

A watercolor illustration of a mountain range in shades of gray, with the text overlaid in the upper portion.

Inspired Conversations
Lent 2026

Wednesday, February 18, 2026
Ash Wednesday



BETHLEHEM
LUTHERAN CHURCH

48 Perrin Street, Fairport, NY ~ (585) 223-0634 ~ www.blcfairport.org

PRELUDE

A Prelude for Lent

Robert J. Powell

On Ash Wednesday we begin Lent, the honest season where we name the reality of our world and the ways in which we continually fall short of God's glory. 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 calling, we seek to more intentionally bear the fruits of mercy and justice in the world.

GATHERING

GATHERING HYMN

O Lord, throughout These Forty Days

ELW 319

GREETING

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

And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. Almighty and ever-living God, create in us new and honest hearts, so that, truly repenting of our sins, we may receive from you, the God of all mercy, full pardon and forgiveness through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

HEARING GOD'S WORD

READING: Psalm 51:1-17

Psalm 51:1-17 is a penitential psalm that the Hebrew Bible puts in the mouth of King David when he repented of adultery and murder. This magnificent prayer for forgiveness is filled with body imagery and is appropriate for a day in which ashes are placed on our foreheads. The psalm is spoken at Noon and chanted at 7pm.



- 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 ev- | er 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 pur- | er 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 spir- | it within me.**
- ¹¹ Cast me not away | from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spir- | it from me.
- ¹² **Restore to me the joy of | your salvation
and sustain me with your boun- | tiful Spirit.**
- ¹³ Let me teach your ways | to offenders,
and sinners shall be re- | stored to you.
- ¹⁴ **Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of | my salvation,
and my tongue shall sing | of your righteousness.**
- ¹⁵ O Lord, o- | pen my lips,
and my mouth shall pro- | claim 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.

READING: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Because of the coming Day of the Lord, the prophet Joel calls the people to a community lament. The repentant community reminds God of his gracious character and asks God to spare the people, lest the nations doubt God's power to save.

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?' "

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, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love.

The holy gospel according to Matthew.
Glory to you, O Lord.

GOSPEL: 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:] 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.

REFLECTION

*Take a moment to reflect on God's word
before we begin to sing the hymn of the day.*

HYMN OF THE DAY		
Noon service	Lord Jesus, Think on Me	ELW 599
Evening Service	All Things of Dust to Dust Return	ACS 920

INVITATION TO LENT

CONFESSION OF SIN

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires are known, and from whom no secrets are hid:

cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Most merciful God,

we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven.

Silence for reflection

For seeking worldly delights that deceive us and dishonor you: Gracious God, **have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.**

For desiring self-reliance instead of hungering for your word: Gracious God,
have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For failing to recognize your coming reign, and for hindering the work of the Spirit: Gracious God,
have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For drawing from the well of self-serving ambition, and for disdainingly the living water Christ offers: Gracious God,
have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For disregarding voices from the margin, and for distrusting signs of your healing and hope in the world: Gracious God,
have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For dwelling in tombs of self-pity and discontent, and for disregarding Christ's call to come forth to life: Gracious God,
have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

Restore us, O God, and let your anger depart from us.
Hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.

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.

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life.

Amen.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Reconciled by God's mercy and sustained by God's presence, let us pray for the world and its needs.

A brief silence.

Guide your church, O God. Accompany all Christians in this season of repentance, and renew our faith in the riches of grace you give to us in baptism. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Heal this earth, O God. Satisfy the needs of every parched place, every diverse ecosystem, every suffering creature. Though all return to dust, grant beauty and purpose to each living thing. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Restore the nations, O God. Let your healing spring up quickly across the world. Give all in authority the will to loose the bonds of injustice and let any who are oppressed go free. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Deliver your people, O God. Comfort any whose hearts are rent by grief, uphold any who are sick, bring food to those who hunger, and give housing to all without shelter, especially those we name before you now.

Silence

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Bless this assembly, O God. Reconcile us to one another and to you. Strengthen our resolve to fast from evil, open our hands in sharing, and quicken our prayer. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Receive our prayers, O God, through Jesus Christ, our strength and salvation.
Amen.

SHARING GOD’S MEAL

THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

Share the peace in a way that cares for friend and neighbor.

If you worship virtually, share the peace through the comments section or text.

OFFERING

Information about supporting Bethlehem's ministry with your offerings is available in the Welcome insert in your pew rack or by visiting blcfairport.org/support-our-ministry.

OFFERING OF MUSIC

Noon Service:

There Is a Balm in Gilead

Gilbert M. Martin
tune, African American spiritual

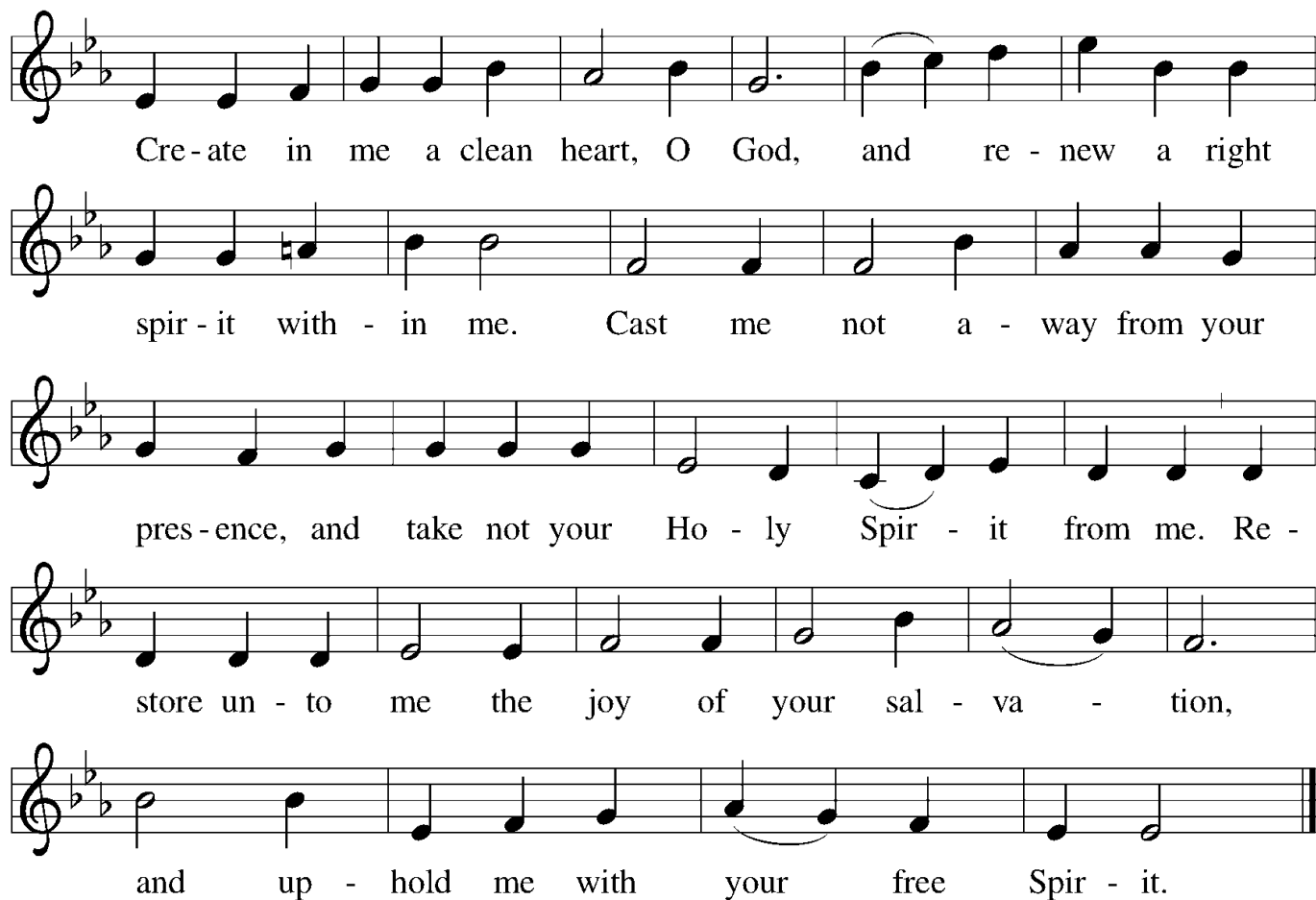
Evening Service:

O God, You Search Me

text, Psalm 139 / ad. Bernadette Farrell
music, B. Farrell

The Chancel Choir

OFFERTORY



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 un - to me the joy of your sal - va - tion,
and up - hold me with your free Spir - it.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray. 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 our bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

We pray as Jesus taught us:

**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

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

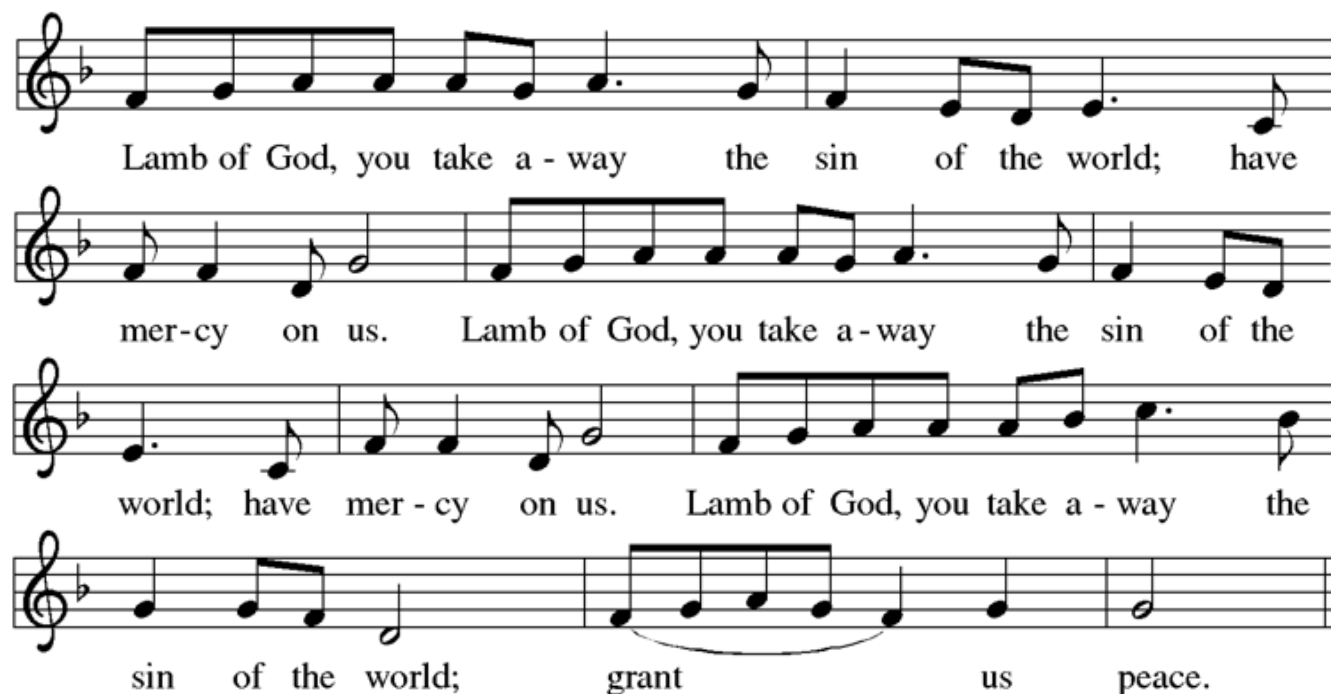
Thanks be to God!

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

Our communion bread is gluten-free, unless noted by the pastor. Grape juice is available; indicate your need to the communion assistant. If you worship through the Livestream and wish to receive communion, please reach out to one of the pastors.

THE COMMUNION

Lamb of God



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.

COMMUNION HYMN AND MUSIC

Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling

O Welt, ich muss dich lassen

(O Bread of Life from Heaven)

ELW 608

G. Winston Cassler
tune, Heinrich Isaac

TABLE BLESSING

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Let us pray. Merciful God, accompany our journey through these forty days.

Renew us in the gift of baptism, that we may provide for those who are poor, pray for those in need, fast from self-indulgence, and above all that we may find our treasure in the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

LEAVING TO SERVE

BENEDICTION

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 HYMN	Restore in Us, O God	ELW 328
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DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

*During the season of Lent we omit the Postlude
and provide space for reflection following worship.*

BLC Pastors

The Rev. Abigail Zang Hoffman and The Rev. Amy Walter-Peterson, co-Pastors

BLC Musicians

Raelynn Clare, Music Director and Organist

Chrisanne Gates, Chancel Choir Director

Rich Towsley, Director of The Folk Group and BLC Dulcimers

Additional musical leadership provided by:

Kathy Moragne, cantor – noon service

James Berner, cantor – evening service

We welcome you to this solemn service of worship that begins the season of Lent. Each Wednesday throughout the season of Lent, a simple one-pot meal will be served each Wednesday from 6-6:45 pm in the fellowship hall, followed by worship at 7 pm. If you are visiting, please introduce yourself to one of the pastors – they would love to greet you personally!

Thank you to all those who participated in worship! Want to learn more about what roles are needed in worship or sign-up for a pre-scheduled role? Talk with Alli O'Malley or one of the pastors following worship or contact Alli directly at volunteersupport@blcfairport.org.

Communicate with us: Share more about who you are, request further information, or leave a prayer request or comment through our website - <https://blcfairport.org/share-in-worship/> - scroll down the page to request or share information.

What's happening at BLC this week? Visit the Calendar of Events at www.blcfairport.org. Zoom links for virtual meetings are also found there. If you would like to schedule a meeting or event, please email the church office at office@blcfairport.org or visit <https://blcfairport.org/blc-facility-request/>

Church office hours: Our co-Pastors are available Sunday-Thursday and on-call for emergencies. Contact them directly to schedule an appointment either by calling (585) 223-0634 or emailing pastor.hoffman@blcfairport.org or pastor.amy@blcfairport.org.

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Holy Communion - Setting Three, Music: Richard W. Hillert, © 1978, 2006 Richard W. Hillert
"There Is a Balm in Gilead", Tune: African American spiritual, Music: Gilbert M. Martin, © 1993 The Sacred Music Press
"O God, You Search Me", Text and Music: Bernadette Farrell, © 1992, Bernadette Farrell (adm. Oregon Catholic Press)
"Create in Me a Clean Heart", Music: J. A. Freylinghausen
"O Welt, ich muss dich lassen" – O Bread of Life from Heaven, Music: G. Winston Cassler, © 1975, Augsburg Publishing House

Inspired conversations can happen anytime, anywhere, with anyone. Use these questions and prompts in the week ahead with family, friends, or even, strangers. Prepare to be surprised!

*What do you practice regularly?
How has it made a difference?*

What is something that makes you smile?

When you are outside, what is something that reminds you of God?

Who are you grateful for and why?

Lent 2026

Inspired Conversations –

Learn more about our

Lenten theme and

opportunities to take part.

<https://blcfairport.org/2026-lent/>



Inspired Conversations Lent 2026

***Extend your Lenten practice with a daily devotion
delivered to your inbox each morning.
Sign up at <https://blcfairport.org/lenten-devotions/>
or pick up a printed copy in the Narthex
beginning Sunday, February 15th.***

***Anyone who received the Lenten devotional by email last year will
automatically receive this year's; you do not need to sign up again.***

Meet-Ups – Creating Community Connections

***Inspired conversations happen when we have the opportunity to gather
and talk. Watch for details in the weekly Star newsletter.***

***Sunday, February 22 – Dessert followed by Compline at Christ Church –
Come for one or both!***

Sunday March 1 – Sunday Table and games!

Saturday, March 7 – Gonadagan Interpretive Center in Victor

***Week of March 15 – Create your own meet-up – let us know and we'll
communicate your plans!***

Sunday, March 22 – Splash Party at Perinton Rec (rescheduled!)

Sunday, March 29 – Winery visit hosted by Pastor Amy and Hans

Smearred in Sin, Washed in Love

With ash and soot we begin this Lenten season with confession; we begin with Psalm 51; we begin on our knees. Today this ancient prayer placed on our lips becomes new again: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions." We speak our truths from the shadow of our sin, the very shadow that marks our mortality. Like ash traced upon our foreheads, we are marked with the reality of our frailties and failings. It is stark reminder that sin and death are smeared all over us. From this inevitable reality, we cry out for mercy! For as bold as it is to name our sin and sinful ways that lead to death, it is all the more audacious to summon our God! To summon the one who actually has the power to do something about sin and the ways of death! On this day of penitence, through the work and witness of Christ Jesus, we brashly summon God to come, to hear our prayer, and to listen to our confession.

So, with our truths laid bare, we confess our unfaithfulness to God, our lackluster love for our neighbors, our neglect of suffering and injustice in the world. In the same breath, we ask God to wash us, to purge us, and to create in us clean hearts. The smears of sin are washed clean through the love of Christ. And yet, we will leave worship this day still carrying the cross-shaped trace of sin and death upon us. It is a reminder that, even amid our confession, we continue this Lenten season to listen for the perpetual call to return to the Lord our God who is gracious and merciful, abounding in steadfast love (Joel 2:13).