

MESSIAH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

A faithful, serving community, joyfully sharing Christ's love



Second Sunday in Lent

March 1, 2026

228 Ramapo Valley Rd, Oakland NJ 07436

www.messiahoaklandnj.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

GATHERING WORDS

On this Second Sunday in Lent, we journey again toward the cross. We feel the weight of all that lies ahead. We wrestle with coming sorrow. We balance our growing needs. God, we come here today braced for the hazards of this journey.

Instead, you pour out grace.

Instead, you anoint us with oil.

Instead, you fill our cups to overflowing.

We find beauty in dry places, abundance in want, and welcome in despair.

You call us to the waters of life, and we respond, our longings now fulfilled.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism.

We know the pull of all that separates us from God. We long for the cleansing water poured out over us again. We seek anointing, the oil running its healing course. We feel this call to reconnect, so we confess our sins.

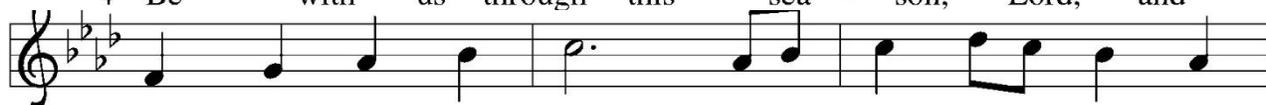
God, we have forgotten your call, insistent though it is. We stay back though the waters of baptism call us forward. We separate ourselves though the bread and cup beckon us to community. We hide our wounds though the oil of anointing waits at the ready.

God knows us better than we know ourselves. Yet God does not withhold any good gift from us. Like Naaman at the river, we are surprised at how easy it is to experience God's outpouring of grace. Like the woman at the well, we share living water and watch impenetrable barriers break. Like Mary at the feet of Jesus, we empty ourselves of all we have, only to be filled again. Beloved, you are forgiven. Receive now, for yourself, the abundant grace that opens your soul to love. **May grace flow free through us once again!**

GATHERING HYMN O Lord Throughout These Forty Days ELW #319



1 O Lord, through - out these for - ty days you
 2 You strove with Sa - tan, and you won; your
 3 Though parched and hun - gry, yet you prayed and
 4 Be with us through this sea - son, Lord, and



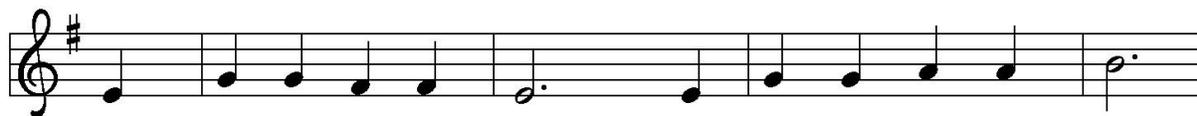
prayed and kept the fast; in - spire re - pen - tance
 faith - ful - ness en - dured; lend us your nerve, your
 fixed your mind a - bove; so teach us to de -
 all our earth - ly days, that when the fi - nal



for our sin, and free us from our past.
 skill and trust in God's e - ter - nal word.
 ny our - selves that we may know God's love.
 Eas - ter dawns, we join in heav - en's praise.

KYRIE

ELW pg.203



1 Have mer - cy on us, Lord, and hear our sol - emn prayer.
 2 Have mer - cy on us, Christ, and wash a - way our sin.
 3 Have mer - cy on us, Lord; make sin and shame de - part.



We come to hear your liv - ing word; it saves us from de - spair.
 Pour out your grace and make us whole that new life may be - gin.
 Re - new us with your sav - ing pow'r; cre - ate in us new hearts!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lavish God, you reveal your truth to us, even as we hide our curiosity under the cover of night. You renew our understanding, even as we stumble to respond. Anoint us with grace that cannot be contained, that we may return to good and gracious community. **Amen.**

FIRST READING: A Reading from **Genesis 12:1-4a**

¹ The LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.² I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.³ I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

^{4a} So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him.

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

THE PSALM: **Psalm 121** will be read responsively

¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills; from where is my help to come?

² **My help comes from the LORD, the maker of heaven and earth.**

³ The LORD will not let your foot be moved

nor will the one who watches over you fall asleep.

⁴ **Behold, the keeper of Israel will neither slumber nor sleep;**

⁵ the LORD watches over you;

the LORD is your shade at your right hand;

⁶ **the sun will not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.**

⁷ The LORD will preserve you from all evil and will keep your life.

⁸ **The LORD will watch over your going out and your coming in, from this time forth forevermore.**

SECOND READING: A Reading from **Romans 4:1-5, 13-17**

¹ What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” ⁴ Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. ⁵ But to one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness.

¹³ For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there transgression.

¹⁶ For this reason the promise depends on faith, in order that it may rest on grace, so that it may be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (who is the father of all of us, ¹⁷ as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”), in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

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 John 3:1-17

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹ Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jewish people.² He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with that person.”³ Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”⁴ Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?”⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.⁶ What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.⁷ Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’⁸ The wind blows where it chooses,

and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”⁹ Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?”¹⁰ Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?”¹¹ “Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony.”¹² If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”¹⁷ “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

CHILDREN’S SERMON

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY

Come to the Water of Life

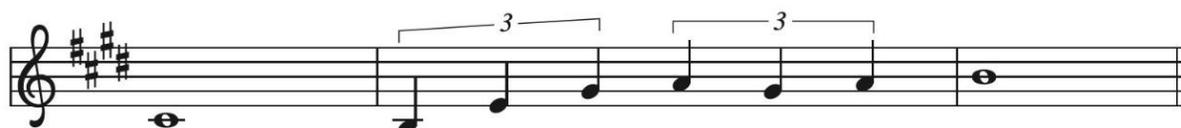
ACS #955



1 All who are thirst-y for mer - cy, all who are thirst-y for
 2 All who are thirst-y for heal - ing, all who are thirst-y for
 3 All who are thirst-y for beau - ty, all who are thirst-y for
 4 All who are thirst-y for jus - tice, all who are thirst-y for



love; all who are thirst - y for love, for mer - cy,
 touch; all who are thirst - y for touch, for heal - ing,
 truth; all who are thirst - y for truth, for beau - ty,
 peace; all who are thirst - y for peace, for jus - tice,



come: come to the Wa - ter of life.
 come: come to the Wa - ter of life.
 come: come to the Wa - ter of life.
 come: come to the Wa - ter of life.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH: APOSTLES' CREED

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

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

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

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. I invite you to name in the chat or comments moments of abundance you have seen, experienced, or received this week.

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. I invite you to name in the chat or comments moments of joy and connection you witnessed, received or experienced this week.

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

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. I invite you to name in the chat or comments those individuals or groups you want to lift up prayers for this day.

We pray especially for those who are ill or injured, those in need of mental health support, those who are seeking recovery from drug and alcohol addiction, those who are lonely, and those who mourn. 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. I invite you to name in the chat or comments ministries, programs, and groups working locally, regionally, and around the world. 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.**

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.



OFFERTORY**Create in Me a Clean Heart**

ELW #186



Cre-ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re-new a right



spir-it with-in me. Cast me not a-way from your pres-ence, and take



not your Ho-ly Spir-it from me. Re-store to me the joy of



your sal-va-tion, and up-hold me with your free Spir-it.

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

God is with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to our God.

Let us give thanks to God, our saving grace.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

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.

PREFACE

COMMUNION RESPONSE

Holy Holy

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

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

Lamb of God

ACS pg.40



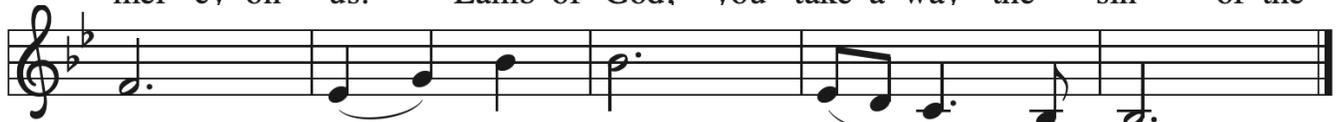
Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on



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

God Loved the World

ELW #323



1 God loved the world so that he gave his on - ly
2 Christ Je - sus is the ground of faith, who was made
3 If you are ill, if death draws near, this truth your
4 Be of good cheer, for God's own Son for - gives all
5 All glo - ry to the Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly



Son the lost to save, that all who would in
flesh and suf - fered death; all who con - fide in
trou - bled heart can cheer: Christ Je - sus res - cues
sins that you have done, and jus - ti - fied by
Spir - it, Three in One! To you, O bless - ed



him be - lieve should ev - er - last - ing life re - ceive.
Christ a - lone are built on this chief cor - ner - stone.
us from death; that is the firm - est ground of faith.
Je - sus' blood, your bap - tism grants the high - est good.
Trin - i - ty, be praise now and e - ter - nal - ly!

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.

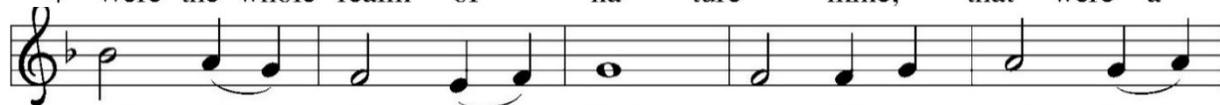
BLESSING

Beloved, receive now this blessing: Life and life abundant is yours, today. 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 When I Survey the Wondrous Cross ELW # 803



1 When I sur - vey the won - drous cross on which the
2 For - bid it, Lord, that I should boast save in the
3 See, from his head, his hands, his feet, sor - row and
4 Were the whole realm of na - ture mine, that were a



prince of glo - ry died, my rich - est gain I
death of Christ, my God; all the vain things that
love flow min - gled down. Did e'er such love and
pres - ent far too small; love so a - maz - ing,



count but loss and pour con - tempt on all my pride.
charm me most, I sac - ri - fice them to his blood.
sor - row meet, or thorns com - pose so rich a crown?
so di - vine, de - mands my soul, my life, my all.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MINUTE FOR MISSION: ELCA GOOD GIFTS

BENEDICTION

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

POSTLUDE

UPCOMING WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Mid-Week Lenten Worship | 7:30 on Zoom

Third Sunday in Lent, March 8, 2026 | 10:00am Worship Service

MARCH BENEVOLENCE OF THE MONTH

ELCA World Hunger

THIS WEEK AT MESSIAH

MONDAY: 6:00 pm Community Dinner at Ponds

TUESDAY: 6:30 pm AA Meeting

WEDNESDAY: 7:30 pm Mid-Week Lenten Worship on Zoom

THURSDAY: 7:30 pm Band practice

SUNDAY: 9:00 am Choir Practice

10:00 am Worship

TODAY'S MINISTERS

PASTOR: Rev. Courtney Smith Westerlund

MUSIC DIRECTOR: Bob Luderer

LAY READER: Jerri Angermueller

USHER: Don Brown

GREETER: Brigitte Albrecht

COMMUNION ASSISTANTS: Arnold Ludke & Michele Weintraub

ALTAR GUILD: Brigitte Albrecht & Susanne Herbst

VIDEO TECH: Alex Boyce

COUNTERS: Eleanore Orman & Joan Ludke

COORDINATING COUNCILOR: Victoria Boyce

COFFEE HOUR: Linda Axtell

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Book Club: March 9th: "The Book of Longings" by Sue Monk Kidd.

April 13th: "The Correspondent" by Virginia Evans.

ELCA Good Gifts: March 1st to March 29th, Palm Sunday.

This coming month we will be working toward donations of animals or items such as bibles and feeding those in need. Last year there was an amazing amount of \$700.00 raised for this charity. I know we are all hurting a little more this year, but any and all donations are welcome.

You can find the animal and costs in the Narthex and banks for home are also available. Please return your barns or envelopes by March 29th

Mar10 Day Observed: Please join us on March 8th, after church for some Mario Kart fun and a special Mario Bros coffee hour!

Sunday School: On March 15th we will be doing two special activities during Sunday School. There will also be a discussion with our youth about activities they would like to do. During coffee hour, we invite the parents and other adults to discuss activities they would like to do in the next few months. Look for updates in the May/June newsletter.

Palm Sunday: We need readers for the Passion! If you're interested, please talk to Pastor Courtney

Worship Assistants Needed!

Please consider if you might be interested in helping with worship by serving as a lector or Communion Assistant. Training is available if you need but both responsibilities are easy to pick up and learn. Please talk to Pastor Courtney, Ashley, or sign up on the serving schedule.

THE



Please keep in prayer the following people in our Messiah family: Bob, Helen, Joan B, Jonny & Natalie, Kim, Len, Mike, and Sue. And the following friends & family:

All affected by seasonal illnesses	John, Joan, Herb, Todd, Gus,
All those in the armed forces,	Peggy, Jim, Kathy, and Carol,
especially those connected to our	Ron and Marilyn's friends
congregation, Evan and Joseph	The family and friends of Ethel,
Jeff	Brigitte's sister-in-law
David	Kim, friend of Sue
Kurt	Marilyn & Vincent, Lisa's parents
Peter & Joyce	Ron & June, Karen's parents
Mark and Keith, Susanne's friends	Melinda & Paul, Eleanore's sister
Gayle, friend of Joan & Eleanore	& nephew
June, Lee's mother	Jennifer, friend of Sue & Eleanore
Miro, Vesna's father	Nancy, friend of Kim
Erika, Kristen's sister	Peggy & Christine, Alex's aunts
Thomas, friend of Tony & Edie	Karol & Barbara, Eleanore's
Peter, Terri's father	friends
Paula, friend of Nancy	Alexa and Hank friends of Nancy
	Julie, family friend of Nancy

Please let us know if you have changes we should make to our prayer list

ADVOCACY FOR ALL

Second Sunday in Lent



Walter Brueggemann sees lament as essential to faith and justice. He argues lament is the language of people who refuse to accept the world as it is and dare to voice their pain, grief, and protest before God. Lament interrupts denial and makes space for truth-telling about suffering and injustice. By lamenting, communities resist silence and passivity, opening themselves to God's new possibilities.

Advocacy is the holy work of imagination. Once we lament, we must take loving action to help make things right. Advocating for ourselves and others is central to our faith because God imagines a world of wholeness, healing, and equity for all people. Scripture calls us not only to love God but also to love our neighbor in tangible, restorative ways. When we seek justice, we participate in God's work of making all things new.

LAMENT: POLITICAL DIVISION

God of unity and truth, we cry out in a time of deep division. We mourn families split by anger, communities fractured by fear, friendships lost to blame and bitterness. We grieve how power is used to wound, how truth is twisted for gain, how the common good is cast aside. The gap feels wide. The trust feels broken. The path forward feels unclear. How long, O God? How long until justice and compassion lead us? Lord, have mercy.

Silence: Take a moment to reflect and lament as you prepare your heart for action.

ACT: BUILDING BRIDGES

When was the last time you had a meaningful conversation with someone whose political views differ from yours? How much of your energy goes toward naming differences rather than finding common ground?

A lot of division comes from assuming we know what others think without ever hearing their stories. Jesus regularly crossed social boundaries to sit with people others avoided—not to argue, but to listen and connect.

This week, invite someone who thinks differently from you to coffee, lunch, or a walk in the park. Avoid politics altogether unless it can be done respectfully. Instead, focus on stories: Where did they grow up? What was their childhood like? What's a favorite book or movie, and why? Who is their role model? What are they proud of? What dreams or goals do they hold? You may be surprised by the common ground you discover.