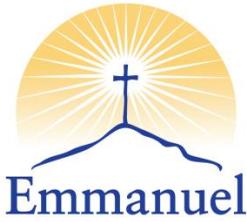
Q: Do you promise that with the help of the Holy Spirit you will from this time forward amend your sinful life?

A: *Truly you should so promise, for Holy Scripture declares, "No one who lives in him keeps on sinning," and Jesus himself declares, "If you love me, you will obey what I command."*

Personal prayer:

Lord Jesus, as a penitent sinner filled with joy and gratitude, I now come to your table to receive the precious food of your life-giving body and blood. May it strengthen me to remain in you as you remain in me, so that I bear much fruit in devoted service to you and in acts of love and kindness to others. Amen.

A person should examine himself before eating of the bread and drinking from the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment (1 Corinthians 11:28,29,31).



About Us

Emmanuel Lutheran Church shares the love of Jesus and the truth of his saving Word with the people in our church, our community and the world.

The objectives of our mission are:

- To **preach**, by proclaiming the Word of God, as we worship and praise God in a loving Christian atmosphere;
- To **teach**, by fostering an ongoing increase in knowledge and maturity in God's Word;
- To **reach**, by sharing the Gospel of God's Word with all people, and to do so;
- By **each** member actively participating in our ministry.

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Emmanuel Lutheran Church is a member of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran

Synod (WELS). We are united in faith and teaching with the other churches of the Wisconsin Synod as well as the churches of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS).

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