



ASH WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 14, 2024

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
OF NORTHEAST MINNEAPOLIS

Welcome to Grace Lutheran Church. We are a congregation with a long history of loving God and serving our neighbors. We welcome and celebrate all of you, including race, culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, age, and family.

*We welcome you to share fellowship with us in your joys and struggles. If you hunger for a good meal, a bag of groceries, the bread of communion, an opportunity to serve your neighbors, or a welcoming church home, **there is a place for you at Grace.***

WELCOME & GREETING

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

During this Lenten season we will hear of God's steadfast love expressed in covenants, public promises of relationship that call forth a new way of life. We particularly recommit to the baptismal covenant and its public expressions:

*to live among God's faithful people,
to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper,
to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed,
to serve all people, following the example of Jesus,
and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth.*

Traditionally, when we affirm God's love overflowing in baptism, we renounce the ways of sin. On Ash Wednesday we let Psalm 51 lead us in this practice. Later, we will hold space for a time of prayer for those things which break our hearts, lamenting the sins of the world and the mistakes we have made as individuals.

GATHERING PRAYER

SONG & PSALM

Psalm 51, one of the seven penitential psalms, is a poignant cry for divine forgiveness, appealing to God's compassion. Today we make this psalm our own, singing with Christians in Palestine: "Rain down upon us your peace."



Ya Rab as - sa - la - mi, am - ter al - ay - na - sa - lam.
God of peace and jus - tice, rain down up - on us your peace.



Ya Rab as - sa - la - mi, Im - la' qu - lu - ba - na - sa - lam.
God of peace and jus - tice, let ev - 'ry heart be filled with peace.

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.

God of peace and justice, rain down upon us your peace.

God of peace and justice, let every heart be filled with peace.

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.

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.

God of peace and justice, rain down upon us your peace.

God of peace and justice, let every heart be filled with peace.

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

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.

Let me teach your ways to offenders,
and sinners shall be restored to you.

God of peace and justice, rain down upon us your peace.

God of peace and justice, let every heart be filled with peace.

Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of my salvation,
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness.

O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

For you take no delight in sacrifice, or I would give it.

You are not pleased with burnt offering.

The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit;
a troubled and broken heart, O God,
you will not despise.

God of peace and justice, rain down upon us your peace.

God of peace and justice, let every heart be filled with peace.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 58:1-12

Shout loudly; don't hold back; raise your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their crime, to the house of Jacob their sins. They seek me day after day, desiring knowledge of my ways like a nation that acted righteously,

that didn't abandon their God. They ask me for righteous judgments, wanting to be close to God.

“Why do we fast and you don't see; why afflict ourselves and you don't notice?” Yet on your fast day you do whatever you want and oppress all your workers. You quarrel and brawl, and then you fast; you hit each other violently with your fists. You shouldn't fast as you are doing today if you want to make your voice heard on high.

Is this the kind of fast I choose: a day of self-affliction, of bending one's head like a reed and of lying down in mourning clothing and ashes? Is this what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Isn't this the fast I choose: releasing wicked restraints, untying the ropes of a yoke, setting free the mistreated, and breaking every yoke? Isn't it sharing your bread with the hungry and bringing the homeless poor into your house, covering the naked when you see them, and not hiding from your own family?

Then your light will break out like the dawn, and you will be healed quickly. Your own righteousness will walk before you, and the LORD's glory will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and God will say, “I'm here.” If you remove the yoke from among you, the finger-pointing, the wicked speech; if you open your heart to the hungry, and provide abundantly for those who are afflicted, your light will shine in the darkness, and your gloom will be like the noon.

The LORD will guide you continually and provide for you, even in parched places. God will rescue your bones. You will be like a watered garden, like a spring of water that won't run dry. They will rebuild ancient ruins on your account; the foundations of generations past you will restore. You will be called Mender of Broken Walls, Restorer of Livable Streets.

This is the word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

✠ GOSPEL CHANT *Let us rise to meet Jesus, walking beside us.*

I want Je - sus to walk with me;
I want Je - sus to walk with me;
all a - long my pil - grim jour - ney.
Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.

✠ GOSPEL READING

Mark 1:21-28

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus and his followers went into Capernaum. Immediately on the Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and started teaching. The people were amazed by his teaching, for he was teaching them with authority, not like the legal experts. Suddenly, there in the synagogue, a person with an evil spirit screamed, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. You are the holy one from God.”

“Silence!” Jesus said, speaking harshly to the demon. “Come out of him!” The unclean spirit shook him and screamed, then it came out. Everyone was shaken and questioned among themselves, “What’s this? A new teaching with authority! He even commands unclean spirits and they obey him!” Right away the news about him spread throughout the entire region of Galilee.

This is the good news. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

REFLECTION

After a brief reflection from Interim Pastor Ben Masters, take some time to name to yourself what breaks your hearts. What sins of the world make you lament? Which personal mistakes weigh heavily on you?

For our time of extended confession, you are invited to write down what breaks your heart on the strips of paper provided—green for world laments, purple for personal confessions. We will weave them into the prayer.

Playing during our collective meditation is a piece written in Hebrew, Arabic, and English. A collaboration between two Israeli women—Manal Hreib, who is Arab, and Daphna Rosenberg, who is Jewish—has gifted us this song: “Between darkness and light I will always walk, and wherever I will go I will open a window of light and will plant the seeds of love.”

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Trusting in God's healing grace, let us offer in prayer our lamentation and confession, spoken and in silence.

God most mighty, God most motherly,
your heart aches for the wounded world.
Hear our own hearts' lament.

*After each petition, you are invited to echo: “**God, we lament.**”*

God most majestic, God most merciful,
We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind,
and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
Hear our hearts' confession.

*After each petition, you are invited to echo: “**God, we confess.**”*

The prayer concludes:

Restore us, O God of our salvation,
and show us your steadfast love.

Turn to us in your mercy and redeem us.

May these ashes be a sign of our mortal hearts—
fragile, full of grief, ready to begin again—

for just as you created us out of the dust of the earth,

you recreate us by your life-giving Spirit,

in the image of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. **Amen.**

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Since early medieval times, ashes were distributed on the fortieth day before Easter as a sign of individual and communal penitence. The mark of ashes is a cross, a symbol of God's love and power to save.

All who desire ashes may come forward and receive the sign of the cross traced in ashes and oil. Afterwards, let us take refuge in God's compassion and pray together as Jesus taught.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

INVITATION TO LENT & OFFERING OUR GIFTS

You are invited to continue your Lenten journey toward death and resurrection with this congregation. On Wednesdays, we will gather for a simple soup supper at 6pm, reflect on the baptismal covenant, and sing evening prayer from Holden Village. On Sundays, we will hear the stories of God's covenant faithfulness, break bread at Christ's table, and sing this congregation's bluegrass liturgy.

If you feel moved to give financially to this congregation's ministry of living out God's love, you are welcome to place your gift in the offering plate at the back, to give through the mail or online, perhaps using your phone's camera app to scan the QR code to the right.



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As I went down to the ri - ver to pray

stu - dy - ing a - bout that good old way and

who shall wear the star - ry crown Good Lord show me the way

1. O sin - ners, let's go down, let's go down, come on down,
2. O hurt - ing, let's go down, let's go down, come on down,
3. O loved ones, let's go down, let's go down, come on down,

O sin - ners, let's go down, down to the ri - ver to pray.
O hurt - ing, let's go down, down to the ri - ver to pray.
O loved ones, let's go down, down to the ri - ver to pray.

✠ BENEDICTION

In this holy season of Lent,
may you fast from worry and feast on trust;
may you fast from haste and feast on patience;
may you fast from judgment and feast on compassion;
may you fast from resentment and feast on forgiveness;
sustained and redeemed by the triune God. **Amen.**

✠ SENDING

Go in peace. Walk humbly with your God.
We will. Thanks be to God!