



*Emmanuel Presbyterian Church*

2701 Harwood Rd.

Bedford, Texas

February 18, 2026

7:00pm

# Celebration of Worship

Ash Wednesday

7:00pm

February 18, 2026

Greeting

## Centering Words

*For centuries, those who were hungry for God ventured into wilderness places – geographical and spiritual deserts – to quiet the noise of the world and draw near to God. Long before our culture's obsession with productivity, there were women and men who withdrew from the noise of empire and ego to listen deeply to God. They were called the Desert Mothers and Fathers—early Christian mystics who chose obscurity over acclaim, simplicity over striving, and presence over performance. And that's exactly why we need their wisdom now. Their rhythms were slow. Their prayers were embodied. Their spirituality was rooted not in productivity, but in presence. They remind us: You are not what you produce. The body is sacred ground. Silence is not empty—it is full of God. Rest is resistance, and it is holy. Their lives challenge us to practice The Way of Jesus not as a theology only, but as a rhythm – a lived experience in the nervous system, the breath, the bone. Their desert wasn't barren; it was alive with sacred encounter. It still is.*

Prelude Intermezzo from Opus 118

Johannes Brahms

## \*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 Come to Me, O Weary Traveler  
(Emmanuel Chancel Choir)

arr. Bob Moore

Invitation to a Wild Lent

“In the morning, while it was still very dark, Jesus got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions searched for him. When they found him, they said to him, ‘Everyone is searching for you.’” (Mark 1:35-37)

“But now more than ever the word about Jesus spread abroad; many crowds were gathering to hear him and to be cured of their diseases. Meanwhile, he would slip away to deserted places and pray.” (Luke 5:15-16)

“Now during those days, Jesus went out to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles.” (Luke 6:12-13)

“Jesus’ disciples came and took the body [of John the Baptist] and buried him; then they went and told Jesus. Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself.” (Matthew 14:12-13)

“The apostles gathered around Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, ‘Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.’ For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.” (Mark 6:30-32)

*Jesus invites us with him into the wild places: into the deserts of uncertainty, of reliance upon God, and of our own hearts. We travel with him into a wild Lent, fearing no unknown or threat in the dark, for we travel together to pray, and to dwell. We meet God and our truest selves in the wild.*

Prayer of Repentance *adapted from Cole Arthur Riley*

**God of the Ashes, Tonight, let us hold the tension of the story of the making—born of the dirt, beautifully connected to the earth we walk on. And yet, possessing the knowledge of our own mortality—that we ultimately return to the good earth. As we begin Lent, help us to become honest about the ways our societies and selfhoods are marred by injustice, cruelty, neglect, and greed. Help us to see our own role in the degeneration of the world; that as we push back evil around us, we might also admit those secret evils that dwell in us. As we name how we’ve been complicit in the ashes of this world, help us to bear them in solidarity and hope. Amen.**

Scripture and Song

Matthew 4:1-4

Hymn 783, verse 1 When We are Tested (tune Slane – same as Be Thou My Vision)

*When we are tested and wrestle alone,  
Famished for bread when the world offers stone,  
Nourish us, God, by Your word and Your way,  
Food that sustains us by night and by day.*

Matthew 4:5-7

Hymn 783, verse 2 When We are Tested

*When in the desert we cry for relief,  
Pleading for paths marked by certain belief,  
Lift us to love You beyond sign and test,  
Trusting Your presence, our only true rest.*

Scripture Matthew 4:8-11

Hymn 783, verses 3 and 4 When We are Tested

*When we are tempted to barter our souls,  
Trading the truth for the pow'r to control,  
Teach us to worship and praise only You,  
Seeking Your will in the work that we do.*

*When we have struggled and searched through the night,  
Sorting and sifting the wrong from the right,  
Savior, surround us with circles of care,  
Angels of healing, of hope, and of prayer.*

Meditation Into the Wild

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 Softly and Tenderly

Will Thompson, composer; arr. Joel Raney

\*please stand, if able

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

Liturgy by: Jennifer Axcell, Cole Arthur Riley, Walter Brueggemann, John van de Laar, and Jan Richardson.

Worship Leaders: Brittney Axton, Director of Music

Ashley Blaha, Guest Organist

Emmanuel Chancel Choir

Sheryl Taylor, Liturgist

Rev. Dr. Whitney Wilkinson Arreche, Pastor

*You are welcome to all of our Lenten services! See [www.emmanuelpc.org](http://www.emmanuelpc.org) for more information.*