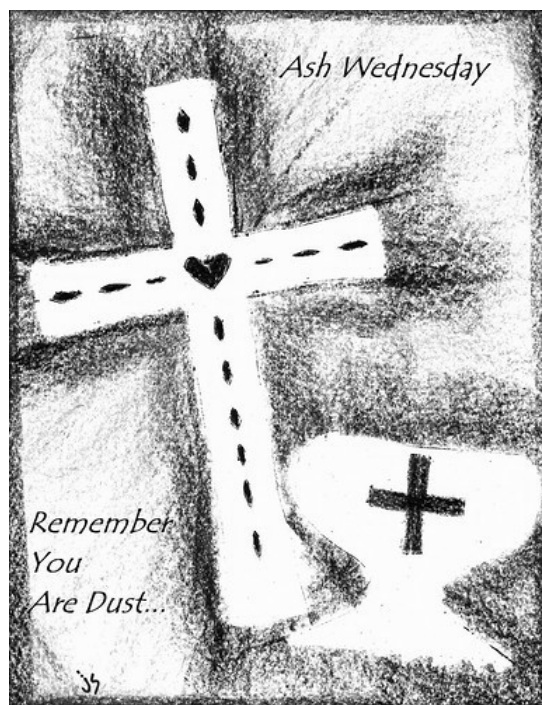


# “Growing God’s Kingdom”



## ASH WEDNESDAY

February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH

REV. SAMUEL J. LEISTER, PASTOR

3 SOUTH THIRD STREET

MIFFLINTOWN, PA 17059

(717)-436-6213

**PASTOR EMAIL:** [mlcsleister@gmail.com](mailto:mlcsleister@gmail.com)

**OFFICE EMAIL:** [mlchurchoffice@gmail.com](mailto:mlchurchoffice@gmail.com)

**WEBSITE:** [mlcmifflintown.org](http://mlcmifflintown.org)

**THIS EVENING’S 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.*

## Welcome

**The congregation** is invited to stand at this mark \*

**The imposition of ashes** is a Christian practice dating from the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Ashes were used to signify God's condemnation of sin. Ashes are signs of mourning and repentance. When we receive ashes during the Ash Wednesday worship, we hear the words, "You are dust and to dust you shall return." These are the same words God spoke to Adam, after Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command (Genesis 3:19). They are also words spoken at graveside services and remind us of our mortality.

Ashes are also about cleansing and renewal. They were used in ancient times in the absence of soap, and when we receive them on Ash Wednesday, they remind us of the cleansing that is received through baptism.

The ash cross we wear tonight is a way of saying, "I am sorry for my sins, and I know I need to be forgiven." When we look in the mirror, it is a reminder to ourselves that we need to be forgiven and to forgive others. Ash Wednesday is a serious day, but it is also a hope-filled one. The cross reminds us that God loves and forgives us. Each day is a chance to start over.

**Communion will be administered continuously.** Come forward by the center aisles, take a communion cup from the table by the front pew, and return by the side aisles. \*Grape juice is available for those who prefer grape juice. \*Gluten free wafers are located on the oak pedestal on the step in front of the chancel. Communion will be brought to those unable to come forward.

**The offerings** from the services will go toward the Juniata County Food Pantry.

**Ash Wednesday**  
**Juniata County Lutheran Churches**  
**February 14, 2024**

PRELUDE

Bob St. Clair, Organist

SPECIAL MUSIC

*“Look to the Rose”*

Community Choir

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

RESPONSIVE PRAYER: Psalm 51:1-17 (*congregation prays part in bold*)

<sup>1</sup> Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
**according to your abundant mercy  
blot out my transgressions.**

<sup>2</sup> Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin.

<sup>3</sup> **For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.**

<sup>4</sup> 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 judgement.

<sup>5</sup> **Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner  
when my mother conceived me.**

<sup>6</sup> **You desire truth in the inward being;  
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret  
heart.**

<sup>7</sup> Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be  
clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter  
than snow.

<sup>8</sup> **Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones that you have crushed  
rejoice.**

<sup>9</sup> Hide your face from my sins,  
and blot out all my iniquities.

<sup>10</sup> **Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit  
within me.**

<sup>11</sup> **Do not cast me away from your  
presence, and do not take your holy  
spirit from me.**

<sup>12</sup> **Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing spirit.**

<sup>13</sup> Then I will teach transgressors your  
ways, and sinners will return to you.

<sup>14</sup> Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,  
O God of my salvation, and my tongue  
will sing aloud of your deliverance.

<sup>15</sup> **O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth  
will declare your praise.**

<sup>16</sup> For you have no delight in sacrifice;  
if I were to give a burnt-offering, you  
would not be pleased.

<sup>17</sup> **The sacrifice acceptable to God is a  
broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart, O God,  
you will not despise.**

\* THE CONFESSION (*Based on Joel 2:1-2, 12-17*)

P: We are gathered in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

P: Return to me with all your heart, says the Lord, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning, with broken and repentant hearts.

**C: For the Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.**

P: Blessed be God who became incarnate as liberator, who flipped tables in his own house, upended systems which mocked his creation, and set individuals free so communities could be made whole.

**C: Amen.**

P: Let us confess our own sins, and the communal sin we have allowed to fester in our hearts, homes, and the lives of the vulnerable. We do this in the presence of one another for accountability, and in the presence of God, active in this sacred time.

*(Extended time of silence for reflection and personal confession)*

P: Holy and Merciful God,

**C: We confess that we have benefited from systems of oppression, not because we are consciously trying to hurt those who are different, but because keeping our eyes shut and closing our ears to anguished cries is the easier path. We focus on what we have done, but do not focus on what we have left undone for our brothers and sisters in you.**

**We often live like the cross happened for me, and not for all of us.**

**We cry out for grace from you, while withholding it from our neighbor.**

**We repent and turn away from this path today. Amen.**

P: Forgive us and restore us, O God, for your mercy is great.

Let us return to the Lord our God.

THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES

*Those who desire to receive ashes may come forward.*

“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

\* WORDS OF FORGIVENESS (*based on Joel 2:13*)

P: Return to the Lord your God, for God is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Turn toward your God in the confidence that, through Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.

**C: Amen. Thanks be to God!**

HYMN

*Be Thou My Vision*

Blue Hymnal 776

\* GREETING ~ *We greet one another in the name of God*

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

**C: And also with you.**

\* THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Gracious God, out of your love and mercy you breathed into dust the breath of life,

creating us to serve you and our neighbors. Call forth our prayers and acts of kindness, and strengthen us to face our mortality with confidence in the mercy 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.

## WORD

THE OLD TESTAMENT READING IS FROM ISAIAH 58:1-12

<sup>1</sup>Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. <sup>2</sup>Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgements they delight to draw near to God. <sup>3</sup>“Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?” Look, you serve your own interest on your fast-day, and oppress all your workers. <sup>4</sup>Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. <sup>5</sup>Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? <sup>6</sup>Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? <sup>7</sup>Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? <sup>8</sup>Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rearguard. <sup>9</sup>Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, <sup>10</sup>if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. <sup>11</sup>The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. <sup>12</sup>Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

L: The word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God!**

THE EPISTLE READING IS FROM 2 CORINTHIANS 5:20b—6:10

<sup>20</sup>So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

<sup>6:1</sup>As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. <sup>2</sup>For 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! <sup>3</sup>We are putting no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, <sup>4</sup>but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup>beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; <sup>6</sup>by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, <sup>7</sup>truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; <sup>8</sup>in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; <sup>9</sup>as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; <sup>10</sup>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!**

SPECIAL MUSIC

*"Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley"*

Community Choir

\* P: The Holy Gospel According to Matthew the 6<sup>th</sup> Chapter

**C: Glory to you, O Lord.**

\* THE GOSPEL READING IS FROM MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-21

[Jesus said]: "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.

<sup>2</sup> "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. <sup>3</sup>But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup>so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>5</sup> "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.

<sup>16</sup> "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. <sup>17</sup>But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>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.

<sup>19</sup> "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; <sup>20</sup>but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

**C: Praise to you, O Christ!**

MESSAGE

Bishop Craig Miller

HYMN

*1, The Lord, of Sea and Sky*

Blue Hymnal 752

\* APOSTLES' CREED (In Unison)

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

\* THE PRAYERS ~ *There are several prayer petitions, and after each one, we pray:*

L: Hear us, O God.

C: **Your mercy is great.**

\* THE PEACE

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: **And also with you.**

*Greet one another in the Peace of Jesus Christ, by shaking hands and saying,  
"Peace be with you."*

THE OFFERING

SPECIAL MUSIC

*"How Beautiful"*

Community Choir

\* PRESENTATION HYMN

Let the vine - yards be fruit - ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our  
cup of bless - ing. Gath - er a har - vest from the  
seeds that were sown, that we may be fed with the bread of life.  
Gath - er the hopes and the dreams of all; u - nite them with the  
prayers we of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your  
pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

\* THE OFFERING PRAYER

L: Jesus, you are the bread of life and the host of this meal. Bless these gifts that we have gathered that all people may know your goodness. Feed us not only with this holy food but with hunger for justice and peace. We pray this in your name.

C: **Amen.**

**\* 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 him thanks and praise.**

**\* PREFACE**

P: It is indeed right and salutary....we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might:**

**Heav- en and earth are full of your glo- ry. Ho - san - na. Ho - san - na.**

**Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who**

**comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.**

**\* THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

**\* THE LORD'S PRAYER**

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 trespasses against us;

and lead us not into temptation,

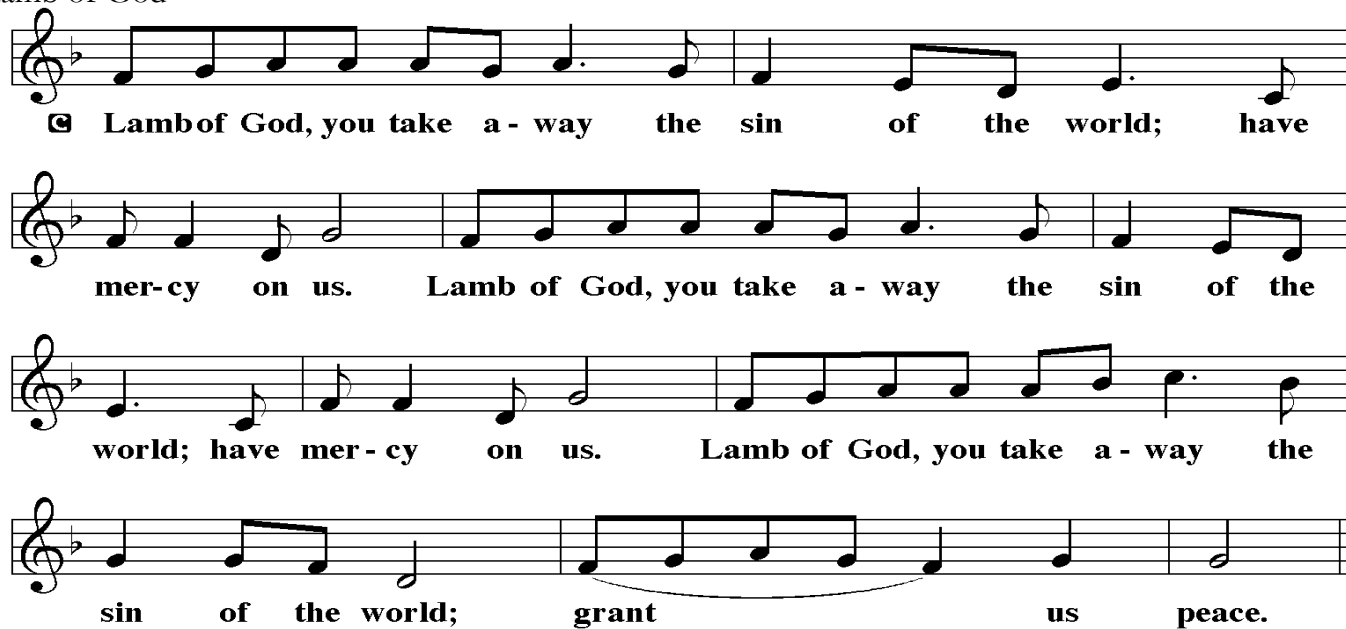
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,

forever and ever. Amen



## Lamb of God



**Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have**  
**mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the**  
**world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the**  
**sin of the world; grant us peace.**

## Receiving of Holy Communion

Hymns sung during communion:

Blue hymnal	734	Softly and Tenderly Jesus is Calling
Green hymnal	296	Just As I Am Without One Plea
Green hymnal	448	Amazing Grace

## \* POST COMMUNION BLESSING

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

**C: Amen**

## \* PRAYER

## \* BENEDICTION

## \* SENDING HYMN

*“Lift High the Cross”*

Green Hymnal #377

## \* DISMISSAL

P: Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honor all people; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Thanks be to God!**

From *Words for Worship*, copyright 2023 Augsburg Fortress. Used by permission. Scripture quotations (except psalms) from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship copyright 2006. Used by permission of Augsburg Fortress under license #SB154530

**We give thanks** for all those who helped to plan, lead and be a part of our Ash Wednesday Worship.

**We especially give thanks for:**

**Our guest, Bishop Craig Miller,** for his presence, leadership and sharing the gospel with us.

**Worship Assistants: Pastor Mindy Petrovcic, Pastor Rick Adams, Pastor Sam Leister, Julia Martin, Barbara Geedey, Hannah Ehrisman, Marina Holderman, and Braedon Walton.**

**Organist: Bob St. Clair**

**Pianist: Slone Smith**

**Kevin Cunningham,** for leading the Community Choir, and for all the choir members:

SOPRANO

Andrea Cameron

Arlen Saner

Shelly Damiano

Dot Dowling

Roberta Eckenrode

Diane Manbeck

Christina Martin

Dianna Spriggle

Marci Walters

Diana Wise

ALTO

Penni Abram

Amy Hart

Julia Martin

Pastor Anna Ritter-Esborn

Mary Tonge

TENOR

Joe Barnes, Jr.

Slone Smith

Larry Wise

BASS

Pastor Rick Adams

Will Angenent

Craig Baillie, III

Greg Cunningham

Kevin Cunningham

David Stimeling

Maison Wolfe

**The people of Messiah Lutheran Church,** for hosting us for worship and fellowship this evening.