



COVENANT CHURCH

H O U S T O N

A Service of Worship for the
First Sunday of Lent
22 February 2026

“I Confess” by Alison Luterman

I stalked her
in the grocery store: her crown
of snowy braids held in place by a great silver clip,
her erect bearing, radiating tenderness,
the way she placed yogurt and avocados in her basket,
beaming peace like the North Star.
I wanted to ask, “What aisle did you find
your serenity in, do you know
how to be married for fifty years, or how to live alone,
excuse me for interrupting, but you seem to possess
some knowledge that makes the earth burn and turn on its axis—”
but we don’t request such things from strangers
nowadays. So I said, “I love your hair.”

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ring in the hour

Silence is kept

*Prelude

“Prelude”

Jean Langlais
(1907-1991)

Call to Worship

+Opening Hymn #311

“We Meet You, O Christ”

Normandy

**We meet you, O Christ, in many a guise:
Your image we see in simple and wise.
You live in a palace, exist in a shack.
We see you, the gardener, a tree on your back.**

**In millions alive, away and abroad;
Involved in our life, you live down the road.
Imprisoned in systems, you long to be free.
We see you, Lord Jesus, still bearing your tree.**

**We hear you, O Christ, in agony cry.
For freedom you march, in riots you die.
Your face in the papers we read and we see.
The tree must be planted by human decree.**

**You choose to be made at one with the earth;
The dark of the grave prepares for your birth.
Your death is your rising, creative your word:
The tree springs to life and our hope is restored.**

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

+Please stand in body or spirit

+Opening Sentences

**The central task of the religious community
is to unveil the bonds that bind us to each other.
There is a connectedness,
a relationship discovered amid the particulars of our lives
and the lives of others.
Once felt, it inspires us to act for justice.
It is the church that assures us
that we are not struggling for justice on our own,
but as members of a larger community.
The religious community is essential,
For alone our vision is too narrow to see all that must be seen,
And our strength too limited to do all that must be done.
Together, our vision widens and our strength is renewed.**

Invitation

Houston Faith Votes Invitation

Scripture Lesson

Luke 1:36-63

These are our sacred stories.

Thanks be to God.

Time for Children

+ Response:

Dickinson College

**May God support you all your days,
in times of gladness and in need.
May God remember you with grace
and bless your every word and deed.**

Call to Confession

Silent Confession

Unison Confession

**Most of us lead far more meaningful lives than we know.
Often finding meaning is not about doing things differently;
it is about seeing familiar things in new ways.**

+Please stand in body or spirit

**When we find new eyes,
the unsuspected blessing in work we have done for many years
may take us completely by surprise.**

**We can see life in many ways:
with the eye, with the mind, with the intuition.**

**But perhaps it is only by those
who speak the language of meaning,
who have remembered how to see with the heart,
that life is ever deeply known or served.**

Words of Assurance

Music

Ned Rorem
(1923-2022)

“Sing, My Soul, God’s Wondrous Love”

*Sing, my soul, God’s wondrous love, who, from yon bright throne above,
Ever watchful o’er our race still to all extends true grace.
Heaven and earth by God were made, all is by God’s scepter swayed;
What are we that God should show so much love to us below?
God the merciful and good, teaches loving as we should,
And, to make our safety sure, guides us by the spirit pure.
Sing, my soul, adore the name; let God’s glory be thy theme:
Praise until God calls thee home, trust that love for all to come.*

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

+Hymn #436

Whitfield

“We Are Your People”

**We are your people: Lord, by your grace,
You dare to make us Christ to our neighbors
of every nation and race.**

**Called to portray you, help us to live
Closer than neighbors, open to strangers,
able to clash and forgive.**

+Please stand in body or spirit

**Glad of tradition, help us to see
In all life's changing where you are leading,
where our best efforts should be.**

**Joined in community, breaking your bread,
May we discover gifts in each other,
willing to lead and be led.**

**Lord, as we minister in different ways,
May all we're doing show that you're living,
meeting your love with our praise.**

Prayer

Offering

Offertory

“Deck Yourself, My Soul, With Gladness”

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

+Prayer of Dedication

**I open my heart to Christ in the stranger,
to Christ in the face of colleague and friend.
I open my heart to the one who is wounded,
to Christ in the hungry, the lonely, the homeless.
I open my heart to the one who has hurt me,
to Christ in the face of sinner and foe.
I open my heart to those who are outcast,
to Christ in the broken, the prisoner, the poor.
I open my heart to all who are searching,
to Christ in the world, God's generous gift.**

+Doxology

**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.**

Old Hundredth

+Please stand in body or spirit

+Affirmation of Faith

**We are all at once both a composition and a composer.
We have the ability not only to compose
the future of our own lives,
but to help compose the future of everyone around us
and the communities in which we live.**

+Closing Hymn

Heaven Shall Not Wait

“Heaven Shall Not Wait”

**Heaven shall not wait for the poor to lose their patience,
The scorned to smile, the despised to find a friend:
Jesus is Lord; he has championed the unwanted;
In him injustice confronts its timely end.**

**Heaven shall not wait for the rich to share their fortunes,
The proud to fall, the elite to tend the least:
Jesus is Lord; he has shown the master’s privilege:
To kneel and wash servants’ feet before they feast.**

**Heaven shall not wait for the dawn of great ideas,
Thoughts of compassion divorced from cries of pain:
Jesus is Lord; he has married word and action;
His cross and company make his purpose plain.**

**Heaven shall not wait for triumphant Hallelujahs,
When earth has passed and we reach another shore:
Jesus is Lord in our present imperfection;
His power and love are for now and then for evermore.**

Benediction

+Postlude

“Tu Es Petrus”

Jeanne Demessieux
(1921-1968)

+Please stand in body or spirit

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

Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Ava Daughtry**.

The Call to Worship is “Because” by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer.

The Opening Sentences are by Mark Morrison-Reed from *Singing the Living Tradition*, the 1993 Unitarian Universalist Hymnal.

Linda Phenix and **Paul Wilson** give the Houston Faith Votes Invitation.

The Unison Confession is by Rachel Naomi Remen.

Deacon Dennis Robinson gives the prayer.

The Prayer of Dedication is excerpted from “A litany of hospitality” by Christine Sine, originally published on *Word Made Flesh Argentina*.

The Affirmation of Faith is by Maya Angelou.

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About Today’s Service

Today’s Prayer of Dedication appeared in Covenant’s worship resources as “Words of Commitment, author unknown.” Using my Zoomer superpower of Google, I was able to trace this poem back to Christine Sine, a gardener and spiritual writer living in Washington State. She originally published it in 2009 on a now-defunct blog called *Word Made Flesh Argentina*. In 2018, it was reprinted in an Anglican resource titled *Asylum Seekers and Refugees: Spiritual, Theological, and Ethical Approaches*, as a dedicatory prayer to conclude a group study on the ethical issues of holding children in detention centers. The full poem opens with the following two lines:

*God, we want to fulfill your law of love and be your hospitality to our world,
I open my heart to be the hospitality of Christ, to all those who come to my door.*

Christine’s husband of thirty-five years, Tom, transitioned to a long-term care home for support handling dementia earlier this week, on Ash Wednesday. I open my heart to Christ in her, the stranger who has gifted us this beautiful prayer.

—Jason Steiner

Announcements

Early voting field trip **today, February 22**; please find Paul Wilson after worship to join.
Spring Organ Recital Series: Tuesdays at 12:15pm, starting on February 24.
The 2026 Covenant Safety Summit will be held on Saturday, February 28, at 9am.
Houston Food Bank service day on March 14: please see the newsletter to sign up.
Subscribe to the Covenant Lent devotional at CovenantLent2026.substack.com.
Committees meet on April 26, August 9, and November 8.

Calendar

Sun. February 22	12:15pm	Group Voting Day, off-site.
Mon. February 23	7pm	Insight Meditation, Huff Fellowship Hall.
Tues. February 24	12:15pm	Spring Organ Recital Series: Jason Steiner, Sanctuary.
Thurs. February 26	10am	Community Group, Zoom.
	1:15pm	Luncheon Lectionary Lab, Zoom.
	7:15pm	Covenant Singers Rehearsal, Sanctuary.
Sat. February 28	9am	Covenant Safety Summit, Sanctuary.
Sun. March 1	9:30am	Adult Education, 2nd floor of Huff Fellowship Hall building or on Zoom: Kristy Kyle presents on emergency care and safety as a follow-up to the Safety Summit.
	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.