



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

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Dear People of Trinity,

This month marks the Season after Epiphany, Ash Wednesday, and the beginning of our Lenten journey. In response to the continued high number of covid cases in our area, we will be worshipping together online or using the at-home worship materials through February. For those wanting to join in online worship, the link for worship and the link for a bulletin can be found each Sunday on the homepage of Trinity's website (trinityarendtsville.org). Folks can join online worship from any type of phone as well, including a landline, by using the instructions at the bottom of this letter.

Ash Wednesday, this year on February 17th, marks a significant moment in the church year. This is a time when we overtly say, aloud to ourselves and to one another, that we have sinned "by our fault, by our own fault, by our own most grievous fault."¹ We do this not as a single act, but as a model for our whole lives.

Hearing this confession, Christ calls us in Lent toward a "discipline that contends against evil and resists whatever leads us away from love of God and neighbor," but Lent is not the fullness of such work.² Ash Wednesday and Lent is meant to be an examen of the elementary, foundational, daily elements in our lives of faith instead of embarking on a journey of the temporary and fleeting. In other words, Ash Wednesday and Lent examines our lives as they are, with no filter, no excuse, and no hiding.

Part of this seasonal examen has traditionally been anchored with the Imposition of Ashes. This year, we will not be able to mark ourselves with the ground ashes of burned palms from Palm Sunday as is our tradition. Instead, I ask that each of you, in preparation for this time, collect soil from the place you live, or a place that is meaningful to you. Do this well in advance, and leave the soil out to dry in your home. Once dry, work the soil into a fine matter. On Ash Wednesday, we will combine this fine soil with a small bit of oil (olive, vegetable, or even canola oil work fine) and use this as we worship together online that evening at 7pm (using the same link as we do for Sunday mornings), or using the at-home worship materials provided.

It may seem strange to use soil on Ash Wednesday, but I invite you to remember our practice at the grave. For each committal at the graveside, we announce "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," as we make the sign of the cross using soil over the coffin or urn.³ At the grave, we know that earth, ashes, and dust have been used to announce our mortality over the course of our lives. Throughout our lives, and then in our death, we find that the God of resurrection brings us from death to life each time we encounter the grave, the earth, ashes, and dust. Though new to us, soil, an element of our lives, seems appropriate to mark the season of Lent.

¹ "Confession and Forgiveness" in "Ash Wednesday" in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 252.

² "Invitation to Lent" in "Ash Wednesday" in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Leaders Desk Edition* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 617.

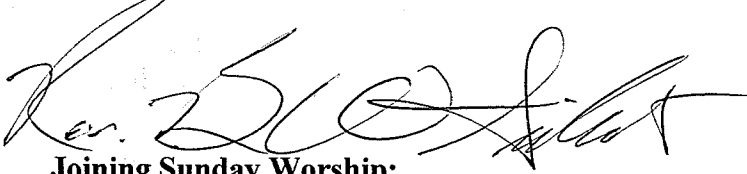
³ "Committal" in "Funeral" in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 284.

Our Lenten journey will also include opportunity to gather online and reflect on the impact and meaning of the cross of Christ. A link for these gatherings, each Wednesday in Lent at 7pm, will be placed on our church webpage as well.

As we take the time this year to reexamine, refocus, and recommit to our lives of faith, I pray that God is with us, pointing us to the truth of our sin, highlighting the presence of God's grace, and speaking the Word that calls us to manna and mercy for all. In this season, and in all things, may God raise us from death into new life.

Peace,

Pastor Ben Siebert

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rev. Ben Siebert". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B".

Joining Sunday Worship:

To join at 9am for Sunday Morning Worship, you can use any computer, tablet, or smartphone with the link provided on our homepage at trinityarendtsville.org.

OR

Use the following steps for any type of phone (landline included):

1. Dial: 1 301 715 8592
2. When asked, enter the Meeting ID: 868 3849 4181
3. If asked, enter the passcode: 271040
4. To be able to speak, press *6.
5. To stop speaking, press *6 again.