

# Where Two or Three Are Gathered: Worship for Small Assemblies

Ash Wednesday and Sundays in Lent - Year A

Prepared by Rev. Kathy Caulkins, ABT Synod

## Ash Wednesday Introduction February 26, 2020

### 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. “Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return.” While not included in the texts for the day, to remember we are dust, is also to remember that in the beginning God created humanity “from the dust of the ground.” We are God-formed, God-breathed dust! 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, already created and formed anew in grace. 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. (adapted from Sundays and Seasons, <https://members.sundaysandseasons.com> )

### Lectionary/Themes

**Joel 2:1-2, 12-17** Imagine the scene. The trumpet sounds rebounding from the heights of the hill where a walled city; a fortress sits high for all to see. And the people gather and wait to hear a message from the king. “Declare a fast, fall on your knees in ashes and repentance. Return to the Lord your God!” The edict seems out of character from a king who has demanded the fealty and worship of his people; who has commanded them to kneel before him. But the horses ride out, the ravens are sent, the message spreads throughout the kingdom. And we watch as an entire nation falls to their knees to fast and pray, to turn away from their sin. It is an epic scene. And yet the setting begins with an odd contrast. “I don’t want your ceremony,” says the Lord. “I am not interested in people who bow the knee simply because they are commanded. I am not interested in outward appearances of worship and remorse. But give me your hearts.” And before we think this is just another king who wants to be worshipped for worship’s sake; the reason we return to the Lord, is because this God *is* gracious. This God *is* merciful. This God *is* slow to anger. **OUR GOD *is*** abounding in steadfast love. In the midst of the Ashes of Ash Wednesday, the focus is not on our repentance, but on a God of grace who desires nothing more than the life and love of all people.

**Psalms 51** “Create in Me a Clean Heart O God.” Perhaps the most penitent Psalm in the scripture, it comes from a place of deep humility. A heart-wrenching confession of sin, that acknowledges we do not deserve forgiveness and yet we ask for it anyway; turning to the only place where true forgiveness and grace can be found—in God. As in the

reading from Joel, the theme continues. God's love is steadfast, unshakable, everlasting, and eternal.

**2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10** Paul's urging to the Corinthian church, "Do not receive God's grace in vain, for now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation." In the midst of struggle, hardship, persecution, beatings, imprisonment the church at Corinth has lost hope in God. Paul's encouragement is to "carry on carrying on;" that in fact God's grace is not in vain, so be reconciled to God. How? "In hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness..." It seems a daunting list and we can quickly forget what Paul sets forth. That these things do not save us, but in these things God is revealed, in these things, we understand the riches of grace come to us in Christ, who "had no sin, yet became sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

**Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21** The Gospel of Matthew echoes the text from Joel; that fasting and praying and giving alms for the sake of outward appearances is not what God requires or desires. That if the motivation for spiritual practices is our glory, fame, notoriety, etc., then these are the things we seek and what we ultimately treasure and worship. Be careful. For this treasure is fickle and fleeting and easily destroyed. "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

### **Main Themes**

We are yet a people who rely on ourselves, our actions and spiritual practices, on outward appearances that in the end are shallow and fleeting. This day calls us to turn away even from worship practices and traditions that bring us a false sense of security, that now we are "good with God." God is not moved by our practices, but longs for relationship with us. As we kneel before God marked in ashes, the readings encourage, call, ache, for our return to God and God alone who is faithful. God who is gracious and merciful. God who is abounding in steadfast love.

### **Alternatives for Smaller Congregations**

It is true that in some smaller congregations and communities it becomes difficult to gather people together for evening worship, particularly if there has already been a Shrove Tuesday gathering the night before. Creativity and flexibility are often the best suggestion. Plan an afternoon worship time. Or alternatively, combine the Shrove Tuesday meal with an Ash Wednesday focus. Plan for this on whichever evening works best in your setting. Less important is whether it is Tuesday or Wednesday. More important to provide the opportunity for reflection, prayer, and the imposition of ashes. Suggested ideas for prep as follows:

### **Setting up the Space for a combined evening**

Ahead of the Shrove Tuesday meal set the worship space to invite a quiet and reflective atmosphere. Dimmed lights with several lit candles can set the tone. A pianist may want to play seasonally appropriate hymns softly during the reflection time. Or alternatively, other recorded music can be played.

Prepare several stations using the petitions from the Confession of Sin found on pg. 253 in the hymnal. For instance:

**“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.”**

Print the petition in larger print and display it in a picture frame, etc. At the station include photos of creation—both in its beauty and in the ways we pollute and destroy our environment. Perhaps include resources about environmental stewardship, pamphlets on ways to reduce our carbon footprint, etc.

For a petition on lack of love for neighbor and those who are different include photos of local refugee families and their stories, or reflections from the homeless in your town, etc. Be creative. Include the petitions that are most meaningful to your setting and adapt your display according to topic. You may also include related scripture, or include stations with select verses from the Ash Wednesday lectionary along with summaries of the themes of the text. For the final station print the Ash Wednesday focus and call from Joel, “Return to the Lord your God who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.”

As you share the Shrove Tuesday meal announce that people may move through the stations following the meal as they are ready. At the final station have two people ready to apply the ashes inviting people to either stand or kneel. As the ashes are applied, speak the words, **“Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”**

Have pre-printed papers with the spoken liturgy as found on ELW pg. 254 that can be repeated by leaders and those who come following the imposition of ashes.

Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation.

**That we may show forth your glory in the world.**

By the cross and passion of your Son, our Saviour,

**Bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection. Amen.**

The openness and invitation of this kind of setting led to surprises in my own congregation. A 75 year old man who had never participated in Ash Wednesday before asked for an explanation of the meaning of the ashes and then came for the first time. Sunday School children asked if they could apply the ashes too, and children were marking the heads of their parents and grandparents and Sunday School teachers. Be open to the Spirit’s leading and work among the people who gather.

### **Ashes**

If you have used palm branches for the previous year’s Palm Sunday procession, plan to include a “Burning of the Palms” rite either on the last Sunday of Epiphany (Transfiguration Sunday), or just prior to the Shrove Tuesday meal so that the ashes can be prepared in advance for the imposition. The burning is best done outdoors to avoid smoke detectors and the dangers of smoke and fire. In the church parking lot or even at a campsite where the congregation may gather for a wiener roast following, and where the fire and smoke and embers continue to connect and evoke reflection on the burning of the ashes.

Dried palms are crushed and placed in a large coffee can. A rite for burning of the ashes follows.

If not burning palm branches from previous years, ashes can be purchased at a church supply store. Ensure enough time for order and delivery.

### **Burning of the Ashes Liturgy — by Rev. Kathy Calkins**

With our palms we have praised you  
**With our voices Hosannas we have sung**  
But when the fire of our passion dies  
**When we have turned away from you**  
All that remains is ashes

When we have forgotten your promises O God  
**When we burn our bridges**  
When we set fire to our relationships  
**When we have turned away from love, when the fire dies**  
All that remains is smoke and ashes

When our lives grow cold  
**When our bodies wither and die**  
When memories fade and breath flickers  
**And our lives on this earth pass away**  
All that remains is dust and ashes

Can the dust praise you, O God?  
**Does beauty rise from the ashes of death?**  
Out of the depths we cry to you O God  
**For you alone can raise us to life**  
And create us anew when all that remains is ashes

For out of the dust of the ground  
**You have shaped and formed your people**  
And breathed in us your Spirit's breath  
**Create us anew we pray O God**  
As we wait for beauty to rise even as we are ashes.

***The ashes are lit. The people remain in silence until the flame ebbs out.***

Let us pray. God of grace, we remember that we are dust and to dust we shall return. Bless these ashes and with them our lives forever marked with the sign of the cross. In your love, forgive our sin and create us anew through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**

## Ash Wednesday Worship Resources February 26, 2020

The order of worship for the day is based upon ELW pg. 251ff. Holy Communion may be included and would follow the Imposition of Ashes. This suggested order does not include Holy Communion.

### Suggested Hymns for the Day

ELW #328 Restore in Us O God  
ELW #599 Lord Jesus Think on Me  
ELW #600 Out of the Depths I Cry to You  
ELW #601 Savior, When in Dust to You  
ELW #602 Your Heart O God is Grieved  
ELW #607 Come, Ye Disconsolate  
ELW #608 Softly and Tenderly  
ELW #609 Chief of Sinners Though I Be  
ELW #775 Jesus Priceless Treasure  
ELW #801 Change My Heart O God  
ELW #814 Take O Take Me As I Am  
Turn My Heart O God—Marty Haugen

Youtube video link: <https://ca.video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?fr=yhs-shnl-001&hsimp=yhs-001&hspart=shnl&p=tune+my+heart+o+god+marty+haugen#id=1&vid=38f4a0ae1a846b08aec2474208e47980&action=click>

Sheet Music: <https://www.free-scores.com/shop/turn-heart-god-sheetmusic--199064-USA>

Create in Me A Clean Heart O God

Youtube video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGPmMcDeRpM>

### ORDER OF WORSHIP

#### Gathering Litany *(may be omitted, especially if already used for burning of the palms)*

With our palms we have praised you

**With our voices Hosannas we have sung**

But when the fire of our passion dies

**When we have turned away from you**

All that remains is ashes

When we have forgotten your promises O God

**When we burn our bridges**

When we set fire to our relationships

**When we have turned away from love, when the fire dies**

All that remains is smoke and ashes

When our lives grow cold

**When our bodies wither and die**

When memories fade and breath flickers

**And our lives on this earth pass away**

All that remains is dust and ashes

Can the dust praise you, O God?  
**Does beauty rise from the ashes of death?**  
 Out of the depths we cry to you O God  
**For you alone can raise us to life**  
 And create us anew when all that remains is ashes

For out of the dust of the ground  
**You have shaped and formed your people**  
 And breathed in us your Spirit's breath  
**Create us anew we pray O God**  
 As we wait for beauty to rise even as we are ashes.

**Gathering Hymn** ELW #600 Out of the Depths I Cry to You *(Or alternative as listed)*

The Lord be with you.  
**And also with you.**  
 Let us pray.  
 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.**

**1st Reading** Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

**Song** Turn My Heart O God (Marty Haugen) *or Create in Me a Clean Heart O God*

Refrain

Turn my heart, O God. Turn my heart, O

God. Take my pain and bro - ken - ness; shape my life for

you. Come and turn my heart, O God.

**Psalm 51: 1-12**

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

**Wash me through and through from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin.** For I know my offenses, and my sin is ever before me.

**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.**

**Song** Turn My Heart O God (Marty Haugen)

Indeed, I was born steeped in wickedness, a sinner from my mother's womb.

**Indeed, you delight in truth deep within me, and would have me know wisdom deep within.**

Remove my sins with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be purer than snow.

**Song** Turn My Heart O God (Marty Haugen)

**Let me hear joy and gladness; that the body you have broken may rejoice.**

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

**Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.**

Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

**Restore to me the joy of your salvation and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.**

**Song** Turn My Heart O God (Marty Haugen)

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading** 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

**Gospel Acclamation** ELW Setting 8 page 189 Let Your Steadfast Love *Or alternative Lenten Acclamation in any setting*

**Gospel** Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

**Sermon**

**Hymn of the Day** ELW #358 Great God Your Love Has Called Us vs 1-3, 5 *(Or alternative as listed)*

**Confession of Sin** ELW pg. 252-253

**Imposition of Ashes**

In times of great sorrow and heartache, God's people of old would wear their grief. With sackcloth and ashes, their outward form reflected the reality of their hearts. Tonight we too wear ashes as a sign of our brokenness. We acknowledge our need. We confess our sin—the excuses that have kept us from being made whole. We come in our desire to be created anew, our longing to be made well.

After the fire has raged and the flames have died away and grown cold, nothing remains but ashes.

**We are dust and to dust we shall return.**

After the hot passion of sin, after to cool calculation of evil, all that remains is brokenness and ashes.

**We are dust and to dust we shall return.**

After the zeal for living has ebbed away and life has run its course, there is nothing left but ashes.

**We are dust, and to dust we shall return.**

But the ashes are not the end. Smearred in ashes we fall to our knees.

**Washed in waters of grace we rise.**

In the depths of sorrow we enter.

**In Christ we rise with confidence and hope.**

In the frailty of dust we begin.

**Created anew, we rise to resurrection and life.**

O Lord, we are but dust and ashes. But ashes are not the end. For out of the dust of the ground you form us anew. Over the ashes of our life you breathe your breath, and we rise to life in you.

**Thanks be to God!**

Traced in the sign of the cross, the ashes point not only to the reality of who we are, but call us to repent—to return to the cross of Christ—the place where our sin is forgiven, the place of our healing, the place where Jesus, arms open wide, pours out his life for us. This day, as you come to receive the ashes, the invitation of Christ for us: “Come, be made well.”

*(People may come forward and kneel or stand to receive the ashes.)*

**Hymns during the Imposition of Ashes** *(Or if preferred instrumental music, or silence, or other alternatives listed)*

ELW #801 Change my Heart O God

ELW #814 Take O Take Me As I Am

*(After the imposition of ashes, the service continues, pg.254 )*

Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation,

**That we may show forth your glory in the world.**

By the cross and passion of your Son, our Saviour,

**Bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.**

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.**

Let us pray.

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 Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

**The Lord's Prayer**



## **Blessing**

Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

**Amen.**

ELW #757 ALL My Hope on God is Founded **OR** ELW #790 Day by Day (*Or alternative as listed*)

**Dismissal** ELW pg 254

## Lent 1 March 1

### Introduction

Today's gospel tells of Jesus' temptation in the desert. His forty-day fast becomes the basis of our Lenten pilgrimage. In the early church Lent was a time of intense preparation for those to be baptized at the Easter Vigil. This catechetical focus on the meaning of faith is at the heart of our Lenten journey to the baptismal waters of Easter. Hungry for God's mercy, we receive the bread of life to nourish us for the days ahead. (Sundays and Seasons, <https://members.sundaysandseasons.com> )

### Lectionary/Themes

**Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7** God places Adam and Eve in the garden to "till it and keep it." In our context where climate change is a topic of great concern and controversy, this text calls us to wonder at what it means to "keep" God's garden and all God has created good. God sets limits for Adam and Eve and for us. In the garden humanity is given the gift of fruit in abundance. When we set our eyes and hearts on that which is beyond our grasp, gift quickly turns to resource in a world where everything is ours for the picking. Adam and Eve's actions and the serpent's words are at the heart of this text, "Did God really say...?" Can God be trusted in both gift and limitation?

**Psalms 32** "Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven and whose sin is put away." While Lent is a more somber time in the church year, this Psalm turns our focus away from ourselves to what God is doing—forgiving sin, bringing us to life and love and relationship with one another and with God! Happy are we!

**Romans 5:12-19** "One man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all." We can quickly get bogged down in St. Paul's explanation of Adam's originating sin that becomes the sin of the world and the forensic acts of justification that come through the acts of "One Man;" Jesus. Yet the focus of this text is the same focus as Psalm 32: What God is doing—the "free gift" of Jesus, of forgiveness and life!

**Matthew 4:1-11** Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness where Jesus meets the devil and knows every human temptation—hunger, power, wealth, glory, identity, a secure future. In this text we hear echoes of the same question that haunted Adam and Eve: "Did God say???" Can God be trusted?" "Didn't God say he would send angels to protect you? *If you are* the Son of God... But then again maybe you're not. Can you trust yourself God?"

**Main Themes:** Forgiveness and life that comes all ways and always in the free gift of God through Christ. Even in the face of everything that says otherwise—God is faithful! God can be trusted! We are forgiven!

### Suggested Hymns for the Day:

ELW #319 O Lord Throughout These Forty Days

ELW #320 The Glory of These Forty Days

ELW #325 I Want Jesus to Walk With Me

ELW #326 Bless Now, O God, the Journey

ELW #334 Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery, vs. 1-3, Lent 1  
ELW #338 Beneath the Cross of Jesus  
ELW #342 There in God's Garden

## **SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION**

### **GATHERING**

**Confession & Forgiveness** (with Kyrie from "Now the Feast")

In the name of the Father, +Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Loving God you search for us, we run away. You speak to us, we close our ears. You give us life, but we cannot see. Hear us as we confess to you.

**Gracious and merciful God, we come to you exhausted by the slavery of this world and the things we have trusted. We wander in the wilderness. We do not trust your leading. We turn away from your love. Turn us again to you. Come to us O God.**

*Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy; mercy on us all.*

**You provide for our every need. You give us manna in the wilderness and water from the rock. But we seek bread that cannot fill; brackish water that does not quench our thirst. Our bones are dry. Come to us O God. Feed us, refresh us and turn us again to you. Come to us O God.**

*Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy; mercy on us all.*

**O God we have heard your call, but refuse to hear. We have seen your love, but walk with blinded eyes. We have known your grace, but cannot understand. We seek power and self-fulfillment. We are bound in our egos, imprisoned in harmful patterns of living, failing to love one another. Turn us again to you and to one another. Forgive us. Renew us. Come to us O God.**

*Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy; mercy on us all.*

Gathered in grace we hear this Good News! God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners at the right time Christ died for us. In the free gift of God's mercy we have been justified by faith, our sins are forgiven—we have peace with God! In the name of the Father, and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

**Gathering Hymn** (*Omitted due to length of #622 used as the Hymn of Praise*)

### **Greeting**

**Hymn of Praise** ELW #622 Neither Death nor Life

**Prayer of the Day** Year A (*ELW pg. 26*)

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us pray. Lord God, our strength; the struggle between good and evil rages within and around us, and the devil and all the forces of evil that defy you tempt us with empty promises.

**Keep us steadfast in your word, and when we fall raise us again and restore us through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

## **WORD**

**First Reading** Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7

**Psalm** *(optional)*

**Second Reading** Romans 5:12-19 *(optional)*

**Lenten Acclamation** Let your steadfast love ELW pg. 189 *(optional, any ELW settings or alternatives suggested)*

**Gospel** Matthew 4:1-11

**Sermon/Reflection**

**Hymn of the Day**

**Apostle's Creed** ELW pg. 105

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

We cry to you for help, O God, praying for the church, the world, and all those who are in need.

*A brief silence.*

God of covenant and promise, you led your ancient people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land. Strengthen us in the covenant of our baptism and guide your Church, that, following Jesus our Saviour, we may walk through the wilderness of this world and the promises of your kingdom to come. Lord in your mercy;

**Hear our prayer**

God of all creation, of remote wilderness and barren deserts, of flowing rivers and majestic mountains; we pray for the wild beasts, the birds, the domestic animals, and every living creature; for the wilderness areas on this continent; for rain, enough but not too much. Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer**

God of all nations, of war-torn countries and places of peace, of places of wealth and those filled with poverty, disease, and natural disaster. We pray for those who provide leadership in times of chaos; for disaster relief workers and aid organizations. Protect

all who flee oppression. Grant refuge on their journey. Provide shelter as there is need. Bring together rich and poor, homeless and housed, and cause the hearts of all to turn to you in repentance and faith. Restore your blessing and wholeness. Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer**

God of the broken and sorrowful, we pray for people in prison; for those who live in long-term care facilities; for the homeless, the dying, those who mourn and who are sick especially those we mention aloud or in the quiet of our hearts *(a brief pause here...)* In times of sorrow and barrenness, bring your comfort and healing. Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer**

O God, our strength in weakness, give us strength in ministering in our congregation, community, synod, and the wider world. Teach us to serve you and your people, trusting you for all things, that we would be faithful witnesses to all people. Strengthen us in our bonds of love; call us to hope and faithfulness as we follow you. Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer**

All these things and whatever else you see that we need, grant us, O God, for the sake of Jesus who died and rose again and now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. **Amen.**

## **Offering**

**Offering Song** ELW #691 Accept O Lord *(optional, any ELW settings or alternatives suggested. Gifts of bread and wine may be processed to the altar along with the offering at this time.)*

**Offering Prayer** ELW pg. 64

God our provider, you do not feed us with bread alone, but with words of grace and life. **Bless us and these your gifts, which we receive from your bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## **MEAL**

**The Great Thanksgiving Dialog** *(sung or spoken, any communion setting)*

### **Preface**

It is indeed right, our duty and humble joy that we should at all times and in all places offer thanks and praise to you, O Lord, holy Father, through Christ our Lord. Who on the tree of the cross gave salvation to all, that where death began, life might be restored. Turn us to you in repentance and faith, to clean hearts and fullness of grace, that with the church on earth and all the hosts of heaven, we would praise your name and join their unending hymn,  
*(OR:)*

“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.

And so, with all the choirs of angels,  
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,  
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

### **Holy, Holy, Holy**

**Words of Institution** Form IV Ash Wednesday – Day of Pentecost ELW pg. 111 or ELW VI pg. 66 *(or alternatives suggested in this resource for the day as follows)*

O God most mighty, O God most merciful, O God our rock and our salvation, hear us as we praise, hear us as we pray, call us to your table, grant us your life. We praise you for the grace shown to your people in every age: the promise to Israel, the rescue from Egypt, the gift of the promised land, the words of the prophets, and, at this end of all ages, the gift of your Son, who proclaimed good news in word, and deed, who was obedient to your will, through the giving of his life, granted the people your life.

O God of our wilderness, you journey with us in struggle and joy, in our hunger and thirst, in loneliness and the barrenness of this world in the gift of Jesus your Son, our Saviour and Lord. Born among the poor, tempted as we were, Jesus suffered hunger and thirst, longed for love, lived under oppression, and was betrayed by those closest to him. In his passion for life Jesus reached out to heal the sick and suffering, proclaiming good news in word and deed. Obedient to your will, and in infinite love, taking up the cross of our death, Jesus granted the people your life.

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." In the same way, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks and gave it for 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."

Remembering therefore, his death and resurrection, we await the day when Jesus will come again to free all the earth from the bonds of slavery and death; when hungry no longer and bound to you in love, we share together with all nations in the feast that is yet to come. Send now your Spirit upon these the gifts of your church; gather into one all who share this bread and wine; that we might praise you with our lives, and be your people in the world. Through Jesus Christ your Son, through him, with him, in him, with the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour are yours now and forever. **Amen.**

**Lord's Prayer** ELW pg. 112

**Communion** *Instrumental music may accompany (CD, guitar, piano, depending on availability), or communion hymns may be chosen ELW# 460-502. If preferred, silence may also be observed during the communion meal.*

### **Communion Hymns**

ELW #338 Beneath the Cross of Jesus

ELW #342 There in God's Garden

WOV #783 Seek Ye First *(replace Alleluia with Amen)*

### **Post-communion prayer** *(optional, ELW pg. 65)*

Compassionate God, you have fed us with the bread of heaven. **Sustain us in our Lenten pilgrimage: may our fasting be hunger for justice; our alms, a making of peace; and our prayer, the song of grateful hearts, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen.**

### **SENDING**

#### **Blessing**

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.** Romans 15:13 *(or ELW pg. 114-115)*

**Sending Hymn** ELW #326 Bless Now O God the Journey

#### **Dismissal**

Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. **Thanks be to God.** *(Or ELW pg. 115)*

## Lent 2 March 8

### Introduction

During Lent we journey with all those around the world who will be baptized at the Easter Vigil. In today's gospel Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born of water and Spirit. At the font we are given a new birth as children of God. As God made a covenant with Abraham, in baptism God promises to raise us up with Christ to new life. From worship we are sent forth to proclaim God's love for all the world. (Sundays and Seasons, <https://members.sundaysandseasons.com> )

### Lectionary/Themes

**Genesis 12:1-4a** God's promise to Abraham, "I will make of you a great nation." This is a very specific promise; yet not for Abraham alone; and not only for a chosen nation or God's chosen people alone. The blessing of God extends beyond Abraham and Sarah, beyond the Israelites to become a blessing for all nations and people: "I will bless you **so that you** may be a blessing." And, "Through you **all the families of the earth** shall be blessed." The context of the Gospel of Matthew harks us back to this text as in Matthew 1 the genealogy of Abraham is traced through the generations to the birth of Jesus, the Messiah through whom all generations have been and will be blessed. How have we embraced (or fail to embrace) the vision and promise of God that extends to all nations and peoples?

**Psalm 121** "I lift my eyes to the hills; from where is my help to come?" The answer penned by the Psalmist echoes God's promise to Abraham and to all generations: "The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore." *As an alternative to the Psalm for today, "I Lift My Eyes Up," Brian Doerksen can be sung or serve as "bookends" to the spoken Psalm.*

**Romans 4:1-5, 13-17** "For this reason it depends on faith in order that the promise may rest on grace." Using Abraham as the example Paul argues that God's promise cannot rest on works; that reliance on works would make faith irrelevant and God's promise null and void. So as "Abraham believed and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," so for us too, the promise of God rests completely on grace.

**John 3:1-17** "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit." Belonging comes through birth; and that through water and the Spirit of God. Try as we might we cannot enter the womb twice, nor can we decide our birthday, our birth family, or even to be born at all. Birth is completely beyond our control. So it is with the kingdom of God. We are birthed by God.

**Main Themes:** The readings today call into question our culture that still bases our value on merit, hard work, intellect, wealth, and even the family we are born into. And not only our culture but the church too. Debunked in our readings is any kind of decision



theology—the idea that we can accept Jesus as our personal Saviour; that we have faith because we decided to, or worked really hard at it. But in God’s kingdom culture, we are “born” children of water and Spirit through God’s grace only; by God’s decision alone.

### **Suggested Hymns for the Day**

ELW 779 Amazing Grace

ELW #453 Baptized and Set Free

ELW #456 Baptized in Water

ELW #628 Blessed Assurance

ELW #598 For By Grace You Have Been Saved

ELW #334 Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery, vs. 1-3, Lent 2

## **SERVICE OF THE WORD**

### **GATHERING**

**Thanksgiving for Baptism** *ELW pg. 97*

**Gathering Hymn** *ELW #453 Baptized and Set Free*

**Greeting** *ELW pg. 213*

**Kyrie** *ELW pg. 213 (any ELW settings or alternatives suggested)*

**Hymn of Praise** *ELW #622 Neither Death Nor Life*

*OR ELW pg. 213-214 (or alternatives suggested)*

**Prayer of the Day** Year A *(ELW pg.27)*

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Let us pray. O God, our leader and guide, in the waters of baptism you bring us to new birth to live as your children.

**Strengthen our faith in your promises, that by your Spirit we may lift up your life to all the world through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

### **WORD**

**First Reading** Genesis12:1-4a

**Psalm 121 with “I Lift my Eyes Up”** *(optional)*

*I lift my eyes up, to the mountains*

*Where does my help come from?*

*My help comes from you, maker of heaven*

*Creator of the earth.*

*O how I need you Lord  
You are my only hope  
You're my only prayer  
So I will wait for you  
To come and rescue me  
Come and give me life*

- <sup>1</sup>I lift up my eyes | to the hills;  
from where is my | help to come?  
<sup>2</sup>**My help comes | from the LORD,  
the maker of heav- | en and earth.**  
<sup>3</sup>The LORD will not let your | foot be moved  
nor will the one who watches over you | fall asleep.

*O how I need you Lord  
You are my only hope  
You're my only prayer  
So I will wait for you  
To come and rescue me  
Come and give me life*

- <sup>4</sup>**Behold, the keep- | er of Israel  
will neither slum- | ber nor sleep;**  
<sup>5</sup>the LORD watches | over you;  
the LORD is your shade at | your right hand;  
<sup>6</sup>**the sun will not strike | you by day,  
nor the | moon by night.**  
<sup>7</sup>The LORD will preserve you | from all evil  
and will | keep your life.  
<sup>8</sup>**The LORD will watch over your going out and your | coming in,  
from this time forth for- | evermore.**

*I lift my eyes up, to the mountains  
Where does my help come from?*

**Second Reading** Romans 4:1-5, 13-17 *(optional)*

**Lenten Acclamation** *Let Your Steadfast Love ELW pg. 189 (optional, or alternatives suggested)*

**Gospel** John 3:1-17

**Sermon/Reflection**

**Hymn of the Day** *ELW #598 "For By Grace"*

**Apostle's Creed** *ELW pg. 217*

**Prayers of Intercession and THANKSGIVING** *ELW pg. 218 (See guidelines in red print. For alternate prayers see sundaysandseasons.com. Subscription required.)*

**Sharing of the Peace**

**Offering**

**Canticle of Thanksgiving** *ELW pg. 219 (optional, or offering song alternatives suggested.)*

**Thanksgiving for the Word** *ELW pg. 220 (optional, two printed options, suggest the longer version for the season.)*

**Lord's Prayer** *ELW pg. 221*

**SENDING**

**Blessing**

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.** Romans 15:13 *(or ELW pg. 221)*

**Sending Hymn** *ELW #334 Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery vs. 1-3, Lent 2, General*

**Dismissal**

Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. **Thanks be to God.** *(Or alternatives ELW pg. 222)*

## Lent 3 March 15

### Introduction

In today's gospel the Samaritan woman asks Jesus for water, an image of our thirst for God. Jesus offers living water, a sign of God's grace flowing from the waters of baptism. The early church used this gospel and those of the next two Sundays to deepen baptismal reflection during the final days of preparation before baptism at Easter. As we journey to the resurrection feast, Christ comes among us in word, bath, and meal—offering us the life-giving water of God's mercy and forgiveness. (Sundays and Seasons, <https://members.sundaysandseasons.com> )

### Lectionary/Themes

**Exodus 17:1-7** The Israelites' journey in the wilderness is harsh often leaving them wanting for the day to day necessities of life. And today the life-threatening reality: there is no water to drink. But we know that God has already provided in the wilderness. When they were hungry there was manna. And when the Israelites bored of God's gift then there were quail. Now once again, the Israelites complain. And we want to say, "Give your head a shake. God has and is already providing, will God not also give you water to drink?" The pattern is predictable not only for the Israelites, but for us too. And even as the people whine and complain and turn away, already God is opening up ways in the wilderness, opening up the rocks of the ground to spring forth with water. In our world where many people do not have clean drinking water and where water is bottled as a commodity; this text reminds us how we still turn away from God's gifts towards "the slavery of Egypt," and the models of hoarding and greed. The challenge of this text is poignant: Does God yet provide for all the earth?

**Psalms 95** "Come let us sing to the Lord!" A hymn of praise, this Psalm juxtaposes the complaints of the Israelites and our complaints too, and calls us to recall God's love and care celebrated by all creation. For those who dislike the sombreness of Lent, this joyful Psalm boldly declares the joy and focus of this rich Season that directs us back to God's mercy and love for all. A joyful sung alternative to speaking the Psalm for this day can be found in the Morning Prayer service, pg. 300-301; where Psalm 95 is set to music.

**Romans 5:1-11** "Since we are justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." If we are not careful we might be quick to overlook one small word that proves the turning point of Paul's letter to the Romans. While it is our human tendency to find our value and place through what we have done, Paul says "Since..." A word that signals what has gone before and that leads to what comes next. Since we are justified (not by works, not by fasting, or prayer, or daily devotion); but since we are justified by faith (that is pure gift from God); since we are justified by God's work alone what follows is peace with God even in harsh wilderness times when it seems God does not care; even when we turn away from God to the slavery of this world; since God has and does... we are reconciled, saved, brought to life in Christ.

**John 4:5-42** A very familiar text; Jesus crosses all conventional boundaries: Jews would avoid Samaritan territory but Jesus walks right in. Men did not have open conversations with women alone in public but Jesus engages with a woman at a well. The woman with unarguably a “colourful” past, an outcast of society, and considered outside of God’s grace is welcomed by Jesus; given living water. And a woman who had no voice or authority is transformed into a witness of God’s forgiveness, grace, and life to the very ones who have excluded her. The radical grace of God for all comes in the words of Jesus, “The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” With the woman at the well may our response be, “Sir, give me this water always.”

**Main Themes** Our default is to turn away from God to things that keep us bound. God’s default is to give us all things: manna, quail, water, forgiveness, life; and all as the free gift of God through Christ. Even in the face of everything that says otherwise—God is faithful! God can be trusted! We are forgiven, nourished, and quenched! Thanks be to God!

### **Suggested Hymns for the Day**

All Who Are Thirsty (Brenton Brown)

Youtube video link: <https://ca.video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?fr=yhs-shnl-001&hsimp=yhs-001&hspart=shnl&p=all+who+are+thirsty+all+who+are+weak#id=1&vid=b3eec01c9b6d66534b6aaa29f9bac5a0&action=click>

Guitar Chords and Lyrics: [https://www.sanctuarycrc.org/worship\\_resources/pdf/All%20Who%20are%20thirsty%20\(D\).pdf](https://www.sanctuarycrc.org/worship_resources/pdf/All%20Who%20are%20thirsty%20(D).pdf)

ELW #448 This is the Spirit’s Entry Now

ELW #445 Crashing Waters at Creation

ELW #457 Waterlife

I’ve Got (There’s) a River of Life

Guitar Chords and Lyrics:

<https://tabs.ultimate-guitar.com/tab/misc-praise-songs/ive-got-a-river-of-life-chords-1967593>

Youtube video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndNEBq8OGBc>

ELW #807 Come Thou Fount

ELW #777 Come to Me All Pilgrims Thirsty

ELW #334 Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery, vs. 1-3, Lent 3

ELW #332 I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say

## **SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION**

### **GATHERING**

**Thanksgiving for Baptism** *(Due to the rich themes of water in the texts for the day in place of the Confession and Absolution; the Thanksgiving for Baptism sets the tone for the entire service to follow. If preferred, the Confession and Absolution may be used: ELW pg. 94, or alternate as provided elsewhere in this resource.)*

**Gathering Hymn** All Who are Thirsty

### **Greeting**

## Hymn of Praise ELW #622 Neither Death nor Life

### Prayer of the Day Year A *(ELW pg. 27)*

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Let us pray. Merciful God, the fountain of living water, you quench our thirst and wash away our sin. **Give us this water always. Bring us to drink from the well that flows with the beauty of your truth through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

## WORD

**First Reading** Exodus 17:1-7

**Psalm 95** *sung canticle* ELW pg. 300 "Come Let us Sing to the Lord *(optional)*

**Second Reading** Romans 5:1-11 *(optional)*

**Lenten Acclamation** Let your steadfast love ELW pg. 189 *(optional, any ELW settings or alternatives suggested)*

**Gospel** John 4:5-42

## Sermon/Reflection

**Hymn of the Day** ELW #777 Come to Me All Pilgrims Thirsty vs. 1,3, 4, 6,

**Apostle's Creed** ELW pg. 105

## Prayers of Intercession

Returning to the waters of baptism, let us pray for the church, those in need, and all of God's creation singing, *O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer, when I call, answer me. O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer, come and listen to me.*

### ***A brief silence.***

God of water and grace, we pray for the church around the globe; for our national church and synods; for bishops and pastors, other rostered leaders, musicians, and lay ministers; for all thirsty for your word. Draw us in together in unity in the waters of our baptism. Lord in your mercy,

**hear our prayer. O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer, when I call, answer me. O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer, come and listen to me.**

Lord God who creates all things, we pray for living water; for deep wells and safe sewer systems; for acid-free rain and oil-free oceans; for clean and abundant drinking water for every human being. **O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer, when I call, answer me. O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer, come and listen to me.**

Loving God, drench the earth with your peace, so that nations and leaders might work

for justice in all the world. We bring before you those nations who are now at war or in conflict. Bring an end to oppression, religious persecution, and hatred. Grant comfort and safe places to live for refugees. Bless relief workers, policy makers and all those who work towards peace in our world. ***O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer, when I call, answer me. O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer, come and listen to me.***

Living Water of Life, satisfy the thirst of all who long for you; the hungry, the poor, the fearful, those divorced or widowed, the lonely and the ill, especially those we mention now aloud or in the quiet of our hearts. In times of anguish and distress, may they draw deeply from your well of hope. ***O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer, when I call, answer me. O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer, come and listen to me.***

O God of mercy, bless us your people, shower us all in grace, flood us in Spirit, strengthen us in the mission and ministry to which we have been called, in our homes, in our schools and in our work—wherever you call us into community in our world—may we walk dripping wet in witness and welcome to all people who thirst for you. ***O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer, when I call, answer me. O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer, come and listen to me.***

God of love, you gave your only Son as water to a world dying of thirst. By your grace, hear our prayers, spoken and unspoken. Give us all to drink of the saving water of life, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. ***The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise, all my hope comes from God. The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise, God the well-spring of life. Amen.***

## Offering

**Offering Song** ELW #691 Accept O Lord (*optional, any ELW settings or alternatives suggested. Gifts of bread and wine may be processed to the altar along with the offering at this time.*)

**Offering Prayer** ELW pg. 64

God our provider, you do not feed us with bread alone, but with words of grace and life. **Bless us and these your gifts, which we receive from your bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## MEAL

**The Great Thanksgiving** Dialog (*sung or spoken, any communion setting*)

### *Preface*

It is indeed right, our duty and humble joy that we should at all times and in all places offer thanks and praise to you, O Lord, holy Father, through Christ our Lord. Who on the tree of the cross gave salvation to all, that where death began, life might be restored. Turn us to you in repentance and faith, to clean hearts and fullness of grace,

that with the church on earth and all the hosts of heaven, we would praise your name and join their unending hymn,

*(OR)*

“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.  
And so, with all the choirs of angels,  
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,  
we praise your name and join their unending hymn

### **Holy, Holy, Holy**

#### **Words of Institution**

*Form IV Ash Wednesday – Day of Pentecost, ELW pg. 111, or ELW VI pg. 66 (or alternatives suggested in this resource for the day as follows)*

O God most mighty, O God most merciful, O God our rock and our salvation, hear us as we praise, hear us as we pray, call us to your table, grant us your life. We praise you for the grace shown to your people in every age: the promise to Israel, the rescue from Egypt, the gift of the promised land, the words of the prophets, and, at this end of all ages, the gift of your Son, who proclaimed good news in word, and deed, who was obedient to your will, through the giving of his life, granted the people your life.

O God of our wilderness, you journey with us in struggle and joy, in our hunger and thirst, in loneliness and the barrenness of this world in the gift of Jesus your Son, our Saviour and Lord. Born among the poor, tempted as we were, Jesus suffered hunger and thirst, longed for love, lived under oppression, and was betrayed by those closest to him. In his passion for life Jesus reached out to heal the sick and suffering, proclaiming good news in word and deed. Obedient to your will, and in infinite love, taking up the cross of our death, Jesus granted the people your life.

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.” In the same way, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks and gave it for 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.”

Remembering therefore, his death and resurrection, we await the day when Jesus will come again to free all the earth from the bonds of slavery and death; when hungry no longer and bound to you in love, we share together with all nations in the feast that is yet to come. Send now your Spirit upon these the gifts of your church; gather into one all who share this bread and wine; that we might praise you with our lives, and be your



people in the world. Through Jesus Christ your Son, through him, with him, in him, with the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour are yours now and forever. **Amen.**

**Lord's Prayer** *ELW pg. 112*

**Communion** *Instrumental music may accompany (CD, guitar, piano, depending on availability), or communion hymns may be chosen ELW# 460-502. If preferred, silence may also be observed during the communion meal.*

### **Communion Hymns**

ELW #469 By Your Hand You Feed Your People

ELW #474 Bread of Life From Heaven

ELW #472 Eat this Bread

ELW #481 Come to the Table

**Post-communion prayer** *(optional, ELW pg. 65)*

Compassionate God, you have fed us with the bread of heaven. **Sustain us in our Lenten pilgrimage: may our fasting be hunger for justice; our alms, a making of peace; and our prayer, the song of grateful hearts, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen.**

## **SENDING**

### **Blessing**

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen. Romans 15:13** *(or ELW pg. 114-115)*

**Sending Hymn** ELW #334 Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery, vs. 1-3, Lent 3

### **Dismissal**

Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. **Thanks be to God.** *(Or ELW pg. 115)*

## Lent 4 March 22

### Introduction

Baptism is sometimes called enlightenment. The gospel for this Sunday is the story of the man born blind healed by Christ. “I was blind, now I see,” declares the man. In baptism God opens our eyes to see the truth of who we are: God’s beloved children. As David was anointed king of Israel, in baptism God anoints our head with oil, and calls us to bear witness to the light of Christ in our daily lives. (Sundays and Seasons, <https://members.sundaysandseasons.com> )

### Lectionary/Themes

**1 Samuel 16:1-13** God has chosen a king to rule over Israel and sends Samuel to the house of Jesse of Bethlehem to anoint whom he has chosen. As Samuel looks at all of Jesse’s sons, he looks to their strength, height, and appearance—the qualities he thinks will make a good King. But God has someone else in mind. The youngest son, small, a shepherd, untrained in the ways of war and the world. As our readings today focus on sight and blindness, this story of David, too, challenges our own sight and blindness as God declares, “For the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”

**Psalms 23** Likely the most beloved Psalm of all and popularly used at funerals, Psalm 23 takes on a different light as we think of David the Shepherd in the day-to-day, wrestling with lions and bears, fleeing a vengeful king who wants to take his life, and a wilderness world that threatens on every side. Not only a Psalm of hope of life through death and after, Psalm 23 speaks into our lives of God who is ever-present with us through all the ever-present dangers of life in this world.

**Ephesians 5:8-14** “Everything that becomes visible is light.” A profound statement—not only that everything becomes visible *in* the light, but everything that becomes visible *is* light. The readings chosen for today continue to push the boundaries of what defines true sight. Dark things are dark. But things seen are light by their very nature. How do we live as light in the darkness of our world?

**John 9:1-41** The story of a man born blind now healed by Jesus is complicated by the religious rulers who get hung up because Jesus heals on the Sabbath. Jesus cuts through all the convoluted darkness and the inability of those to see what this healing really means. “I came into this world so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.” And we understand this gospel to be about so much more than the physical capability to see. Beyond seeing with eyes, it is about seeing with the heart, seeing in faith, seeing who is right before our eyes—Jesus. The Pharisees who still can’t see respond with a question of their own, a question that is for all of us, “Surely we are not blind, are we?”

**Main Themes** Darkness and light. Blindness and sight. Where and in what do we see Jesus at work in our world?

## **Suggested Hymns for the Day**

ELW 779 Amazing Grace

ELW #334 Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery, vs. 1-3, Lent 4

Open the Eyes of My Heart Lord (Michael W. Smith)

Youtube video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vnqb7Vn4AEE>

Guitar Chords and lyrics: <https://www.e-chords.com/chords/michael-w-smith/open-the-eyes-of-my-heart>

Open our Eyes Lord (We want to see Jesus) (Robert Cull)

Guitar Chords and lyrics: <https://tabs.ultimate-guitar.com/tab/robert-cull/open-our-eyes-lord-chords-1812618>

Youtube video link: <https://ca.video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?fr=yhs-shnl-001&hsimp=yhs-001&hspart=shnl&p=open+our+eyes+lord+chords#id=1&vid=642ceb8f86a2deab5edbecc48bf612c&action=click>

ELW #715 Christ be our Light

ELW #793 Be Thou My Vision

ELW #726 Light Dawns on a Weary World

## **SERVICE OF THE WORD**

### **GATHERING**

**Confession & Forgiveness** Open our Eyes Lord

In the name of the Father, +Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Loving God you search for us, we run away. You speak to us, we close our ears. You give us life, but we cannot see. Hear us as we confess to you.

**Gracious and merciful God, we come to you exhausted by the slavery of this world and the things we have trusted. We wander in the wilderness. We do not trust your leading. We turn away from your love. Turn us again to you. Come to us O God.**

***Open our eyes Lord, we want to see Jesus. To reach out and touch him. And say that we love him. Open our ears Lord and help us to listen. Open our eyes Lord, we want to see Jesus.***

**You provide for our every need. You give us manna in the wilderness and water from the rock. But we seek bread that cannot fill; brackish water that does not quench our thirst. Our bones are dry. Come to us O God. Feed us, refresh us and turn us again to you. Come to us O God.**

***Open our eyes Lord...***

**O God we have heard your call, but refuse to hear. We have seen your love, but walk with blinded eyes. We have known your grace, but cannot understand. We seek power and self-fulfillment. We are bound in our egos, imprisoned in harmful patterns of living, failing to love one another. Turn us again to you and to one another. Forgive us. Renew us. Come to us O God.**

***Open our eyes Lord...***

Gathered in grace we hear this Good News! God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners at the right time Christ died for us. In the free gift of God's mercy we have been justified by faith, our sins are forgiven—we have peace with God! In the name of the Father, and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

**Gathering Hymn** Open the Eyes of My Heart Lord (Michael W. Smith) *(suggested lyric change from "I" to "We" and "My" to "Our"—worship is corporate, something we do together and never alone. Simple lyric changes can broaden our understanding of the church together as the Body of Christ.)*

**Greeting** ELW pg. 213

**Hymn of Praise** ELW #622 Neither Death Nor Life

**Prayer of the Day** Year A ELW pg.28

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us pray. Bend your ear to our prayers, Lord Christ, and come among us.

**By your gracious life and death for us, bring light into the darkness of our hearts, and anoint us with your Spirit, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

## **WORD**

**Children's Message**

**First Reading** 1 Samuel 16:1-13

**Second Reading** Ephesians 5:8-14

**Lenten Acclamation** Let Your Steadfast Love ELW pg. 189

**Gospel** John 9:1-41

**Sermon/Reflection**

**Hymn of the Day** ELW 779 Amazing Grace

**Apostle's Creed** ELW pg. 217

**Prayers of Intercession and Thanksgiving**

As God's beloved children, let us pray that the light of Christ shine on the nations, the church, and all those in need, saying, Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

*A brief silence.*

Gracious God, open our eyes in wonder to the beauty of your salvation to and through the church in the gift of your Son. Call us to joyfully proclaim of your grace revealed, in

the cross and by your Spirit, in the words of prophets and in our songs of praise. Raise your whole church to faithful service, that all people might see the glory of your light and life. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of creation, in grace you formed the heavens and the earth and all we need for life in this world. Open our eyes in wonder to the beauty of created life—the moose and the deer, spring storms and warm rays of sun, the smallest of seeds and the highest of mountains. Bless and sustain all that you have made, that all creation might reflect your glory and life. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Loving God, your grace extends to nations and rulers of nations and to the ends of the earth. Open our eyes in wonder to the beauty of divergent races and cultures, to the variety of gifts given, to the vision and hope of justice for this world and for the next. We pray for nations and leaders—for the prosperous and the poor, for the peaceful and the perilous, for the proud and for the meek, that together we would work for the betterment of all. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of compassion, open our eyes to the suffering in our world. For families living in distress and disfunction, for children whose days are filled with fear, for the ones whose days are spent in anguish or anxiety, in grief or illness, especially *(the names in the bulletin here)* Through our hands bring your gentle touch, through our words grant your hope, in your grace grant your healing and life. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Merciful God, open our eyes in wonder to the beauty of your call that gathers us in community, as together we praise you, as together we serve you, as together you send us in witness and service to the people of this town and this time. Bless this house of worship and us, your people especially *(The ministries and names in the bulletin here)*. Place in us your vision for the world outside our doors, to the people who yet long to see your salvation, for those who do not yet see Jesus. Place in us also a vision that extends beyond this congregation and to our area both ecumenically and denominationally, for your gifts given to the whole church. Open our eyes to possibility of you in new ways of ministry and mission. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Receive our prayers and hopes, God of grace and mercy, we entrust all for whom we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, light of the nations, salvation of the world, Lord of us all. **Amen.**

### **Sharing of the Peace**

**Canticle of Thanksgiving** ELW pg. 219

**THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD** ELW pg. 220

**Lord's Prayer** ELW pg. 221

### **Community Life**

### **SENDING**

**Blessing**

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.** Romans 15:13

**Sending Hymn** ELW #715 Christ be our Light

**Dismissal**

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

**Thanks be to God. We Will!**

## Lent 5 March 29

### Introduction

In today's gospel Jesus reveals his power over death by raising Lazarus from the dead. The prophet Ezekiel prophesies God breathing new life into dry bones. To those in exile or living in the shadows of death, these stories proclaim God's promise of resurrection. Breath, Spirit, Flesh, Bone, Life!! It is the promise made to us in baptism: we die with Christ that we might also be raised with him to new life. (adapted from Sundays and Seasons, <https://members.sundaysandseasons.com> )

### Lectionary/Themes

**Ezekiel 37:1-14** "Can these bones live?" The answer is found in this powerful and vivid description of the Valley of the Dry bones. A pile of bones. Remnants in a heap that cannot be sorted or separated into the lives that once were; that cannot be discerned or named for the people who once were. Prophecy! Says the Lord. And now we hear them rattling, bone upon bone. Separating and sorting and coming together. And we see the flesh forming and attaching, sinew to sinew. But still they are lifeless, inanimate, unknown. But once more the command rings out! Prophecy! And we hear the rush of wind—it is breath! And they rise up to breathe, and there is life! I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live! It is God's promise to us in the cross of Christ, in the waters of our baptism—Spirit, Breath, Life! As an alternative, the dramatic reading included later in this document may be used.

**Psalms 130** "Out of the depths I cry to you." With Ezekiel, the Psalmist states the truth of our lives in the depths of sin and darkness. That on our own we cannot stand, but with God there is forgiveness of sin. With God there is steadfast love. With God, in God alone there is life.

**Romans 8:6-11** "Can these bones live?" Does flesh makes us alive? Paul echoes the truth of Ezekiel. That flesh and bone does not constitute life. But only Spirit. In this text from Romans, once again we hear the rattling of bones. Once again we see flesh attaching, sinew to sinew. Once again we hear the rush of breath in the resounding promise, "...he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through the Spirit that dwells in you."

**John 11:1-45** A scene of death. The agony of loss and grief. The tears of Jesus show us the depth of grief Christ shares with us as we stare at a tomb with a stone rolled in place. Martha states the blunt reality: the stench of death is overwhelming and cannot be overcome. But Jesus is not willing to give death the final word but calls and commands us with a loud voice, "Come out! Come out of the tomb and live!" God has the final word. It is resurrection. It is life. As the darkness of Lent deepens and we prepare

for Holy Week and the cross and death of Jesus, the resurrection of Lazarus foreshadows what is to come in Jesus who is “the Resurrection and the Life.” Of interest...the last sentence of this reading includes a command from Jesus to the community, “Unbind him and let him go.” The command stands as invitation and role of the church to participate in God’s life-giving activity in the world.

**Main Themes:** Dry bones and death. Resurrection and breath. God’s command and desire to fill us with breath, to raise us from death so that all may live.

### **Suggested Hymns for the Day**

ELW #328 Restore In Us, O God

ELW #333 Jesus is a Rock in a Weary Land

ELW #334 Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery, vs. 1-3, Lent 5

ELW #339 Christ of all the Living

ELW #407 O Living Breath of God

ELW #379 Now the Green Blade Rises, vs. 1,2,4

ELW #627 O Day Full of Grace, vs. 1-3, 4

LBW #488 Breathe on Me Breath of God

ELW #621 Jesus Lives My Sure Defense, vs. 1-3, 5-6

ELW #631 Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

ELW #666 What Wondrous Love is This

This is the Air I Breathe (Hillsong)

Guitar chords and lyrics: <https://tabs.ultimate-guitar.com/tab/hillsongs/this-is-the-air-i-breathe-chords-1049502>

Youtube video link: <https://ca.video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?fr=yhs-shnl-001&hsimp=yhs-001&hspart=shnl&p=this+is+the+air+i+breathe+author#id=9&vid=98136061c7f7ffa548ee2bfe5c5bbf66&action=click>

## **SERVICE OF THE WORD**

### **GATHERING**

**Confession & Forgiveness** with LBW #448 “Breathe on Me Breath of God” adapted words for community worship; “me” to “we”, etc.

In the name of the Father, +Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Loving God you search for us, we run away. You speak to us, we close our ears. You give us life, but we cannot see. Hear us as we confess to you.

**Gracious and merciful God, we come to you exhausted by the slavery of this world and the things we have trusted. We wander in the wilderness. We do not trust your leading. We turn away from your love. Turn us again to you. Come to us O God.**



***Breathe on us Breath of God. Fill us with life anew. That we may love all that you love and do what you would do.***

You provide for our every need. You give us manna in the wilderness and water from the rock. But we seek bread that cannot fill; brackish water that does not quench our thirst. Our bones are dry. Come to us O God. Feed us, refresh us and turn us again to you. Come to us O God.

***Breathe on us Breath of God. Until our heart is pure. Until with you we will one will to do and to endure.***

O God we have heard your call, but refuse to hear. We have seen your love, but walk with blinded eyes. We have known your grace, but cannot understand. We seek power and self-fulfillment. We are bound in our egos, imprisoned in harmful patterns of living, failing to love one another. Turn us again to you and to one another. Forgive us. Renew us. Come to us O God.

***Breathe on us Breath of God. So shall we never die. But live with you the perfect life of your eternity.***

Gathered in grace we hear this Good News! God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners at the right time Christ died for us. In the free gift of God's mercy we have been justified by faith, our sins are forgiven—we have peace with God! In the name of the Father, and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

**Gathering Hymn** This is the Air I Breathe

**Greeting** *ELW pg. 213*

**Kyrie** *ELW pg. 213 (any ELW settings or alternatives suggested, optional if using Confession as above and ELW #622 Neither Death Nor Life as follows.)*

**Hymn of Praise** *ELW #622 Neither Death Nor Life  
OR ELW pg. 213-214 (or alternatives suggested)*

**Prayer of the Day** Year A *ELW pg.28*

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Let us pray. Almighty God, your Son came into the world to free us all from sin and death.

**Breathe upon us the power of your Spirit, that we may be raised to new life in Christ and serve you in righteousness all our days, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

## **WORD**

**First Reading** Ezekiel 37:1-14 *(a dramatic reading of the Valley of Dry Bones follows. It can be read by two alternating voices or the congregation can take the voice of God. The people*

*rubbing their hands together makes the sound of the rattling of the bones and the blowing of the breath of God. The rattling grows in intensity starting with a few hands then with the whole. People can be divided into sections with leaders for each section. Section 1 begins, then section 1 and 2 and so on as the rattling builds in intensity throughout. The readers voice increases with volume and intensity as the sound increases.)*

The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. The Lord led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. And the Lord said to me,

**“Mortal, can these bones live?”**

I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.” <sup>4</sup>Then God said to me,

**“Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; *(read with louder intensity)* and you shall know that I am the LORD.”**

*(Reader leaves a pause of silence, then continues in a quieter tone)*...and you shall know that I am the LORD.” So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, *(Section 1 rubbing hands together)*

a rattling, *(read with louder intensity, Sections 1 and 2 rubbing hands together)*

and the bones came together, *(read with louder intensity, Sections 1, 2 and 3 rubbing hands together)*

bone to its bone. *(read with louder intensity, Sections 1, 2 3, and 4 rubbing hands together)*

*(Reader leaves a pause of silence, then continues in a quieter tone)*

I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then the Lord said to me,

**“Prophecy to the breath, *(Section 1 rubbing hands together)***

**prophecy, mortal, and say to the breath: *(read with louder intensity, Sections 1 and 2 rubbing hands together)***

**Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, *(read with louder intensity, Sections 1, 2 and 3 rubbing hands together)***

**and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” *(read with louder intensity, Sections 1, 2 3, and 4 rubbing hands together)***

*(Reader with increased excitement with each phrase)*

I prophesied as the Lord commanded me,  
and the breath came into them,  
and they lived,  
and stood on their feet,  
a vast multitude.

*(All people stomp their feet like rumbling)*

Then the Lord said to me,

**“Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’ Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD,**

*(reader, quieter tone)* And you shall know that I am the LORD,

**And you shall know that I am the LORD,  
when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people.  
I will put my spirit within you,**

*(reader, quieter tone)* I will put my spirit within you

**and you shall live,**

*(reader, quieter tone)* and you shall live

**and I will place you on your own soil;**

*(reader, quieter tone)* and I will place you on your own soil

**then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act,**

*(reader, quieter tone)* then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act,

*(reader, very soft and intentional!)* says the LORD.”

Psalm 130 *(optional)*

**Second Reading** Romans 8:6-11 *(optional)*

**Lenten Acclamation** *Let your steadfast love ELW pg. 189 (optional, any ELW settings or alternatives suggested)*

**Gospel** John 11:1-45

## Sermon/Reflection

**Hymn of the Day** *ELW #621 Jesus Lives My Sure Defense, vs. 1-3, 5-6*

**Apostle's Creed** *ELW pg. 105*

## Prayers of the People

Resurrected through Jesus Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit, we pray for the life of the church, for those in need, and for all of God's creation, saying Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

*A brief silence.*

Holy and gracious God, pour out your Spirit upon your church and people. Be the breath of our words, be the flesh of our ministries, be the life of our existence in this world, so that all peoples might rise to know new life in you. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Holy and gracious God, pour out your Spirit upon your creation. Be the breath of warm spring and the flesh of abundance to and for all creation. Call life to spring forth in water, field, and forest. Fill all the earth with joy, with the flourishing of all good things for the life of all. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Holy and gracious God, pour out your Spirit upon the nations. Be the breath of love in hearts of hatred, be the flesh of dignity for all people living in oppression, be the life of justice and peace in all rulers and peoples for the sake of life for all. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Holy and gracious God, pour out your Spirit upon those who suffer. Be the breath of life to weary and dry bones, be the flesh of broken hearts, be the life of dark anxious minds. We remember those who struggle with broken relationships, personal crisis, or poor health especially those we mention aloud and in the quiet of our hearts. *(a brief pause here)* Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Holy and gracious God, pour out your Spirit upon this community. Be the breath of encouragement and strength to all who put the good of others before themselves: local law enforcement, health care workers, teachers, and those who serve in our grocery stores and gas stations. Be the flesh of everyday hands and make us servants of this community. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Holy and gracious God, pour out your Spirit upon this congregation. Be the breath of blessing blowing through those who love and care for us; for the generations who have gone before as faithful witnesses to your love; for those we have loved and lost; and for those who now grace our lives. Stitch us together sinew to sinew, be the flesh of our faith and love rising to life in service to those we meet. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Trusting in your abundant mercy, O God, we commend ourselves and all for whom we pray into your care, through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

## Sharing of the Peace

### Offering

Canticle of Thanksgiving *ELW pg. 219 (optional, or offering song alternatives suggested.)*

**THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD** *ELW pg. 220 (optional, two printed options, suggest the longer version for the season.)*

Lord's Prayer *ELW pg. 221*

## SENDING

### Blessing

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen. Romans 15:13** *(or ELW pg. 221)*

**Sending Hymn** *ELW #627 O Day Full of Grace, vs. 1-3, 4*

### Dismissal

Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. **Thanks be to God.** *(Or alternatives ELW pg. 222)*