

MESSIAH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
A faithful, serving community, joyfully sharing Christ's love



Ash Wednesday
February 18, 2026
228 Ramapo Valley Rd, Oakland NJ 07436
www.messiahoklandnj.org | 201-337-4900
@MessiahOaklandNJ
Sunday Worship 10:00 am

The congregation is invited to worship in any way that is comfortable and meaningful such as standing, sitting, kneeling, coloring, etc. You may join in worship by speaking the responses in bold type.

SILENT MEDITATION DURING PRELUDE

WELCOME

THE PSALM: Psalm 51:1-17 will be read responsively

- ¹ Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.
- ² **Wash me through and through from my wickedness, and
cleanse me from my sin.**
- ³ For I know my offenses, and my sin is ever before me.
- ⁴ **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.**
- ⁵ Indeed, I was born steeped in wickedness, a sinner from my
mother's womb.
- ⁶ **Indeed, you delight in truth deep within me,
and would have me know wisdom deep within.**
- ⁷ Remove my sins with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be purer than snow.
- ⁸ **Let me hear joy and gladness; that the body you have broken
may rejoice.**
- ⁹ Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my wickedness.
- ¹⁰ **Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit
within me.**
- ¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit
from me.
- ¹² **Restore to me the joy of your salvation and sustain me with
your bountiful Spirit.**

¹³ Let me teach your ways to offenders, and sinners shall be restored to you.

¹⁴ **Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of my salvation,
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness.**

¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

¹⁶ **For you take no delight in sacrifice, or I would give it.
You are not pleased with burnt offering.**

¹⁷ The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit;
a troubled and broken heart, O God, you will not despise.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Beloved One, you call us to restoration, joy, and repentance, mixed together in the remembrances of this day. You bring us to new beginnings, fragile and frail though our hopes may be. Anoint us with ashes and oil, that we may live in awareness of all that life can be.

Amen.

FIRST READING: A Reading from Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

¹ Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near—² a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness spread upon the mountains, a great and powerful army comes; their like has never been from of old, nor will be again after them in ages to come.¹² Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;¹³ rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from punishment.¹⁴ Who knows whether he will not turn and relent and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord your God?

¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly;

¹⁶ gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her canopy.¹⁷ Between the vestibule and the altar, let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep. Let them say, "Spare your people, O Lord, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING: A Reading from 2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10

^{20b} We entreat you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake God made the one who knew no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. ^{6:1} As we work together with him, we entreat you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. ² For he says, “At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.” Look, now is the acceptable time; look, now is the day of salvation! ³ We are putting no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴ but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: in great endurance, afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵ beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶ in purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, ⁷ truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸ in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors and yet are true, ⁹ as unknown and yet are well known, as dying and look—we are alive, as punished and yet not killed, ¹⁰ as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing everything.

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Nothing in All Creation

ACS pg.34



Noth-ing in all cre - a - tion can sep-a-rate us from the love of God.



Noth-ing in all cre - a - tion can sep-a-rate us from the love of God.

THE GOSPEL: The Holy Gospel according to Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹ “Beware of practicing your righteousness before others in order to be seen by them, for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.” ² “So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give

alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your alms may be done in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁵ “And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

¹⁶ “And whenever you fast, do not look somber, like the hypocrites, for they mark their faces to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ¹⁹ “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON



1 Be thou my vi - sion, O Lord of my heart;
 2 Be thou my wis - dom, and thou my true word;
 3 Rich - es I heed not, nor vain, emp - ty praise,
 4 Light of my soul, af - ter vic - to - ry won,



naught be all else to me, save that thou art:
 I ev - er with thee and thou with me, Lord.
 thou mine in - her - i - tance, now and al - ways:
 may I reach heav - en's joys, O heav - en's Sun!



thou my best thought both by day and by night,
 Thou my soul's shel - ter, and thou my high tow'r,
 thou and thou on - ly, the first in my heart,
 Heart of my own heart, what - ev - er be - fall,



wak - ing or sleep - ing, thy pres - ence my light.
 raise thou me heav'n - ward, O Pow'r of my pow'r.
 great God of heav - en, my trea - sure thou art.
 still be my vi - sion, O Rul - er of all.

INVITATION TO LENT

Siblings in Christ, today with the whole church we enter the time of remembering Jesus' journey from death to life, and our life in Christ is renewed.

We begin this holy season by acknowledging our need for repentance and for God's mercy. We are created to experience joy in communion with God, to love one another, and to live in harmony with creation. But our sinful rebellion separates us from God, our neighbors, and creation, so that we do not enjoy the life our creator intended.

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to a discipline that contends against evil and resists whatever leads us away from love of God and neighbor. I invite you, therefore, to the discipline of Lent—self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and

works of love—strengthened by the gifts of word and sacrament. Let us continue our journey through these forty days to the great Three Days of Jesus' death and resurrection.

CONFESSION OF SIN

You may join us in confession by sitting, standing, or kneeling. As the pastor begins, you may choose to make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism.

Blessed be the Holy Trinity, one God, who looks upon us in compassion, forgives our sin, and heals our lives. **Amen**

With honesty of heart, let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another:

Silence is kept for reflection

We confess our neglect of human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty. **God, we confess to you.**

We confess our false judgements, our hurtful thoughts toward our neighbors, and our prejudice toward those who differ from us.

God, we confess to you.

We confess our waste and pollution of your creation, our lust for material goods, and our lack of concern for those who come after us.

God, we confess to you.

We confess the ways we are unfaithful: for our anger, envy, pride, impatience, and dishonesty towards ourselves and others.

God, we confess to you.

We confess the wrong we have done and for the good we fail to do.

God, we confess to you, have mercy on us.

As tender as a parent to child, so deep is God's compassion for you. As high as heaven is above earth, so vast is God's love for you. As far as east is from west, so far God removes your sin from you, renewing your life through Jesus Christ. Blessed be God who crowns us with mercy and love. **Blessed be God forever.**

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. May these ashes be a sign of our mortality and penitence, reminding us that only by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ are we given eternal life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

As the chant begins and as you feel called, you may come forward to receive the mark of the cross on your forehead as the pastor says:

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. **Amen.**

HYMN

Remember That You are Dust

ACS #919

1* 2

Re - mem - ber that you are dust, and to
dust you shall re - turn.

You are welcome to stay at the altar to pray or return to your seat.

If you are joining us online, we invite you to make the sign of the cross on your forehead using oil, water, makeup, or the ashes you picked up from church. If there are others joining you, offer to make the sign for one another using the words "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return"

Please join us in reflection and song until all have received the imposition of ashes.

HYMN

Savior, When in Dust to You

ELW #601

1 Sav-ior, when in dust to you low we bow in hom-age due;
2 By your help-less in-fant years, by your life of want and tears,
3 By your hour of dire de-spair, by your ag-o-ny of prayer,
4 By your deep ex-pir-ing groan, by the sad se-pul-chral stone,

when, re-pen-tant, to the skies scarce we lift our weep-ing eyes;
by your days of deep dis-tress in the sav-age wil-der-ness,
by the cross, the nail, the thorn, pierc-ing spear, and tor-turing scorn,
by the vault whose dark a-bode held in vain the ris-ing God,

oh, by all your pains and woe suf-fered once for us be-low,
by the dread, mys-te-rious hour of the in-sult-ing tempt-cr's pow'r,
by the gloom that veiled the skies o'er the dread-ful sac-ri-fice,
oh, from earth to heav'n re-stored, might-y, re-as-cend-ed Lord,

bend-ing from your throne on high, hear our pen-i-ten-tial cry!
turn, oh, turn a fa-v'ring eye; hear our pen-i-ten-tial cry!
lis-ten to our hum-ble sigh; hear our pen-i-ten-tial cry!
bend-ing from your throne on high, hear our pen-i-ten-tial cry!

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

God of all things, you pour out your grace upon us through living water, healing oil, and cups running over. We come to you this day asking again for you to give your grace anew. We lift our joys to you and seek your presence among our sorrows.

We pray for creation, for the land, the water, the skies, and the air. We thank you for its beauty and abundance, astonishing each day. Send your Spirit among us as we tend to this world, seeking to promote wholeness in places that have experienced disaster.

God, in your grace, **tend to our prayers.**

We pray for our community, for family, friends, neighbors, and strangers. We thank you for the joy shared between us all. Send your accompanying presence to those who are unable to be among community this week, whether because of travel, illness, or vulnerability. Anoint those who need healing, wholeness, and companionship with your reviving Spirit.

God, in your grace, **tend to our prayers.**

We pray for the church around the world, doing the slow but persistent work of ministry. We thank you for the grace that we have witnessed pouring out of your church. Send your patience and wisdom among us when we try to rush through work that will take time. Encourage us to see our ministry efforts through. Stir our hearts when opportunities arise and remove barriers that discourage and distract us. Help us to prepare and share the feast of your love with all whom we encounter.

God, in your grace, **tend to our prayers.**

We pray for the nations and their leaders all throughout the earth. We thank you for bright moments of peacemaking and cooperation. Send your Spirit of justice and peace to those who experience strife and discord, violence and heartbreaking need. Pour out your courage and wisdom on us and on all who serve, that all people may experience love, care, and all that they need.

God, in your grace, **tend to our prayers.**

God, we trust in your abundance, whether we sense it or not. Even in days of sorrow or seasons of grief, remind us of your unyielding grace. **Amen.**

PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you.**

The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace, such as a handshake, hug, or peace sign and may say, "Peace be with you," or similar words.

OFFERING

Offering can be left in the plates at the back of the sanctuary, sent to the church office, or given online by using the QR code to the right.



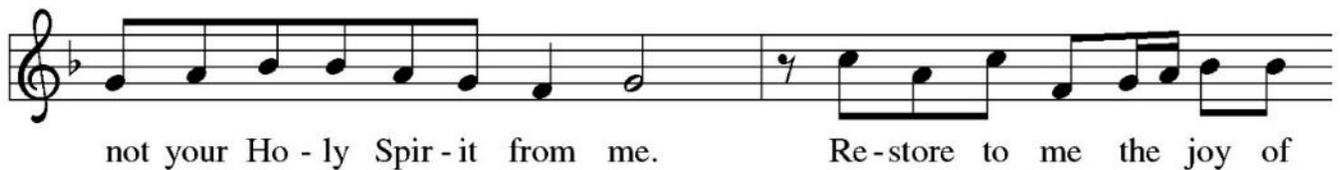
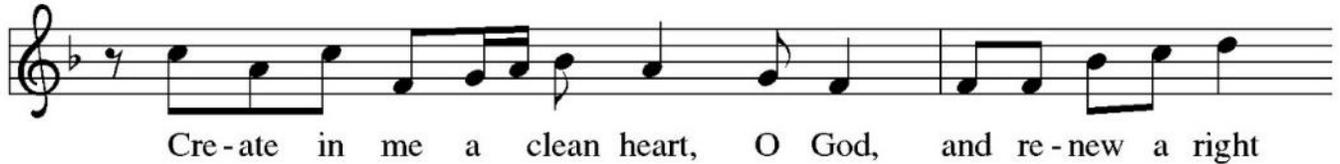
MUSICAL OFFERING

Messiah Singers

OFFERTORY

Create in Me a Clean Heart

ELW #186



OFFERING PRAYER

God of grace, you give us all that we have and all that we need. Teach us to recognize your gifts and to share with you all that we have. Though we don't yet know what you have in store for us, we pray that you bring overflowing abundance out of what we offer. Amen.

DIALOGUE

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

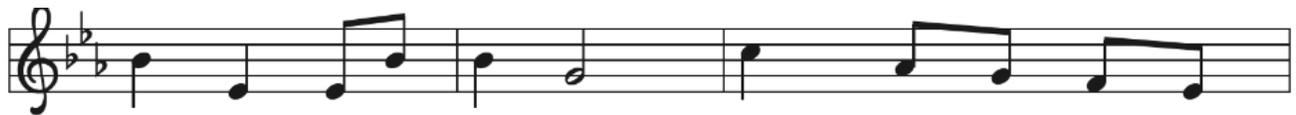
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

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:

COMMUNION RESPONSE

ACS pg.36



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



God of might, heav - en and earth are full of your



glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est.



Bless - ed is the one who comes in the name of the



Lord. Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.



Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

As the shadows lengthen, we bless you, sheltering God.

We glorify you for the endless, starlit sky, deep with the mystery of your creative labor through all time and space. We praise you for the fertile earth and for the life its darkness holds and births: plants of every variety, animals curled in sleep, humankind you shaped by your own hand. Stay with us, for it is evening.

Stay with us, for it is evening.

Through the night you led your people into freedom. At day's end you rained down manna in the wilderness. At sundown your Son brought healing to people in need. In the midday night when Jesus died on the cross, life came forth for all. Stay with us, for it is evening.

Stay with us, for it is evening.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, 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. Our hearts burn within us as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Like a mother hen, hold us close through the coming night. Watch with those who labor, accompany those who long for peaceful sleep, welcome those whose waking will be only in you. Into our deepest night, come, Lord Jesus.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Come, Holy Spirit, make here the body of Christ: in the breaking of the bread, in justice for our broken world, in rest for the weary, come, Holy Spirit. **Come, Holy Spirit.**

To you, O God, painter of both night and day, guiding star and healing sun, breath of peace and wind of change, be all glory, all honor, all praise this night unto the coming dawn, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

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 COMMUNION

One loaf, broken yet abundant. One cup, poured out yet more than enough. Come, share in the feast.

COMMUNION

We invite you to commune in whatever way is comfortable to you either from your seat using the prepackaged elements or by coming forward to the altar rail. To commune at the altar rail, please proceed down the diagonal aisles and pick up a cup from the silver plates. You will be given a wafer and then offered wine (first chalice) or grape juice (second chalice). For those communing online, please join us using whatever bread/crackers and wine/grape juice you have at home. All are welcome at God's table.

The body and blood of Christ, given for you. **Amen**

COMMUNION SONG

ACS pg. 36



Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on



us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have



mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the



world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

COMMUNION HYMN**Lord Jesus, Think on Me**

ELW #599



1 Lord Je - sus, think on me, and purge a - way my sin;
 2 Lord Je - sus, think on me, by anx - ious thoughts op - pressed;
 3 Lord Je - sus, think on me, nor let me go a - stray;
 4 Lord Je - sus, think on me, that, when the flood is past,



from self - ish pas - sions set me free and make me pure with - in.
 let me your lov - ing ser - vant be and taste your prom - ised rest.
 through dark - ness and per - plex - i - ty point out your cho - sen way.
 I may the e - ter - nal bright - ness see and share your joy at last.

TABLE BLESSING

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you and keep you in God's grace. **Amen**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray. O Jesus, you have shared a feast more gracious than we could ever ask, the outpouring of your own self with us. Send us out into the world to be conduits for your goodness, channels of your grace, anointing this world with the new life you have given us. Amen.

BLESSING

Beloved, receive now this blessing: Life and life abundant is yours. As you leave this place, embrace the transformation you have found here. Like water changed to wine, we can share delight beyond measure. Like new wineskins for new wine, we can stretch and change, new vessels for God's goodness. Like the wine and oil of the Samaritan on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho, we can offer blessing, even as we seek healing. God blesses you with abundance. Christ blesses you with grace. The Spirit blesses you with love overflowing. Trust this blessing as you go, and pour yourself out to a world in need. **Amen.**

SENDING HYMN**Just As I Am Without One Plea**

ELW #592



1 Just as I am, with - out one plea, but that thy blood was
 2 Just as I am, though tossed a - bout with man - y_a con - flict,
 3 Just as I am, thou wilt re - ceive, wilt wel - come, par - don,
 4 Just as I am; thy love un - known has bro - ken ev - 'ry



shed for me, and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
 man - y_a doubt, fight - ings and fears with - in, with - out,
 cleanse, re - lieve; be - cause thy prom - ise I be - lieve,
 bar - rier down; now to be thine, yea, thine a - lone,



O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

ANNOUNCEMENTS**BENEDICTION**

Go in peace. Believe the good news. **Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE**TODAY'S MINISTERS**

PASTOR: Rev. Courtney Smith
Westerlund

MUSIC DIRECTOR: Bob Luderer

LAY READER: Eleanore Orman

USHER: Don Brown

GREETER: Len Nicolosi

COMMUNION ASSISTANTS: Michele
Weintraub & Arnold Ludke

ALTAR GUILD: Jerri Angermueller
& Nancy Krause

VIDEO TECH: Alex Boyce

COORDINATING COUNCILOR:

Alex Boyce

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