



A Service of Worship for  
Ash Wednesday  
18 February 2026

I am not saying that we should love death, but rather that we should love life so generously, without picking and choosing, that we automatically include it (life's other half) in our love.

This is what actually happens in the great expansiveness of love, which cannot be stopped or constricted. It is only because we exclude it that death becomes more and more foreign to us and, ultimately, our enemy. It is conceivable that death is infinitely closer to us than life itself.... What do we know of it?

—Rainer Maria Rilke



Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you.  
**And also with you.**

Ring in the hour  
Silence is kept

\*Prelude

*“From Jewish Life No. 1: Prayer”*

Ernest Bloch  
(1880-1959)

*BEING CALLED TO WORSHIP*

Introit

“Teach Me, O Lord”

Thomas Attwood  
(1765-1838)

*Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes,  
And I shall keep it unto the end.*

Gathering Words

*SINGING A HYMN TOGETHER*

+Hymn #353

Das neugeborne Kindelein

“Great God, Your Love Has Called Us Here” (Verses 1-3)

**Great God, Your love has called us here  
As we, by love, for love were made.  
Your living likeness still we bear,  
Though marred, dishonored, disobeyed.  
We come, with all our heart and mind  
Your call to hear, Your love to find.**

*\*Usbers will seat latecomers.*

*+Please stand in body or spirit.*

**We come with self-inflicted pains  
Of broken trust and chosen wrong.  
Half-free, half-bound by inner chains,  
By social forces swept along,  
By powers and systems close confined  
Yet seeking hope for humankind.**

**Great God, in Christ You call our name  
And then receive us as Your own  
Not through some merit, right, or claim  
But by Your gracious love alone.  
We strain to glimpse Your mercy seat  
And find You kneeling at our feet.**

*LISTENING TO SACRED STORIES*

Scripture

Psalm 19:12-14  
Luke 4:1-13

Music

Walter L. Pelz  
(b. 1926)

“Show Me Thy Ways”  
*Show me thy ways O Lord, teach me thy paths;  
Lead me in in thy truth and teach me:  
For thou art the God of my salvation  
And on thee do I wait all the day.*

*REMEMBERING OUR MORTALITY*

Poem

“When Death Comes”

Mary Oliver  
(1935-2019)

Scripture

Genesis 3:19

Blessing the Ashes

Imposing the Ashes

*REMEMBERING OUR FALLIBILITY*

Scripture

Psalm 139:1-10

Call to Confession

Silent Confession

Unison Confession

**God, with profound gratitude,  
I remember that you created humankind from dirt,  
by breathing on the clay and giving it life.  
We are all made of the earth;  
we all return to it;  
we are all created of soil and spirit.  
May these forty days be marked by thankful remembrance  
of this connection with the earth and to others,  
with a renewed passion to care for your creation and to make peace,  
and a humble awareness of our common destiny. Amen.**

*BEING CALLED TO A SEASON OF AWARENESS*

Music

Richard Farrant  
(d. 1580)

“Call to Remembrance”  
*Call to remembrance, O Lord,  
Thy tender mercy and thy loving kindness  
Which hath been ever of old.  
Oh, remember not the sins and offenses of my youth,  
But according to thy mercy  
Think thou on me, O Lord, for thy goodness.*

Scripture

Isaiah 58:6-12

“Lord Make Us Servants of Your Peace” (Verses 1-4)

**Lord, make us servants of Your peace;  
Where there is hate, may we sow love;  
Where there is hurt, may we forgive;  
Where there is strife, may we make one.**

**Where all is doubt, may we sow faith;  
Where all is gloom, may we sow hope;  
Where all is night, may we sow light;  
Where all is tears, may we sow joy.**

**Jesus, our Lord, may we not seek  
To be consoled, but to console,  
Nor look to understanding hearts,  
But look for hearts to understand.**

**May we not look for love’s return,  
But seek to love unselfishly,  
For in our giving we receive,  
And in forgiving are forgiv’n.**

Poem

“A Blessing for Ash Wednesday”

Kate Bowler  
(b. 1980)

Music

“Song of the Birds”

Pablo Casals  
(1876-1973)

Departing Words

## **This Evening's Service**

Ash Wednesday occurs on the Wednesday of the seventh week before Easter and serves as the first day of the Christian season of Lent. The day derives its name from the ceremonial imposition of ashes on the foreheads of worshippers, a rite that goes back to at least the tenth century. The use of ashes to symbolize penitence and mortality has references in both Hebrew and Christian scripture and is common to many other religious traditions.

The worship leader is **Laura Mayo**.

The readers are **Karen Kline, Ben Shaw, Raymond Stubblefield, and Lori Wagner**.

The cellist is **Susan Wegner**.

The Unison Confession is by Diana Butler Bass.

## **Lent, Holy Week, and Easter at Covenant**

Tuesdays during Lent - Spring Organ Recital Series, weekly at 12:15pm.

Service opportunities: Houston Food Bank on March 14; All-Church Workday on March 28.

Sunday, March 29 - Palm Sunday Worship at 11am.

Friday, April 3 - Good Friday Tenebrae Worship at 7:30pm.

Sunday, April 5 - Easter Sunday Sunrise Labyrinth Walk at 7am; worship at 11am.

## **Information**

**Childcare** is provided during this evening's service on Sunday mornings beginning at 9:30 a.m. Children aged 2 and under are invited to the nursery. Children aged 3 to 9 are invited to the children's area.

**All-Gender Restrooms** are located in the Huff Fellowship Hall building.

**Covenant Recycles:** If you do not wish to keep your order of worship, please recycle it by placing it on the stand located in the narthex.

**Office Hours:** The Church Office is open Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 8am-3pm, and Tuesday from 1pm-5pm.

**Helpful Links:** Scan here for digital Visitor and Celebration & Concern Cards; information about Lent, Holy Week, and Easter offerings; and other useful information.



*Covenant Church affirms the sanctity, dignity, and equality  
of human beings and the value of all life in the universe.  
We welcome persons of all racial and ethnic heritages, all sexual orientations,  
all gender identities, and all faith perspectives to our Christian community.  
We stand for each individual's right to worship God and to respond  
to God's call to ministry with a personal understanding  
of God's all-encompassing love.  
We value a holistic approach to faith and seek to worship in ways that are  
intellectually credible, emotionally stimulating, spiritually engaging  
and contemporarily relevant.  
We value music and art and ritual to express what we cannot ever fully say.  
We value participation so that we might hear many approaches  
to our shared faith.*

**Covenant Church, an ecumenical, liberal, Baptist congregation**

Members of Covenant, Ministers

Fran Avera, Minister of Music, Emerita

Trena' Jamison, Children and Youth Coordinator

Heather Laureles, Director of Administration & Communications

David Lee, Director of Music

Laura Mayo, Senior Minister

Jason Steiner, Organist and Associate Director of Music

Raymond Stubblefield, Minister of Congregational Life

Brendon Young, Moores School of Music Artist in Residence

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*Covenant Church recognizes the laws of the State of Texas and the rights of its citizens. Consistent with this acknowledgment and with respect for the values of our Church, we also acknowledge that our congregants and visitors seek a safe and comfortable space for worship and celebration. In that spirit, we request that all firearms be left in a secure place outside of the Church. We thank God for providing us with the opportunity to worship together and to continue to respect each other as human beings.*