

St. Paul Lutheran Church
of Stillwater, Minnesota
February 22, 2026
First Sunday in Lent



Your presence at worship is important to God and to us! Whether you are a first-time visitor, frequent participant, neighbor, member, or friend, please take a moment as you prepare for worship to share some information on the "Welcome to Worship" card included with your bulletin. Place it in the offering plate at the time the offering is received.

Today's gospel tells of Jesus' temptation in the desert. His forty-day fast becomes the basis of our Lenten pilgrimage. In the early church Lent was a time of intense preparation for those to be baptized at the Easter Vigil. This catechetical focus on the meaning of faith is at the heart of our Lenten journey to the baptismal waters of Easter.

Hungry for God's mercy, we receive the bread of life to nourish us for the days ahead.

Many of our worship materials are taken from the red Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW). Page numbers are located in the front half of the book, and hymn numbers are located in the back half of the book.

The assembly **speaks** or **sings** the bold responses.

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

Prelude

Confession and Forgiveness

ELW Page 94

Gathering Song

ELW hymn 325

"I Want Jesus to Walk with Me"

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.

Prayer of the Day

Lord God, our strength, the struggle between good and evil rages within and around us, and the devil and all the forces that defy you tempt us with empty promises. Keep us steadfast in your word, and when we fall, raise us again and restore us 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.

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

First Reading

Pew Bible: Old Testament Pages 2-3

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

Human beings were formed with great care, to be in relationship with the creator, creation, and one another. The serpent's promise to the first couple that their eyes would be opened led, ironically, to the discovery only that they were naked.

At the conclusion:

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 32

"You Are My Hiding Place"

The musical score is written in 4/4 time on a single treble clef staff. It consists of four lines of music with lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: "You are my hid - ing place, You al - ways fill my heart with songs of de - liv - er - ance: When - ev - er I am a - fraid, I will trust in You. I will trust in You. Let the weak say, 'I am strong in the strength of the Lord!'" The score ends with a double bar line and a '2' indicating a second ending.

(Continued on the next page.)

- ¹Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven,
and whose sin is put away!
- ²**Happy are they to whom the LORD imputes no guilt,
and in whose spirit there is no guile!**
- ³While I held my tongue, my bones withered away,
because of my groaning all day long.
- ⁴**For your hand was heavy upon me day and night; my
moisture was dried up as in the heat of summer. R**
- ⁵Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and did not conceal my guilt.
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD."
Then you forgave me the guilt of my sin.
- ⁶**Therefore all the faithful will make their prayers to you in time
of trouble; when the great waters overflow, they shall not
reach them.**
- ⁷You are my hiding-place; you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance. **R**
- ⁸"I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go;
I will guide you with my eye.
- ⁹**Do not be like horse or mule, which have no understanding;
who must be fitted with bit and bridle,
or else they will not stay near you."**
- ¹⁰Great are the tribulations of the wicked;
but mercy embraces those who trust in the LORD.
- ¹¹**Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice in the LORD;
shout for joy, all who are true of heart. R**



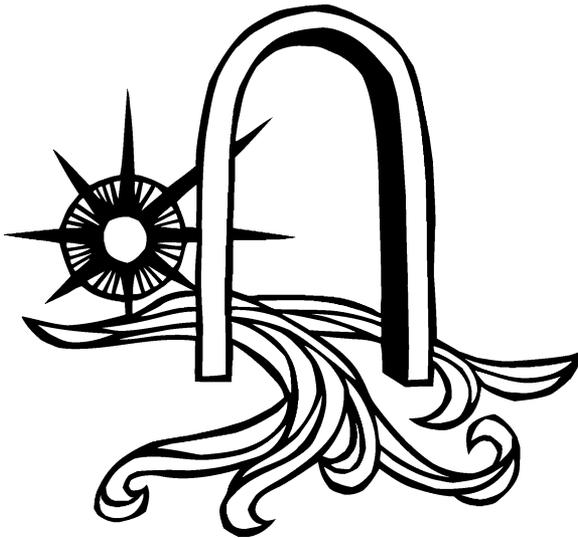
Romans 5:12-19

Through Adam's disobedience, humanity came under bondage to sin and death, from which we cannot free ourselves. In Christ's obedient death, God graciously showers on us the free gift of liberation and life.

At the conclusion:

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.



Children's and Outreach Message

Jenny Brelje

Gospel Acclamation

Re - turn to the Lord, your God, for he is gra - cious and mer - ci - ful,
 slow to an - ger, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love.

Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus experiences anew the temptations that Israel faced in the wilderness. As the Son of God, he endures the testing of the evil one.

The gospel is introduced:

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

oGlory to you, O Lord.

At the conclusion:

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.



Sermon

Pastor Nathan Baker-Trinity

Silence for reflection follows the sermon.

Hymn of the Day

ELW hymn 326

"Bless Now, O God, the Journey"

Creed

ELW page 105

Prayers of Intercession

ELW page 105

After each prayer:

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

At the conclusion:

Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

Peace

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

All are invited to greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace.

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

Offering

Our offering is a collection of money for the church's mission, including the care of those in need, as a sign of the giving of our whole selves in grateful response for all God's gifts. Your offering and "Welcome to Worship" card may be placed in the offering plate. The QR code on the right may be used if you wish to give electronically.

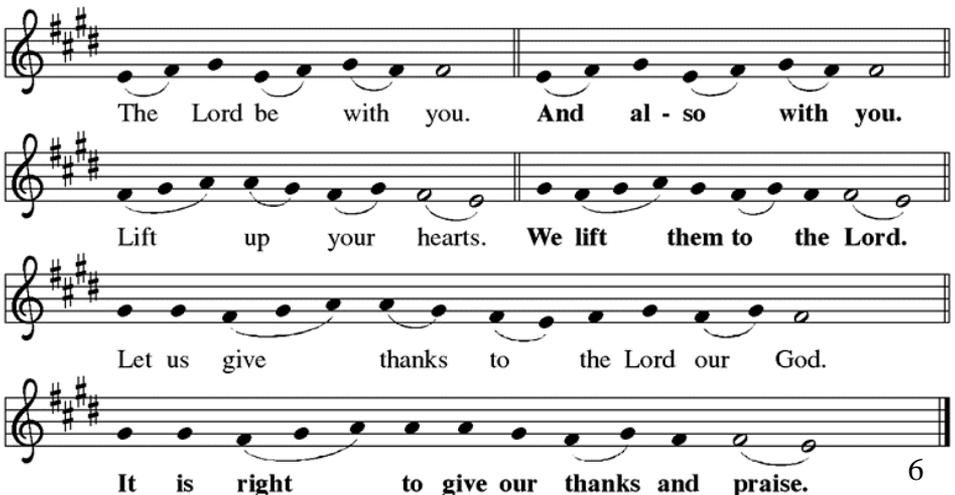


Offering Prayer

God our provider, you have not fed us with bread alone, but with words of grace and life. Bless us and these your gifts, which we receive from your bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Great Thanksgiving



The Lord be with you. And al - so 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.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy . . .

. . . we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



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

Blessed are you, O God of the universe . . .

Praise to you . . .

In the night in which he was betrayed . . .

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks . . .

With this bread and cup

we remember our Lord's passover from death to life

as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

O God of resurrection and new life . . .

. . . Grace our table with your presence.

Come, Holy Spirit.

Reveal yourself to us in the breaking of the bread . . .

. . . Send us forth, burning with justice, peace, and love.

Come, Holy Spirit.

With your holy ones of all times and places . . .
. . . blessed and holy Trinity, now and forever.

Amen.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**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.**

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.

The image shows four staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody is simple and hymn-like, with lyrics written below the notes. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on". The second staff continues: "us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have". The third staff continues: "mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the". The fourth staff concludes: "sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace." The music uses various note values including quarter, eighth, and half notes, with rests and bar lines indicating the structure of the prayer.

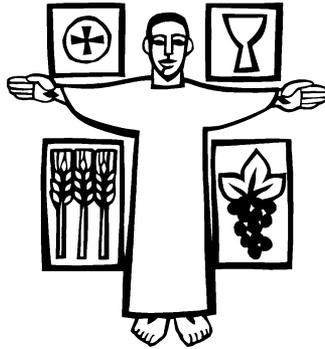
Communion

We celebrate at an open communion table. All who hear our Lord's invitation are welcome to participate. Receive the bread first with an open hand and eat immediately, followed by the juice (white) or wine (red). Gluten-free bread is available at the front end of the center aisle. Please indicate to an usher if you need to receive communion from your pew. Children who have received age-appropriate instruction are welcome to commune. If you prefer instead to receive a blessing, please indicate by crossing your arms over your shoulders.

*When giving the bread and cup, the communion ministers say:
The body of Christ, given for you.
The blood of Christ, shed for you.*

and each person may respond:

Amen.



Communion Song

ELW hymn 793

"Be Thou My Vision"

Prayer After Communion

Compassionate God, you have fed us with the bread of heaven. Sustain us in our Lenten pilgrimage: may our fasting be hunger for justice; our alms, a making of peace; and our prayer, the song of grateful hearts, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

Announcements

Charge and Blessing

Go out into the world in peace;
have courage;
hold on to what is good;
return no one evil for evil;
strengthen the fainthearted;
support the weak, and help the suffering;
honor all people;
love and serve the Lord,
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.
The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.

Amen.

Sending Song

ELW hymn 609

"Chief of Sinners Though I Be"

Dismissal

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

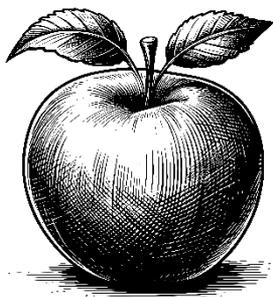
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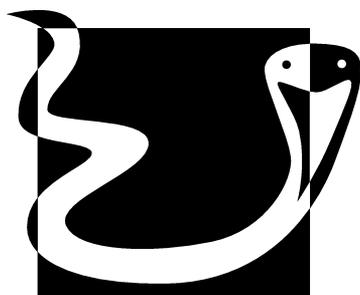
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DAILY PRAYER
When Facing Trials and Temptations



Lord Christ, you came into the world as one of us, and suffered as we do. As we go through the trials of life, help us to realize that you are with us at all times and in all things; that we have no secrets from you; and that your loving grace enfolds us for eternity. In the security of your embrace we pray. Amen.

CONNECTIONS WITH THE LITURGY
Facing Evil Together



Following Jesus, we respond to evil with the power of the word. Each Sunday we acknowledge the readings as “the word of the Lord,” “Word of God, word of life.” For the gospel, we stand, singing “Glory” to Christ, whom we laud in this word. In each baptismal liturgy, we recall this Sunday’s gospel as we join with the candidates and sponsors for baptism to renounce the devil, all the forces that defy God, and all the powers of this world that rebel against God. As God’s Spirit enters us, we reject the spirit of evil that is both within and outside ourselves.

LIFE ON EARTH
Life is Stronger than Death



In Romans 5 Paul wrote that death came into the world through sin. Early Christian theologians understood this to mean that there was no death in God's original creation. For example, all animals were vegetarian before the Fall. Evolutionary science shows, on the other hand, that God created an earth in which birth and death, growth and decay, nurture and violence always coexisted. Our prayer is that God will continue to bring life from death, and Christians see this supremely in the cross and resurrection of Christ. So although the idea of an original paradise has been helpful in Christian teaching, so can be a contemporary understanding of God's perpetual use of death for the purposes of life.

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, martyr, died 156

Monday, February 23, 2026

Polycarp was bishop of Smyrna (in present-day western Turkey) and a link between the apostolic age and the church at the end of the second century. He is said to have been known by John, the author of Revelation. In turn he was known by Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon in France, and Ignatius of Antioch. At the age of eighty-six he was martyred for his faith. When urged to save his life and renounce his faith, Polycarp replied, "Eighty-six years I have served him, and he never did me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my king who saved me?" The magistrate who made the offer was reluctant to kill a gentle old man, but he had no choice. Polycarp was burned at the stake, his death a testimony to the cost of renouncing temptation.

Elizabeth Fedde, deaconess, died 1921

Wednesday, February 25, 2026

Fedde was born in Norway and trained as a deaconess. In 1882, at the age of thirty-two, she was asked to come to New York to minister to the poor and to Norwegian seafarers. Her influence was wide-ranging, and she established the Deaconess House in Brooklyn and the Deaconess House and Hospital (later Fairview Deaconess Hospital) of the Lutheran Free Church in Minneapolis. She returned home to Norway in 1895 and died there.

GOSPEL MESSAGE

Forty Days of Humility

The devil gives Jesus three opportunities to assert himself as powerful and exceptional: to turn rocks into bread, to be saved by the angels, and to rule over all the earth. Three times Jesus rebuffs the devil, turning his attention to God and refusing to take the bait.

Anthony the Great, a desert father whose life mirrored the experience of Jesus in this text, once said, “I saw the snares that the enemy spreads out over the world and I said groaning, ‘What can get through from such snares?’ Then I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Humility’” (Benedicta Ward, trans., *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Cistercian, 1975). This is exactly how Jesus responds to the temptations offered by the devil: turning his attention back to God in humility, refusing the temptation to prove himself through miracles and acts of power.

During Lent, we are invited to engage in practices like fasting, almsgiving, and prayer to discipline our minds and bodies so we can return our full attention to the abiding love of God in Jesus. There will be a temptation to engage these practices as ways of puffing ourselves up, performing, or proving our worth. But Jesus calls us back to a Lent rooted in humility, engaging practices not for the sake of proving ourselves, but for deepening our trust in God.

Where might we be experiencing that temptation to puff ourselves up, perform, or prove our greatness? What practices might support a posture of humility, reminding us that God is the author of all good things, and that we are loved and sustained by a God who humbly took on flesh for the sake of the world? May these forty days teach us to embrace humility and to trust that God walks with us, making all things new.