



Emmanuel Presbyterian Church

Bedford, Texas

February 14, 2024

7:00pm

Celebration of Worship

Ash Wednesday

7:00pm

February 14, 2024

Greeting

Centering Words

We forget sometimes that ashes come from fire. That this soft black powder was once a firm green frond, bright and vibrant before it became dry and brittle, stiff and fibrous before a flame transformed it into dust. Every living thing submits to change. Let's not fear it. From seed to plant, palm to ash, this bit of the earth smudged on our foreheads today was carried lovingly in the hands of the Creator. What fires will we step into this Lent? What new forms will our souls take when we encounter the holy blaze of the Living God? We are—it is true—ash to ash and dust to dust, but whether in youth or in old age, in life or in death, let us be assured, we are held, and we are God's.

Prelude

Near the Cross

Becky Waters

*Call to Worship

There is a wisdom in ash,
that we need so much,
but seldom hear.

**It's the wisdom of grief,
that reminds us of our mortality,
and that Life is more than this dust can contain.**

It's the wisdom of confession,
that brings our shadows out of hiding,
and opens the windows to Light.

**It's the wisdom of repentance,
that stops us in our tracks,
and charts the way to Love.**

There's a wisdom in ash,
and we welcome it, Jesus,
thankful for the renewing gifts it brings.
Let us worship God.

Anthem

Canticle of Hope
(Emmanuel Chancel Choir)

Gary Hallquist

Invitation to a Holy Lent

Beloved people of God: every year at the time of the Christian Passover we celebrate our redemption through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Lent is a time to prepare for this celebration and to renew our life in the paschal mystery. We begin this holy season by acknowledging our need for repentance, and for the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We begin our journey to Easter with the sign of ashes. This ancient sign speaks of the frailty and uncertainty of human life, and marks the penitence of this community.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of Christ, to observe a holy Lent by self-examination and penitence, by prayer and fasting, by works of love, and by meditating on God's word. Now let us come before God, our Creator and Redeemer, and confess our sin.

Prayer of Confession

O God of life, we confess the ways we turn away from the fullness of life that you offer.

(silent prayer)

God of love, we confess the hatred we hold in our hearts.

(silent prayer)

God of compassion, we confess our indifference.

(silent prayer)

God of justice, we confess that our lives are linked to oppressive systems.

(silent prayer)

God of peace, we confess the violent movements of our hearts, and the violent realities of our world.

(silent prayer)

Holy God, we confess our sins to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(silent prayer) **Amen.**

Sung Response (GTG) No. 577 Lord, Have Mercy KYRIE ELEISON (Reindorf)

Assurance of God's Forgiveness

The Spirit guides us as we navigate the known and the unknown of this world. Our defenses crumble in the presence of God's holiness.

Our hearts are softened in the presence of Christ's mercy.

Trust the good news of the gospel; nothing in life or death, nor any power, can take from you the love of God.

In Jesus Christ we are forgiven. Thanks be to God!

Prayerful Scripture Reading

(GTG) No. 469 Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying

CHILDREN PRAYING

*All sing: Lord, listen to your children praying.
Lord, send your Spirit in this place.
Lord, listen to your children praying.
Send us love; send us power; send us grace.*

Isaiah 58:1-2a

- ¹ 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.
- ² 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.

*All sing: Lord, listen to your children praying.
Lord, send your Spirit in this place.
Lord, listen to your children praying.
Send us love; send us power; send us grace.*

Isaiah 58:2b-4

- They ask of me righteous judgments,
they delight to draw near to God.
- ³ “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.
- ⁴ 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.

*All sing: Lord, listen to your children praying.
Lord, send your Spirit in this place.
Lord, listen to your children praying.
Send us love; send us power; send us grace.*

Isaiah 58:5-6

⁵ 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?

⁶ 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?

*All sing: Lord, listen to your children praying.
Lord, send your Spirit in this place.
Lord, listen to your children praying.
Send us love; send us power; send us grace.*

Isaiah 58:7-9a

⁷ 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?
⁸ 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.
⁹ Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

*All sing: Lord, listen to your children praying.
Lord, send your Spirit in this place.
Lord, listen to your children praying.
Send us love; send us power; send us grace.*

Isaiah 58:9b-12

If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,

- ¹⁰ 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.
- ¹¹ 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.
- ¹² 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.

*All sing: Lord, listen to your children praying.
Lord, send your Spirit in this place.
Lord, listen to your children praying.
Send us love; send us power; send us grace.*

Meditation

Rev. Dr. Whitney Wilkinson Arreche

The Imposition of Ashes

(All who wish to receive the imposition of ashes may come forward down the center aisle and return by the side aisles. If you would like the pastor to come to you, she will gladly do so.)

Blessing the Dust *Jan Richardson*

All those days you felt like dust, like dirt, as if all you had to do
was turn your face toward the wind
and be scattered to the four corners
or swept away by the smallest breath
as insubstantial—

Did you not know what the Holy One can do with dust?

This is the day we freely say we are scorched.

**This is the hour we are marked by what has made it
through the burning.**

**This is the moment we ask for the blessing
that lives within
the ancient ashes, that makes its home**

inside the soil of this sacred earth.
So let us be marked not for sorrow.
And let us be marked not for shame.
Let us be marked not for false humility
or for thinking we are less than we are
but for claiming what God can do
within the dust, within the dirt, within the stuff
of which the world is made,
and the stars that blaze in our bones,
and the galaxies that spiral
inside the smudge
we bear.

*Benediction

*Postlude

Prelude in G minor, BWV 558

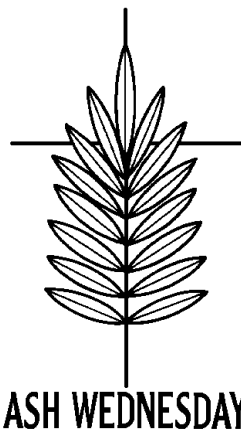
J.S.Bach

*please stand, if able

(GTG) Glory to God Hymnal

Words in **bold print** are said in unison by the congregation.

Liturgy by: Cameron Bellm, Whitney Wilkinson Arreche, John van de Laar.



Worship Leaders

Rev. Dr. Whitney Wilkinson Arreche, Pastor

Katie Phillips, Liturgist

Brittney Axton, Director of Music

Dr. Tak Yan Yeung, Organist

Emmanuel Chancel Choir

