



Ash Wednesday
Gustaf Adolf Lutheran Church
February 18th, 2026

PRELUDE

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

"Even now, declares the Lord, return to me with all your heart." (Joel 2:12)

Roll up your sleeves.

Let down your guard.

Come in from the storm.

Make yourself at home.

Pull up to the table.

Release the tension in your jaw. Take a deep breath. Return to God with all your heart.

May it be so.

OPENING MEDITATION

As we begin the season of Lent, let us turn inward and tune our hearts. Before an orchestra plays together, they must all tune their instruments—the cacophony of this process may be very loud and create lots of dissonance, but it's a necessary step in the process of creating harmonies and melodies. And so, this Lent, how can you tune the instrument of your heart so that it aligns with God?

Moment of Silent Reflection

Prayer of Confession + Words of Forgiveness

C: Holy God, we confess: we don't return to you fully. We share with you the pieces of our lives that are convenient. We put on different hats in different rooms. We forget that we are called, invited, and loved with all that we are— including our mess, our beauty, our faith, and our doubt. Forgive us, and give us hearts that long to return.

L: Friends, God sees you. God hears you. God loves you. You are forgiven and claimed with all that you are. Rest in that good news.

C: Thanks be to God, amen.

Gathering Hymn

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

ELW #807

Prayer for Illumination

L: Loving Creator, **C: we are here, telling stories of dust. We are here, trying to shake the dust out of our ears so that we might hear you clearly. We are here, hoping that showing up is the first step in returning to you. Scoop us up in your embrace and carry us to a place of truth. Clear the smog that makes it hard to see. Clear the dust that makes it hard to hear. We are at the edge of our seats. We are listening for you. Amen.**

Word

Psalm 51:1-17

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions. ² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. ³ For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. 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. ⁵ Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me. ⁶ You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart. ⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. ⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice. ⁹ Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. ¹¹ Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit. ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. ¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance. ¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. ¹⁶ For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased. ¹⁷ The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Reflection

Imposition of Ashes: "Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return"

Lent is a time for us to return to our Creator who formed us from the dust of the earth. Our lives are finite, so we want to spend every precious moment in tune with God, living whole, abundant lives—the kind of lives we were created to lead. And so in recognition of our origins in the earth, in acknowledgment of our finite days, we come to receive ashes and remember: dust we are, and to dust we shall return.

Hymn (*sing during imposition of ashes*) *I Want Jesus To Walk With Me* ELW #325

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

L: Holy Creator, you fashioned us from the dust and called us good, so very good. Your fingerprints remain all over us.

ALL: Don't let us forget that we come from the earth, we will return to the earth, and every day in between is a gift from you. Gifts aren't meant to be encased in glass boxes and set high on a shelf, lest they show any signs of use. No, you gave us this life in the hopes that we would live it fully, using it up and letting it develop signs of wear and tear, a marvelous patina that proves we have lived.

L: But some days we'd rather be safe and sound, where nothing can touch us.

ALL: It's a beautiful life, but the living can be so hard, God. All along our journeys we get scraped knees, hurt feelings, missteps, mistakes, unexpected diagnoses, broken hearts, painful endings, and phone calls that change our lives in an instant.

L: As the paths of our lives wander through hills and valleys, as we get caught in the rain and the soles of our shoes wear down, tune our hearts to hear your voice everywhere.

ALL: If we listen closely, we can hear it now. It's in uncontrollable giggles, birdsong at the window, the sizzle of a homemade meal on the stove, and melodies buried deep in our souls.

L: Yes, indeed, it's a beautiful life. Not because it's perfect, but because it's real.

ALL: Journey with us, accompanying us as the path winds. Lift our heads to witness the majesty tucked around every detour. If we look closely, we might see your fingerprints. And if we listen deeply, we just might hear your voice calling us good, so very good. Amen.

Offering

Offering Song (*sing during collection of offering*) *Give Thanks* Gray #170

Offering Prayer

God of good gifts, receive these and all our offerings as we present them in faithful service for the sake of your gospel. Prepare our hearts to receive you in this meal as you pour out your very presence through Christ Jesus, the wellspring of eternal life. Amen.

Holy Communion

Invitation to the Table

***Words of Institution**

Pg. 207

***Lord's Prayer**

Pg. 208

Communion Distribution (All Are Welcome to Receive Communion at GA Church)

Post Communion Blessing

Post Communion Prayer

God of manna and mustard seeds, we came to this Table hungry and we leave feeling full—full of hope, full of promise, full of what could be. For we not only found glimpses of you at this Table, but we caught a glimpse of the way things could be: in a meal where all are welcomed and all are fed. Is there anything holier than that? So thank you for nourishing our curiosity alongside our spirit and our conviction. May we always seek you the way you seek after us. With grateful hearts we pray, **Amen.**

Sending

Blessing

May God give you grace never to sell yourself short. Grace to risk something big for something good. And grace to remember that the world is too dangerous for anything but truth and too small for anything but love. The blessing of God Almighty, Creator, Son, and Holy Spirit be with you now and remain with you this day and always.

Sending Hymn

Take My Life, That I May Be

ELW #583

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Jesus meets you on the way.

C: To share the Good News of God’s Word and to serve the community and the world.

Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Bulletin Donated:

Mission Statement of Gustaf Lutheran Church (Adopted in 2022)

To share the Good News of God’s Word and to serve the community and the world.

Matthew 22:39 ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

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We celebrate weekly Holy Communion. We welcome all who believe in the Risen Christ and who find in the sacrament our Lord’s real presence for the forgiveness of sins and the renewal of life. If you receive communion in your home congregation, you are invited to receive it here at G.A. Red wine and white grape juice will be offered to you in Christ’s name. You may choose your preference. If you are unable to receive wheat bread, or wine, be sure that in a single element you receive the Presence and all the gifts of the sacrament.

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