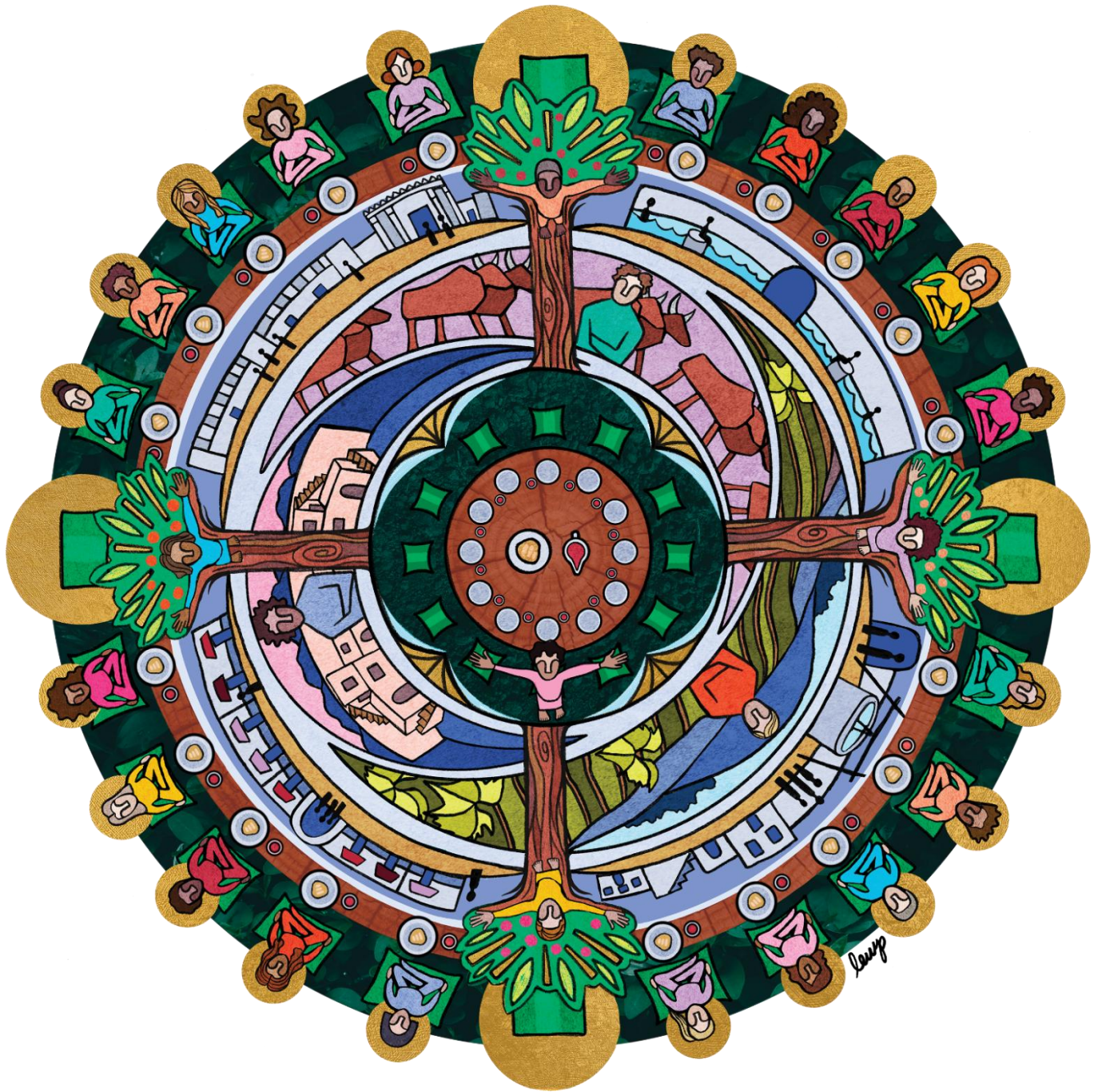


# ASH WEDNESDAY

February 18, 2026



Gethsemane Lutheran Church

3600 Hampton - St. Louis, MO 63109

Worship God, welcome all to nurture a community of harmony, healing, and justice.

***Welcome to worship! We're delighted you are here!***



Gethsemane Lutheran Church is a *Reconciling in Christ* Congregation. **You are welcome here.**



We ask all members, guests, and visitors to please fill out the **attendance slip** in your worship folder and place it in the offering plate.



Please **silence** phones and other devices during the worship service. Sharing that you're at Gethsemane on social media is encouraged! "Check in" using hashtag: #glcstlCheckIn.



The presence, energy, and noise of **children** are always welcome in worship at Gethsemane. The sound of a child in worship is music to our ears. We welcome and encourage kids to move and play. Additional space to move and Wiggle Bags are located in the narthex entry area.



**Postures** are a way in which we engage the body in worship. These movements (sitting, standing, making the sign of the cross) are optional; please engage in them only as you are comfortable or able.



**Holy Communion** is offered to all who seek the presence of Christ. This is a welcome table.



Gethsemane Lutheran Church wishes to **acknowledge** and **honor** the Osage, Quapaw, Myaamia, Očhéthi Šakówinj, Kaskaskia, and Kickapoo peoples upon whose ancestral homelands we gather for worship, as well as all our Indigenous siblings who have and continue to care for this place—this land—and call it their home.

***CHURCH STAFF***

Minister: Pastor Cheryl Walenta Gorvie  
Connections Coordinator: Gretchen Jenson  
Office Manager: Eve Cooney  
Organist/Interim Choir Director: Amy Crousore  
Council President: Cayce Morice, 314-574-0850

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[cayce.morice@yahoo.com](mailto:cayce.morice@yahoo.com)

Office Hours: Vary, but include Tues-Thurs, 10 am – 1 pm.

Outside of these hours, please call before coming to the church to ensure someone will be here to let you in.

**Church Office – (314) 352-8050**

[office@gethsemanestl.org](mailto:office@gethsemanestl.org)    [www.gethsemanestl.org](http://www.gethsemanestl.org)

*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.*

## GATHERING

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*The assembly gathers in silence.*

### CALL TO WORSHIP

**P:** If God threw a party,

**C: all would be invited.**

**P:** If God hosted a dinner,

**C: there'd be a seat saved for each of us.**

**P:** If God prepared a banquet,

**C: a cheer would go up when you arrived.**

**P:** This is the good news:

**C: God is throwing a party. God is hosting a dinner. God is preparing a banquet, and all are invited.**

**P:** Let us worship this invitational God.

### PSALM: Psalm 51:1-17

*The choir will lead the singing of the Psalm with the congregation singing the bolded lines.*

<sup>1</sup>Have mercy on me, O God, according to your <sup>|</sup> steadfast love;  
in your great compassion blot out <sup>|</sup> my offenses.

<sup>2</sup>**Wash me through and through <sup>|</sup> from my wickedness,**  
**and cleanse me <sup>|</sup> from my sin.**

<sup>3</sup>For I know <sup>|</sup> my offenses,  
and my sin is ev- <sup>|</sup> er before me.

<sup>4</sup>**Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil <sup>|</sup> in your sight;**  
**so you are justified when you speak and right <sup>|</sup> in your judgment.**

<sup>5</sup>Indeed, I was born <sup>|</sup> steeped in wickedness,  
a sinner from my <sup>|</sup> mother's womb.

<sup>6</sup>**Indeed, you delight in truth <sup>|</sup> deep within me,**  
**and would have me know wisdom <sup>|</sup> deep within.**

- <sup>7</sup>Remove my sins with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be pur- | er than snow.
- <sup>8</sup>**Let me hear | joy and gladness;**  
**that the body you have broken | may rejoice.**
- <sup>9</sup>Hide your face | from my sins,  
and blot out | all my wickedness.
- <sup>10</sup>**Create in me a clean | heart, O God,**  
**and renew a right spir- | it within me.**
- <sup>11</sup>Cast me not away | from your presence,  
and take not your Holy Spir- | it from me.
- <sup>12</sup>**Restore to me the joy of | your salvation**  
**and sustain me with your boun- | tiful Spirit.**
- <sup>13</sup>Let me teach your ways | to offenders,  
and sinners shall be re- | stored to you.
- <sup>14</sup>**Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of | my salvation,**  
**and my tongue shall sing | of your righteousness.**
- <sup>15</sup>O Lord, o- | pen my lips,  
and my mouth shall pro- | claim your praise.
- <sup>16</sup>**For you take no delight in sacrifice, or | I would give it.**  
**You are not pleased | with burnt offering.**
- <sup>17</sup>The sacrifice of God is a | troubled spirit;  
a troubled and broken heart, O God, you will | not despise.

## CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

**P:** Family of faith, if someone declines our invitations again and again, in our human ways, we tend to stop inviting them. We get the hint. We assume they'd rather be elsewhere. With God, however, things are different. No matter how many times we overlook or ignore God's outstretched hand, God will never stop reaching for us. So with that good news in mind, let us go to God in prayer.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

**P:** Gracious God,

**C:** you invite all of us to your table: the faithful and the doubting, the restless and the hopeless, the addicted and the lonely, the lost and the confused. You invite all of us, regardless of who we are or where we've been, but we fail to do the same. When given the opportunity, we are guilty of casting judgment on our neighbors. We draw lines, assume the worst, create cliques, and accept exclusion. Forgive our harmful ways. This Lent, show us how to love others the way you love us. With hope we pray, amen.

**P:** Friends, no matter how many times we mess up, no matter how many times we lose our way, no matter how many times we decline God's invitation, God will never stop inviting us to the table. There is and always will be a seat saved for you. So join me in these good news words:

**C:** We are forgiven, again and again. We are invited, again and again. We are loved, from beginning to end. Thanks be to God, our Inviter, Amen.

*The congregation is seated.*

## THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES

*Ushers will direct worshippers to the front of the sanctuary.*

## HYMN DURING DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES: Shalom

Sha - lom, my friends, sha - lom, my friends, sha - lom, sha - lom.  
Sha - lom, cha-ve-rim, sha - lom, cha-ve-rim, sha - lom, sha - lom.

Sha - lom my friends, sha - lom, my friends. Sha - lom, sha - lom.  
Sha - lom cha-ve-rim, sha - lom cha-ve-rim. Sha - lom, sha - lom.

Text: Israeli traditional  
Music: SHALOM, Israeli traditional

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

**AM:** Let us pray. Table-setting God, this Lent we do not want to miss your invitation. We do not want to be so caught up in our own business that we miss the holiness right in front of us. So settle our hearts, and open our spirits to hear your word anew. Help us hear your good news today. With hope we pray, **Amen.**

## WORD

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### THE FIRST READING: ISAIAH 58:1-12

*Shortly after the return of Israel from exile in Babylon, the people were troubled by the ineffectiveness of their fasts. God reminds them that outward observance is no substitute for genuine fasting that results in acts of justice, such as feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, and clothing the naked. Sincere repentance will lead to a dramatic improvement of their condition.*

<sup>1</sup>Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. <sup>2</sup>Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God. <sup>3</sup>“Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?” Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. <sup>4</sup>Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. <sup>5</sup>Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?

<sup>6</sup>Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? <sup>7</sup>Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? <sup>8</sup>Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. <sup>9</sup>Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, <sup>10</sup>if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. <sup>11</sup>The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. <sup>12</sup>Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **THE SECOND READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:20b--6:10**

*The ministry of the gospel endures many challenges and hardships. Through this ministry, God's reconciling activity in the death of Christ reaches into the depths of our lives to bring us into a right relationship with God. In this way, God accepts us into the reality of divine salvation.*

<sup>20b</sup>We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. <sup>6:1</sup>As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. <sup>2</sup>For he says, “At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.” See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! <sup>3</sup>We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, <sup>4</sup>but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions,

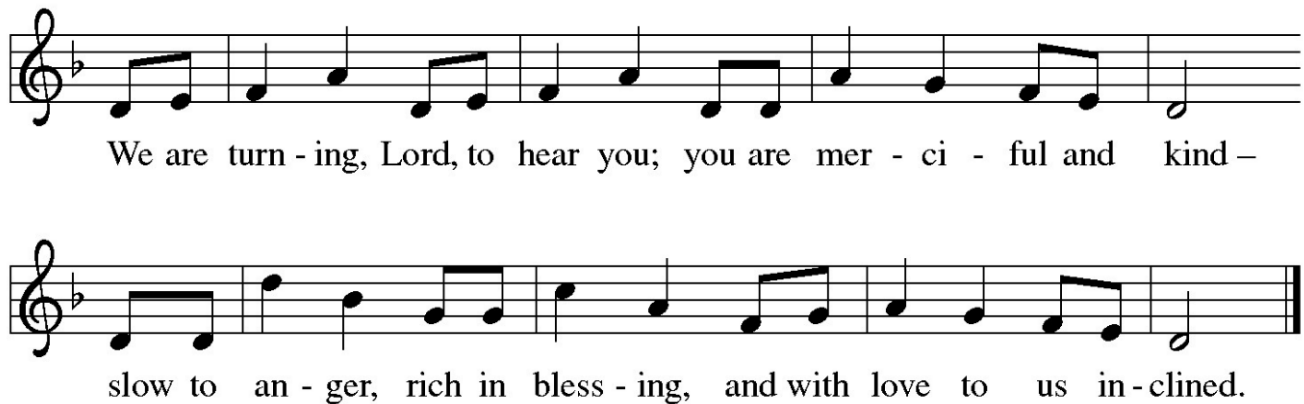
hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup>beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; <sup>6</sup>by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, <sup>7</sup>truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; <sup>8</sup>in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; <sup>9</sup>as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; <sup>10</sup>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.**

*The congregation may stand as they are comfortable.*

### LENTEN VERSE



The Holy Gospel according to Matthew, the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

### THE GOSPEL LESSON: MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-21

*In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commends almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, but emphasizes that spiritual devotion must not be done for show.*

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>1</sup> “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.

<sup>2</sup> “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. <sup>3</sup> But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup> so that your alms may be done in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>5</sup> “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. <sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> “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. <sup>17</sup> But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup> “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup> but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## **SERMON**

**HYMN OF THE DAY: *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross***

**HYMN #80**

*The congregation may stand as they are comfortable.*

## **THE NICENE CREED**

**P:** With the whole church, let us confess our faith.

**C:** We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

## **THE PRAYERS**

**AM:** Reconciled by God’s mercy and sustained by God’s presence, let us pray for the world and its needs.

*A brief silence.*

**AM:** ... Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

**P:** Receive our prayers, O God, through Jesus Christ, our strength and salvation.  
**C: Amen.**

## MEAL

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**THE OFFERING:** *The Offering is received as the Lord's table is prepared.*

### MUSICAL OFFERING:

12 pm: *Be Thou My Vision*

Arr. By John Carter

7 pm: *Shalom Chaverim*

Arr. by Catherin Delanoy

*The congregation may stand as comfortable.*

### OFFERING PRAYER

**AM:** Let us pray. O God, maker of heaven and earth, your steadfast love embraces all creation. You send rain and sunshine to nourish the earth and bring forth its bounty. Through these gifts of bread and wine, draw us into the death and life of your Son, who calls us to bear witness to his saving work. We ask this in Jesus' name.  
**C: Amen.**

### THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

**P:** The Lord be with you

**C: And also with you**

**P:** Lift up your hearts.

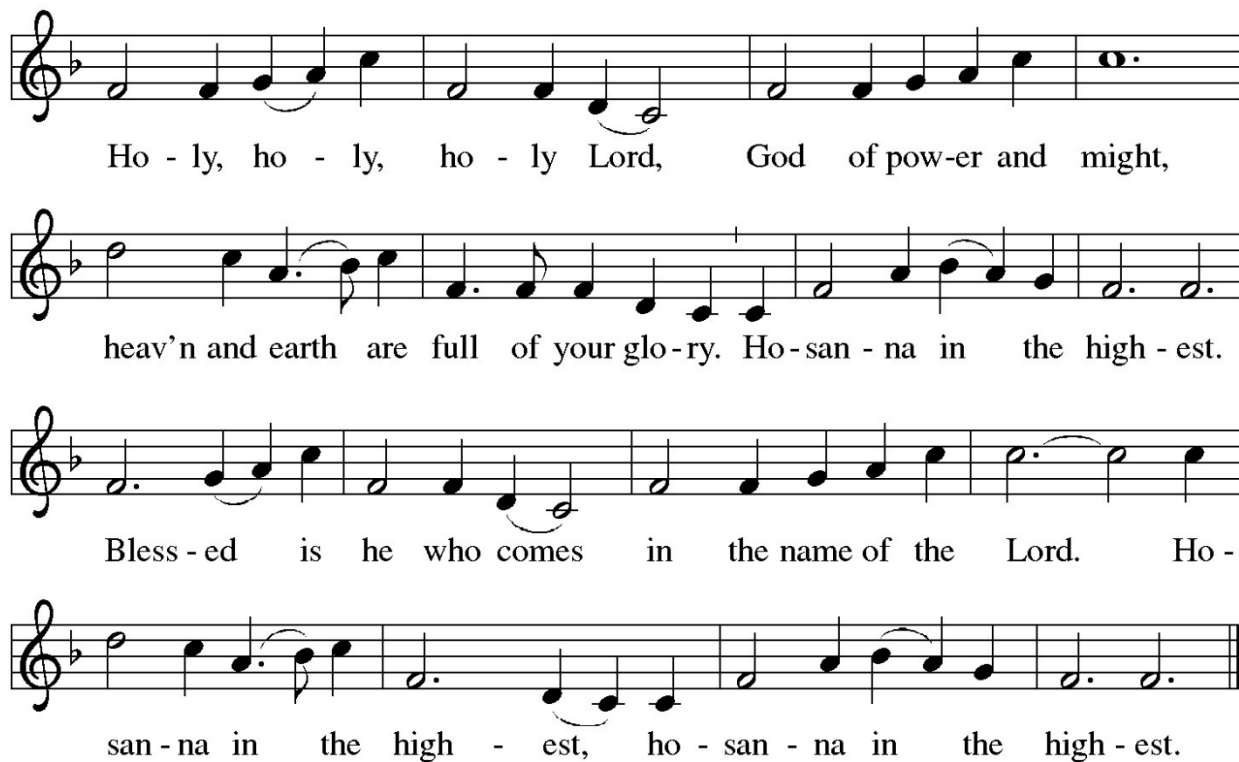
**C: We lift them to the Lord.**

**P:** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

**P:** 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:

## SANCTUS



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might,  
heav'n and earth are full of your glo-ry. Ho-san - na in the high - est.  
Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -  
san - na in the high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est.

**P:** 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.

## LORD'S PRAYER

**P:** Let us pray with confidence in the words our Savior gave us:

**C: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen**

## COMMUNION

**P:** Come to the table. Feast on God's goodness and mercy.

*The congregation is seated.*

*All who seek the Lord are welcome at Christ's table to receive the gift of God's grace!  
Those not receiving the bread and wine are welcome to come for a blessing.  
Please come forward at the direction of the ushers.*

## MUSIC DURING DISTRIBUTION: *Lamb of God*



1 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;  
2 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;  
3 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;



you suf-fered death our lives to save: have mer-cy now, we pray.  
you set us free from guilt and grave: have mer-cy now, we pray.  
e - ter-nal peace with God you made: give us your peace, we pray.

## *Be Thou My Vision*

HYMN# 793

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

C: Amen

*The congregation may stand as comfortable.*

## POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

**AM:** Let us pray, God of our salvation, we give you thanks for this meal that restores our souls, reconciles us to you, and strengthens us for the journey. Through the body and blood of your Son, may we become Christ's body in the world, bearing witness to your love for all creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: Amen.

## SENDING

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### BLESSING

**P:** As you leave this place, when you meet anger, speak with love. When you meet fear, speak with hope. When you meet pain, speak with gentleness. But no matter what, speak this good news. For the good news of the gospel is love and justice for all. It is joy that surprises, and nonviolence that transforms. Tell me something The good news of the gospel is alive in the world, so go forth speaking. For if you won't, then who will? Thanks be to God for this good, good news. Amen.

## SENDING HYMN: *Restore in Us, O God*

HYMN# 328

## DISMISSAL

**AM:** Go in peace. Believe the good news.

**C:** Thanks be to God.

## POSTLUDE: *Shalom Chaverim*

Arr. by John Carter

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WORSHIP LEADERS		
WORSHIP TIME	NOON	7:00PM
PREACHER/PRESIDER	Rev. Cheryl Walenta Gorvie	
ASSISTING MINISTER	Phyllis Saathoff	Maryn Olson
USHER		John Sandberg
LECTOR	Barb Johnson	Angie Fulton
CANTOR	T. Edwards Breed	Angie Fulton
ALTAR GUILD	Missy DeVore	

## PRAYER REQUESTS:

**Neil Gustafson:** healing

**Kate Hartz:** courage and trust

**Barb Johnson:** healing and strength

**Fred Lenhart:** recovering from hip surgery

**Margaret Lenhart:** healing

**Dell Roth:** healing and strength

**Sharon Salerno:** healing and strength

Family and friends of Bob Salsman (**Mark Cutelli's** brother): Comfort and peace as they mourn his death.

Request for:	On Behalf of:
Ed's brother, John Breed (healing)	Breed Family
For the good health of MCU, so that we can position ourselves to make an impact against the rapid rise of authoritarianism.	Garrett Finazzo
Kelsey, Jordan, Dana (healthy pregnancies), Spencer and Sullivan (new babies), Husted family (trust and comfort), for humanity in the world	Kohlberg Family

Karis (healing), Tyla (healing), Scott (strength), Parents (continued health), Farmers of the World.	<i>Cat Leonard</i>
The people of Gaza and the Occupied Territories of Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Ukraine, Sudan, Myanmar, Cambodia and Venezuela; Pat Fulton (healing, strength); Ginny Olson (strength and healing); Sister Marie Orf; Jojo (encouragement); those who do not feel safe in their communities; all impacted by disasters; for peace with justice in our world.	<i>Maryn Olson and Angie Fulton</i>
Jill (healing, love), my loved ones in the Twin Cities: Margaret, Jim, Kathryn, Emily, Chris, Joe, Merritt, Kaitlin and Patrick.	<i>Penny Family</i>
Dear friend's grandson, Jack (6 years old), facing cancer surgery	<i>Mary Scanlan</i>
Stephanie Rice's family on the death of her nephew	<i>Schmidt Family</i>
Job opportunities for Chad	<i>Tullock Family</i>

## LIVING YOUR FAITH

### GIVE

**Little Free Pantry Items** needed include **cereal** of any types. We are also collecting small condiment packages and/or utensil packs from restaurants. Clean out your drawers!

**February's Big Ask** for Isaiah 58 and St. Anthony's is laundry soap and dish soap. Place donation items in the cabinet located in the hallway leading to the Narthex.

### ACT

**Be a host!** Fellowship hosts make Sundays welcoming by helping with coffee and donuts and cleaning up afterwards. Sign up in the kitchen during fellowship.

**Care for others!** Did you know Gethsemane has a **Member Care Team**? Gethsemane's Member Care team provides support for members facing illness, surgery, crisis, or loss, and also celebrate significant life events like births. We perform duties such as sending cards, providing meals (via gift cards), coordinating visits for the homebound or hospitalized. The team acts as a vital link between members in need and those who can offer help within the church community.

If you or a church member you know is in need of support please contact the church office or check the box on weekly insert. You may reach out to the Member Care team directly by contacting Betsy Bartholomew. Requests for member care support are private and will only be shared with the congregation if you so choose.

***All of us can be members in need as well as members who provide care.*** To join this team, watch for meeting updates.

**Spread kindness!** Blessing bags are in the Narthex - take and share with those in need.

**Share your voice!** Send Mar. newsletter items to [connect@gethsemanestl.org](mailto:connect@gethsemanestl.org) by Feb.



**Get ready for a fun and delicious time at our Annual Cookie & Chili Cook-Off Sunday, March 1st after 2nd service! We're looking for:**

- Cookie bakers – any kind of cookie welcome
- Chili chefs – red, white, chicken, vegetarian, mild, or spicy
- Taste testers/judges – no baking or cooking required!

This is a great opportunity to invite family and friends, enjoy amazing food, and connect with your Gethsemane church family. Everyone is welcome, come cook, come taste, or just come enjoy! Sign up in the Narthex, or email, call, or text Natalie Traylor Fontana

The Gethsemane **Women's Luncheon** will be held Monday, Feb 23 at 11:30 am at the 1356 Public House at 1356 Big Bend in Ballwin. RSVP on the website or by contacting Dawn Schuessler.

Sign-ups for **Vacation Bible School** are on Gethsemane's website and in the weekly eNews! We need volunteers and campers! July 6-10, 9 am-5 pm or 9 am-12:30 pm.

### Gethsemane Lutheran Church Calendar February 18 –22, 2026

Today <b>Ash Wednesday</b>	Noon 1:30–2:30 pm 5:30–6:30 pm 7:00 pm	<b>Ash Wednesday Mid-Day Worship</b> Office Staff Meeting (phones unanswered) Choir Rehearsal <b>Ash Wednesday Evening Worship</b>
2/22/26 Sunday <b>First Sunday in Lent</b>	8:30 am 9:45 am 10:00 am 11:00 am	Worship Service: In-Person and on YouTube Fellowship Sunday School and Confirmation Worship Service: In-Person only

### Upcoming Dates to Consider

Date	Time	Event
Mondays	6:00 pm	Handbell Choir Rehearsal
Tuesdays	10:00 am	Bible Study
Weds in Lent	5:30 pm	Lent Midweek Worship, Holden Evening Prayer
Wednesdays	6:30 – 8 pm	Choir Rehearsal
Mon, Feb 23	11:30 am 6:00 pm	Women's Luncheon, 1356 Public House at 1356 Big Bend in Ballwin. RSVP to Dawn Schuessler NorthHampton Neighbors Meeting at GLC
Tues, Feb 24		March Messenger Information due
<b>Sun, Mar 1</b>	<b>Noon</b>	<b>Annual Chili Cook-off and Cookie Bake Off!</b>

**Blood Pressure (BP):** First Sunday of each month in the fellowship hall.  
**Women's Luncheon:** Fourth Monday of every month. \*Except for Holidays.

## **“There Is Still Room” by Lauren Wright Pittman (Cover Art)**

*Digital drawing with collage,*

Inspired by Luke 14:15-24

This image is meant to be viewed from the center, moving outward. The host sets a table,<sup>1</sup> with arms stretched wide in welcome. Surrounding this initial invitation, the first invitees form a ring of rejection around the host—arms crossed, closed off, and distracted by their material wealth and status. One surveys their vast vineyard, another counts their livestock, and the third navigates the economics of joining two households.

Trees, rooted in the central scene of the guestless table,<sup>2</sup> break through the ring of rejection. The next layer includes four figures—with the host’s same open-armed posture—extending welcome to people in neighborhoods, markets, and communal spaces. In the parable, the initial invitation is cast more broadly; everyone is welcome despite any status or condition that might typically isolate them from community. The invited reject, but the rejected are embraced. In the art, the welcoming branches of the tree bear good fruit.<sup>3</sup> The invitation continues to grow and flourish despite all the worldly barriers that would keep us apart and isolated. In the final ring, a crowd is gathered around an even larger table, one that still has open seats.<sup>4</sup>

It can be easy to focus on what feels negative in this text, but in order for the invitation to truly be an invitation, it cannot be coercive. There must always be the option to decline the invitation, and even that is good news. Still, the deeper good news is this: the host never stops inviting, and when all is said and done, there is still room at the table.

--Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

*Look closely at all the people in the outermost ring of the image.*

*What do you notice about the empty seats?*

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<sup>1</sup> The center of the table holds Communion elements, which serve as a nod to the storyteller of the parable and an allusion to Christ’s ever-expanding welcome.

<sup>2</sup> I placed a photograph on the soil as the ground upon which the central table sits. This crumbly dirt texture represents how this open invitation is fertile ground for the good news to take root.

<sup>3</sup> The tree is also a visual reference to the *Tell Me Something Good* logo, which includes abstract branches of a tree.

<sup>4</sup> The final green ring holds the texture of the leaves of a healthy, thriving tree.

## Gethsemane is a Reconciling in Christ Congregation

### Affirmation of Welcome

Christ's welcome knows no boundaries! Therefore, our welcome knows no boundaries, and we invite all people to full participation in the life of the congregation.

We at Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Saint Louis embrace...

People of any race or ethnicity...

People who are male, female, transgender, intersex or any other gender identity...

People of any age...

People wherever they are, or wherever they have been, on their faith journeys...

People who are single, married, widowed, divorced, separated or partnered...

People who are gay, lesbian, straight, bisexual, or any other sexual orientation...

People with a variety of political perspectives...

People who have, or had, addictions, phobias, abortions, or a criminal record...

People who are homeowners, renters, living with parents, or homeless...

People who are fully-abled, disabled, or of differing abilities...

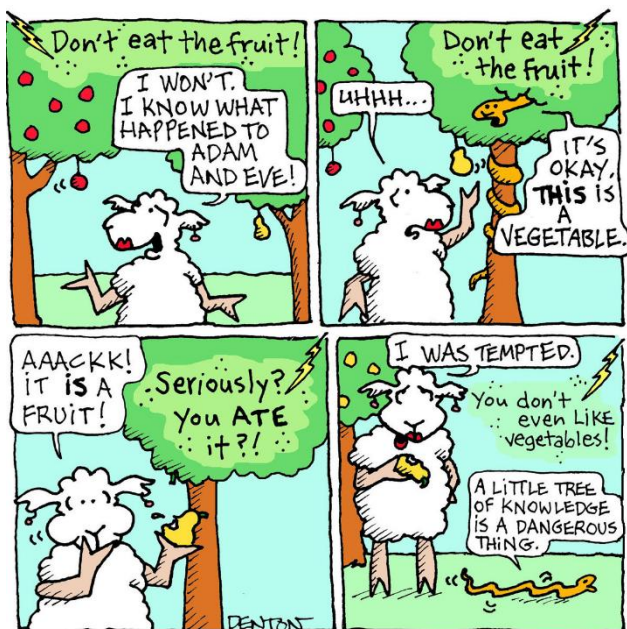
People of differing educational backgrounds...

People of any socio-economic condition...

People not mentioned above, all of whom are created and loved by God!

As we celebrate and seek to preserve the beautiful, amazing diversity of God's creation, we pledge to ourselves and to all others that we will strive to live as a reconciling people in our life together and in our outreach to the world. We are committed to being a radically loving and welcoming community of faith.


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