

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

February 18 - March 22, 2026

Ash Wednesday through Lent 5, Year A

Prepared by Gail Berg - Alberta & the Territories

### **Introduction to Season Of Lent**

Lent has several traditions that have been associated with the season for centuries: fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, traditions that aim to centre us towards both listening to God, and responding (out of our thankfulness for salvation) with care for the community around us. These 40 days set apart are there to help us get our priorities in order, and to realize yet again that God truly saves! There are scripture readings – and several of them very long! – from Matthew and mostly from John, that tell stories of God’s salvation: of being born again, of being given living water, of healing of blindness, and even of being raised from the dead. These are amazing stories in our history; and through the telling of these stories, we are reminded again and again of God’s plan of salvation, of God’s love for God’s people, and of God’s desire to be in relationship with us, God’s people!

*Sundays and Seasons* (the planning aid for worship planners, published through Augsburg Fortress – see link at bottom of document) offers a collective response within the Confession and Forgiveness for worship in this season: we call out again and again through this part of the liturgy for God to “Have mercy on us, according to your steadfast love.” Through this Lent, may we realize how far away from God we may have strayed, as well as the extent that God goes to reconcile us to God’s very self! And as we journey towards the cross and resurrection, may we be convinced and convicted of God’s steadfast love for us!

- written by Intern Deacon Joy Berg

### **Worship notes:**

The main colour for Lent is PURPLE representing solemnity, repentance, and Christ's kingship (the purple robe of mockery).

You may wish to have a large, plain cross present for Ash Wednesday, at least; perhaps for all of Lent. That same cross can be used on Good Friday, and then draped in white for Easter Day!

It is appropriate to refrain from including any ‘Alleluias’ in Lent. Usually the ‘Gloria in excelsis’ is also withdrawn. Please keep in mind that Lent is not sad; it is solemn and serious. Sundays are still Feasts of the Lord and need to be appropriately ‘celebrated’. The scripture passages for Lent

are all rich and powerful; our various hymn and music resources all contain materials which are eminently suitable - prayerful and joyful - for the season.

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- Resources in ELW (Evangelical Lutheran Worship) and ACS (All Creation Sings)
- **Feb.18, Ash Wednesday** - Worship Resources, readings, and hymn suggestions
- **Resources that can be used for any Sunday** – Gathering, Call to worship, Prayer of Confession, Offertory Prayer, Creed, Eucharistic Prayer,
- **Lent 1-5: Feb.22 – March 22** – Readings, Prayer of the day, & Hymn suggestions

## **Order for Holy Communion Service**

*The Holy Communion liturgy is for use when an Ordained Pastor or Authorized Lay Minister is present to preside*

Call to Worship (optional)

Prayer of Confession

Kyrie (optional)

Gathering Hymn

Prayer of the Day

Word - First Reading, Psalm, Second Reading, Gospel

Sermon/Reflection

Hymn of the Day

Apostles' Creed

Prayers of the People

Share the Peace

Offering

Eucharistic Prayer

ELW p. 65-70, choose between forms V-XI, OR ACS p. 56-58, or as suggested below

Lord's Prayer (ELW p.221)

Distribution of Communion

Blessing

Sending Hymn

Dismissal/Blessing ELW p.222, or as printed

## **Order for Service of the Word**

Call to Worship (optional)

Prayer of Confession

Gathering Hymn

Prayer of the Day

Word - First Reading, Psalm, Second Reading, Gospel

Sermon/Reflection

Hymn

Apostles' Creed

Prayers of the People

Share the Peace

Thanksgiving for the Word (ELW p.220 OR WOV pg.49-50)

Lord's Prayer (ELW p.221)

Blessing Leader: Let us bless the Lord. **All: Thanks be to God.**

Sending Hymn / Dismissal

- **There is also a Service of Word & Prayer in ACS, p.42-45**

## **Resources in ELW and ACS**

**Confession and Forgiveness** – ELW pg.94-96, OR ACS pg.8-10,

**Prayer of the Day** – can be found with the Lectionary readings in ELW, p.26-28

**Prayers of the People** - ELW p. 105 offers helpful guidelines for crafting prayers from the assembly. Different themed prayers can be found on p. 72-87 OR in ACS p.46-55

**Affirmation of Baptism** – can use Thanksgiving at the Font, pg.59 ACS for Call to Worship in place of Confession

**Please note that many of the hymns in ELW can be found on YouTube, sung & played by Tim McNabb from Halifax Lutheran, or**

other musicians. Most of the hymns in ACS can also be found on YouTube, either sung by him, by the composer, or various musicians.

### Ash Wednesday, Feb.18, '26

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. S&S

**There is a Service for Ash Wednesday in the ELW p.251 - 253**

### Readings

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Psalm 51:1-17

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

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### Optional Litany: We Come

*In the softness of evening,  
in the solace of silence we come to you, O Lord.  
We come for acceptance;  
we come for community;  
we come for forgiveness and love.*

**Sung response:** *O Lord, Hear My Prayer #751 ELW*

Silence

*In the serenity of day's end,  
in the restfulness of worship, we come to you O Lord.  
We come to you for respite;  
we come to you for completion;  
we come to you for forgiveness and love.*

**Sung response:** *O Lord, Hear My Prayer*

Silence

*In the quiet of the night,  
in the comfort of darkness we come to you, O Lord.*

*We come for peace;  
we come for comfort;  
we come for forgiveness and love.*

(Pause)

We come, O Lord of Light,  
seeking the illumination of your Word.  
We come for the path we can't find;  
we come for the life we don't have.  
We come to you for our lives are death  
and you alone have breath and being.

### **Imposition of Ashes**

*In your mercy you call us to the path of repentance.  
You remind us in your Word that we are earth and dust.  
But you promise to lift the poor from dust.  
Come and receive the sign of repentance.*

— from *Ash Wednesday Meditation* written by Lisa Frenz for the Mt. Carmel Evangelical Lutheran Church in Portland, Oregon: "Copyright © 2010 Lisa Frenz. All Rights Reserved. Used with permission."

Note: Lisa Frenz has prepared a number of other Ash Wednesday Liturgies. You can find them on her site. <https://sites.google.com/site/lisasliturgies/home>

### **Hymn Suggestions**

ACS 1009 Come Bring Your Burdens to God  
ACS 924 As the Winter Days Grow Longer  
ACS 919 Remember that You are Dust  
ACS 918 Now is the Time of Grace  
ELW 601 Savior, When In Dust to You  
ELW 592 Just as I Am, Without One Plea  
ELW 803 When I Survey the Wondrous Cross  
ELW 793 Be Thou My Vision

*Below are resources that can be used for any Sunday in Lent:*

## **Gathering**

*L: The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God*

## **Call to Worship**

P: Listen to the silence. (*pause/short silence*)

Hear the Voice of all; The still, small Voice.

**C: The Voice of God.**

*A: Seek the silence. (pause/short silence)*

Find the Source of all. That still, small Voice.

**C: The Voice of God.**

P: Welcome the silence. (*pause/short silence*)

Live in the Center of all; The still, small Voice.

**C: The Voice of God.**

**Song: Nothing Can Trouble #1033 ACS**

Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten, Those who seek God shall never go wanting,

Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten, God alone fills us.

## **OR**

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

P: The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread? One thing I ask of the Lord, only that do I seek: to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord, to frequent His temple.

**C: Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud; have mercy on me, answer me. . . . You have ever been my help. Do not forsake me, do not abandon me, O God, my deliverer.**

P: Though my father and mother abandon me, the Lord will take me in. Teach me Your way, O Lord, And lead me in a level path. (*Psalms 27*)

### **Offering Prayer**

*A: Lord of all, we give you thanks and praise,*

**C: For you have richly blessed us in this nation with an overflowing wealth of health, peace, safety, and all things needed for our daily lives. By those blessings you entrust us with greater responsibility towards others less blessed. May we never take for granted what you have bestowed us, and always seek to share those blessings with those less fortunate. Amen.**

### **Creed**

God created us; in God's image we are created. We believe in a Creator who made us, loves us, and is with us today and always.

God saved us; by God's grace we are saved. We believe in Christ Jesus who, being one with the Creator, joined us on earth for a brief time as a man, walked with us, healed us, and taught us, reminding us of who we are. With his life, death and resurrection Christ gathers all of us back into a loving relationship with God.

God is creating us anew; in God's love we thrive and grow. We believe in the Spirit who, being one with Christ and the Creator, calls us, comforts us, and guides us every day and every moment of our lives.

### **Confession**

God's peace is ours for we are God's. In the coldest of days, in the warmest of nights, God's love is ours.]

P: In the dark of night God calls to us; beckoning us on, seeking us out, calling us to peace, to quietness, to wholeness.

**C: The world is dark around us, filled with coldness, terror and restlessness.**

P: It is a darkness of our creation: Greed, hatred, envy: brokenness.

**C: Take us and heal us of every evil. Bring us back into the comfort and closeness of your embrace, O God.**

P: Your cleansing love, O God, purifies our darkness restoring it to us: Warm, comforting, restful: complete.

**C: In the dark of our night we hear God call, offering love and strength and forgiveness.**

P: With God the darkness brings comfort not fear, love not hatred, righteousness not punishment. Walk in the darkness of your life as in the light, for both the dark and the light belong to God, as do you. **C: Amen.**

### **Eucharistic Prayer**

P: In great love and wisdom, O God, you created this universe, making the stars to dance and the light to sing, the seas to roar and the waves to leap, the animals to thrive and the plants to flourish. You made humankind to be your children, so that we may walk and talk with you, as the inheritors of your creation.

But we sought freedom and gained bondage to sin. We sought wisdom and found lies. We sought life and found death. Like rebellious children we ran from your presence; distanced ourselves from you and denied our heritage.

In even greater love you let us go, only to reach out to us through your Word, Jesus Christ, who, offering us restoration and healing and life, on the night in which he was betrayed took bread, gave thanks and broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat, this is my body which is given for you. Do this as often as you eat and drink in remembrance of me." After the supper, Jesus also took the cup and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, "Take and drink, this is cup is my blood which is shed for the many for the forgiveness of sin. Drink all of it in remembrance of me."

P: God's grace has called us here, return to the Lord and partake of the feast for all ages.

**C: Amen.**

### **Dismissal from Holy Communion:**

P: God has filled you with the Holy Spirit and nourished you with the body and blood of Christ Jesus at this feast of love. May you become God's upright cup of blessing spilling out God's gifts to all the world. Go in peace and joy knowing you are a child of God.

**C: Amen.**

### **Blessing:**

P: May the God of love and grace keep you safe. May the God of comfort and healing hold you close. May the God of peace and joy fill your heart.

**C: Amen.**

## **Feb.22, 2026 – 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent (Also ELCIC Diaconal Ministry Sunday)**

### **Readings**

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7,

Psalm 32,

Romans 5:12-19,

Matthew 4:1-11 The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness for forty days

### **Hymn suggestions**

ELW 325	I Want Jesus to Walk With Me
ELW 504	A Mighty Fortress
ELW 613	Thy Holy Wings
ELW 808	Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song
ELW 624	Jesus, Still Lead On
ACS 1077	Mercy, We Abide in You
ACS 918	Now is the Time of Grace

### **Prayer of the Day** *(from Diaconal Resources)*

God of new life,

As Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, renew and restore us to new life, leaving in the grave all that prevents us from loving you fully. Amen

For More ELCIC Diaconal Sunday Resources

<https://elcic.ca/diaconal-sunday/>

## Mar.1, 2026 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent

### **Readings**

Genesis 12:1-4a

Psalm 122

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

John 3:1-17. The mission of Christ: to save the world

### **Prayer of the Day**

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 Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.** (S&S)

### **Hymn Suggestions**

ELW 335	Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross
ELW 323	God Loved the World
ELW 442	All Who Believe and Are Baptized
ELW 451	We Are Baptized in Christ Jesus
ELW 324	Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery (stanzas for every week in Lent)
ELW 660	Lift High the Cross
ACS 922	When We Are Tested
ACS 927	Christ is the Life

## Mar.8, 2026 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent

### **Readings**

Exodus 17:1-7

Psalm 95

Romans 5:1-11

John 4:5-42. Baptismal image: The woman at the well

### **Prayer of the Day**

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.** (S&S)

## Hymn Suggestions

ELW 777	Come to Me, All Pilgrims Thirsty
ELW 611	I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say
ELW 335	Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross
ELW 618	Guide Me Ever Great Redeemer
ELW 623	Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me
ELW 419	For All the Faithful Women (Stz 1 & 8)
ACS 918	Now is the Time of Grace
ACS 1049	Before the Waters Nourished Earth
ACS 544	Come to the Water of Life
W&P 9	As the Deer (Worship & Praise hymnal)

## Mar.15, 2026 – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent

### Readings

1 Samuel 16:1-13  
Psalm 23  
Ephesians 5:8-14  
John 9:1-41 – Baptismal image: the man born blind

### Prayer of the Day

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.** (S&S)

## Hymn Suggestions

ELW 714	O God of Mercy, God of Light
ELW 614	There is a Balm in Gilead
ELW 779	Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound
ELW 780	Shepherd Me, O God

ELW 793	Be Thou My Vision
ELW 324	In the Cross of Christ I Glory
ACS 925	Beautiful Things
ACS 1009	Come Bring Your Burdens to God
ACS 1077	Mercy, We Abide In You

## Mar.22, 2026 – 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent

### Readings

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Psalm 130

Romans 8:6-11

John 11:1-45 – Baptismal Image: the raising of Lazarus

### Prayer of the Day

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.** (S&S)

### Gospel Acclamation

“I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me will never die.” (*John 11:25, 26*)

### Hymn Suggestions

ELW 886	O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing
ELW 712	Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service
ELW 333	Jesus is a Rock in a Weary Land
ELW 773	Precious Lord Take my Hand
ELW 336	Lamb of God
ACS 1024	Here on Jesus Christ I will Stand
ACS 924	As the Winter Days Grow Longer

### Resources

- **Prayer of the Day** and **Ash Wed intro** are taken from Sundays and Seasons. (S&S)  
<https://www.sundaysandseasons.com/>

- **Resources that can be used for any Sunday** are “Copyright of Lisa Frenz. All Rights Reserved. Used with permission.”

All of these resources, plus many more, are posted on **Lisa’s Liturgies** at <https://sites.google.com/site/lisaliturgies/home> which you are welcome to use for your worship

- You are also welcome to check out <https://www.workingpreacher.org/> for commentaries on the readings for each Sunday. A resource for the whole church. This website is from Luther Seminary in St. Paul’s MN

- Sermons by email is another resource that is available. The **Sermons by Email** program was developed to support congregations without pastors. It is currently administrated by Pastor Jane Gingrich. Sermons are provided each week by ELCIC pastors. To add your congregation to this list, email [sermonsbyemail@gmail.com](mailto:sermonsbyemail@gmail.com)