

COVENANT CHURCH

H O U S T O N

A Service of Worship for
Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunday &
the Ordination and Commissioning of Deacons
18 January 2026

By acting compassionately,
by helping to restore justice and to encourage peace,
we are acknowledging that we are all part of one another.
—Ram Dass

Love cannot remain by itself--
it has no meaning.
Love has to be put into action
and that action is service.
Whatever form we are,
able or disabled,
rich or poor,
it is not how much we do,
but how much love we put in the doing;
a lifelong sharing of love with others.
—from *Words to Love By* by Mother Theresa

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ring in the hour

Silence is kept

*Prelude

“Prayer: For the Peaceful Protestors (‘Guide My Feet’)”

Sharon Willis
(b. 1949)

Call to Worship

+Opening Hymn #323

“Loving Spirit”

Omni Die

**Loving Spirit, Holy Spirit,
You have chosen me to be;
You have drawn me to Your wonder,
You have set Your sign on me.**

**Like a mother, You enfold me,
Hold my life within Your own,
Feed me with Your very body,
Form me of Your flesh and bone.**

**Like a father, You protect me,
Teach me the discerning eye,
Hoist me up upon Your shoulder,
Let me see the world from high.**

**Loving Spirit, in Your closeness
I am known and held and blest:
In Your promise is my comfort,
In Your presence I may rest.**

**Please hold silence and remain seated during the prelude*

+Please stand in body or spirit

⁺Responsive Opening Prayer

O God, all people are your Beloved,
across races, nationalities, religions, sexual orientations
and all the ways we are distinctive from one another.

We are all manifestations of your image.

**We are bound together in an inescapable network of mutuality
and tied to a single garment of destiny.**

You call us into your unending work
of justice, peace and love.

Let us know your presence among us now:

**Let us delight in our diversity
that offers glimpses of the mosaic of your beauty.
Strengthen us with your steadfast love and
transform our despairing fatigue into hope-filled action.**

Under the shadow of your wings in this hour
may we find rest and strength, renewal and hope.

**We ask this, inspired by the example
of your disciple, Martin Luther King, Jr.,
and in Jesus' name.**

Invitation

Scripture Lesson

Isaiah 49:1-7; 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

These are our sacred stories.

Thanks be to God.

Time for Children

⁺ Response:

Servant Song

**We are pilgrims on a journey,
We are trav'lers on the road;
We are here to help each other
Walk the mile and bear the load.**

+Please stand in body or spirit

Call to Confession

Silent Confession

Unison Confession

We must pray for peace...

**but we must also use our minds as rigorously to plan for peace
as we have used them to plan for war.**

**We must pray with unceasing passion for racial justice,
but we must also use our minds...**

**and employ every resource of our bodies and souls
to bring an end to racial injustice.**

**We must pray unrelentingly for economic justice,
but we must also work diligently to bring into being
those social changes that make for a better distribution of wealth
within our nation and in the undeveloped nations of the world...**

**No problem is solved when we idly wait for God
to take full responsibility.**

Words of Assurance

Music

Alma Bazel Androzzo (1912-2001)

“If I Can Help Somebody”

arr. André Thomas

*If I can help somebody as I pass along
If I can cheer somebody with a word or song;
If I can show somebody he is traveling wrong;
Then my living shall not be in vain.*

*If I can do my duty as a Christian ought;
If I can bring back beauty to a world upwrought;
If I can spread Love's message that the master taught;
Then my living shall not be in vain.*

Silent Reflection

Meditation

"Called as Partners in Christ's Service" stanzas 1-3

**Called as partners in Christ's service, called to ministries of grace,
We respond with deep commitment fresh new lines of faith to trace.
May we learn the art of sharing, side by side and friend with friend,
Equal partners in our caring to fulfill God's chosen end.**

**Christ's example, Christ's inspiring, Christ's clear call to work and worth,
Let us follow, never faltering, reconciling folk on earth.
Men and women, richer, poorer, all God's people, young and old,
Blending human skills together gracious gifts from God unfold.**

**Thus new patterns for Christ's mission, in a small or global sense,
Help us bear each other's burdens, breaking down each wall or fence.
Words of comfort, words of vision, words of challenge, said with care,
Bring new power and strength for action, make us colleagues, free and fair.**

Ordaining Amanda Cox-Floyd, Charity Hammond, and Emily Holien

Litany of Commissioning the 2026 Diaconate (please see insert)

⁺ Response:

Beecher

**So God grant us for tomorrow ways to order human life
That surround each person's sorrow with a calm that conquers strife.
Make us partners in our living, our compassion to increase,
Messengers of faith, thus giving hope and confidence and peace.**

Prayer

Offering

Offertory

"Steal Away"

Charles Callahan
(1951-2023)

⁺Prayer of Dedication

**May we be reminded here of our highest aspirations,
and inspired to bring our gifts of love and service
to the altar of humanity.**

+Please stand in body or spirit

**May we know once again that we are not isolated beings
but connected, in mystery and miracle,
to the universe, to this community and to each other.**

⁺Doxology

Old Hundredth

**Praise God the Source of life and birth.
Praise God the Word, who came to earth.
Praise God the Spirit, holy flame,
All glory, honor to God's name! Amen.**

⁺Affirmation of Faith

In the face of hate,
We answer the call of love.
In the face of exclusion,
We answer the call of inclusion.
In the face of homophobia,
We answer the call of LGBTQ rights.
In the face of racism,
We answer the call of justice for all races.
In the face of xenophobia,
We answer the call of pluralism.
In the face of misogyny,
We answer the call of women's rights.
In the face of demagoguery,
We answer the call of reason.
In the face of religious intolerance,
We answer the call of diversity.
In the face of narrow nationalism,
We answer the call of global community.
In the face of bigotry,
We answer the call of open-mindedness.
In the face of despair,
We answer the call of hope.

+Please stand in body or spirit

“Precious Lord, Take My Hand”

**Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, help me stand;
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;
Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light;
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.**

**When my way grows drear, precious Lord, linger near;
When my life is almost gone,
Hear my cry, hear my call, hold my hand lest I fall;
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.**

Benediction

^{*}Postlude

“Toccata on ‘Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing’”

John Innes
(b. 1937)

+Please stand in body or spirit

**Please hold silence and remain seated during the postlude*

Worship Notes

The worship leaders are **Erica and Eric Middleton**.

The Call to Worship is adapted from Frederick Buechner and Parker Palmer.

The Opening Prayer is by the Rev. Dr. Cari Jackson, Founder and Director of the Center for Spiritual Light, New York City.

The Unison Confession is by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The soloist on “If I Can Help Somebody” is **Mary Hines Lee**.

The Prayer of Dedication is an anonymous prayer from *Singing the Living Tradition*, the 1993 Unitarian Universalist hymnal.

The Affirmation of Faith is “We Answer the Call of Love” by Julia Corbett-Heymeyer.

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About Today's Service

Baptists recognize and ordain two offices, or spiritual leadership roles, in the church: pastors (those ordained to gospel ministry) and deacons. At Covenant, deacons provide care and connection to the members and active participants of our church. They offer calls, cards, and visits to those in need of individual care; help lead prayer during worship; facilitate communion; and grow community through group fellowship events. Like pastors, deacons are ordained through the laying on of hands. This practice is rooted in an ancient Jewish tradition of resting a hand on someone while blessing them or to authorize them to become a rabbi. Later, in the book of Acts, the apostles laid hands on people to fill them with the Holy Spirit, to welcome them into the church, and to designate them as holding religious responsibilities in the community.

Today, we will lay hands on Amanda Cox-Floyd, Charity Hammond, and Emily Ramsey Holien. They have been called by the community to serve on our Diaconate for the first time beginning this year. Because we are a priesthood of believers, everyone present— regardless of church membership status, religious beliefs, or whether you've been ordained—is invited to come forward, rest your hand on each new deacon's shoulder or head, and say a blessing as they begin their ordained ministry in our congregation.

–Jason Steiner

Children and Youth Announcements

January 18 - Youth Fellowship after church

February 15 - Children & Youth Auction

Announcements

The Young Adult Intentional Discussion Group meets this Tuesday, January 20.

Will Parker's Musical Improv workshop is on February 21 - see the newsletter or the QR code to sign up.

Committees will meet on these dates in 2026: February 8, April 26, August 9, November 8.

Calendar

Sun. January 18	12:30pm	Youth Fellowship, Huff Fellowship Hall.
Mon. January 19	All Day	MLK Holiday - Office Closed.
	7pm	Insight Meditation Houston, Huff Fellowship Hall.
	7pm	Houston Sacred Harp, Sanctuary.
Tues. January 20	7pm	Young Adult Intentional Discussion Group, Library.
Thurs. January 22	10am	Community Group, Zoom.
	1:15pm	Luncheon Lectionary Lab, Zoom.
	7:15pm	Covenant Singers Rehearsal, Sanctuary.
Sun. January 25	9:30am	Adult Education, 2nd floor of Huff Fellowship Hall building; Brendon Young, Covenant's Artist in Residence, presents "What's a Bassoon? Should I Care?"
	9:30am	Handbell Rehearsal, Huff Fellowship Hall.
	10:30am	Covenant Singers Rehearsal, Sanctuary.

Information

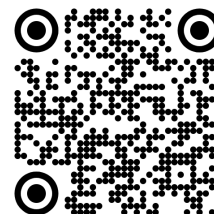
Childcare is provided in the children's area beginning at 9:30 a.m. Children aged 2 and under are invited to the nursery. Children aged 3 to 9 are invited to the children's area after the Time for Children.

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; any sign-up forms mentioned in the Announcements; 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.