



COVENANT CHURCH

H O U S T O N

A Service of Worship for the
Fourth Sunday of Lent
15 March 2026

won't you celebrate with me
what i have shaped into
a kind of life? i had no model.
born in babylon
both nonwhite and woman
what did i see to be except myself?
i made it up
here on this bridge between
starshine and clay,
my one hand holding tight
my other hand; come celebrate
with me that everyday
something has tried to kill me
and has failed.

—Lucille Clifton, “won't you celebrate with me” from *Book of Light*

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ring in the hour

Silence is kept

*Prelude

“Andante”

Kate Loder
(1825-1904)

Call to Worship

+Opening Hymn #376

Hyfrydol

“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling”

**Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven to earth come down,
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown!
Jesus, Thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation, enter every trembling heart.**

**Breathe, O breathe Thy loving Spirit into every troubled breast!
Let us all in Thee inherit, let us find the promised rest;
Take away the love of sinning; Alpha and Omega be;
End of faith, as its beginning, set our hearts at liberty.**

**Come, Almighty to deliver, let us all Thy life receive;
Suddenly return, and never, nevermore Thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing, serve Thee as Thy hosts above;
Pray, and praise Thee without ceasing, glory in Thy perfect love.**

**Finish, then, Thy new creation; pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see Thy great salvation perfectly restored in Thee;
Changed from glory into glory, till in heav'n we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise.**

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

+Please stand in body or spirit

+Opening Sentences

**We seek to see clearly
the complexity of life.
We seek to celebrate
the wonder and beauty of life.
We seek to transcend
the conditions of oppression
through loving life, self, and others.
We seek to move
toward social transformation.
Our efforts are partial,
yet they are divine
in their love and courage.
They bear witness.**

Invitation

Scripture Lesson

Luke 7:36-8:3

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

**From all that is broken
let there be beauty.
From all that is torn, jagged,
ripped, frayed,**

+Please stand in body or spirit

let there be
not just mendings
but meetings unimagined.
May the God in whom
nothing is wasted
gather up every scrap,
every shred and shard,
and make of them
new paths,
doorways,
Worlds.

Words of Assurance

Music

Dede Duson
(b. 1938)

“What Is A Heart?”

My God, what is a heart?

*Silver or gold or precious stone, or star or rainbow,
or a part of all these things, or all of them in one:*

My God, what is a heart, that thou should'st it so eye and woo?

Pouring upon it all thy art, as if that thou had'st nothing else to do.

My God, what is a heart...

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

+Hymn #380

Erhalt Uns, Herr

“O Christ, the Healer”

**O Christ, the healer, we have come
To pray for health, to plead for friends.
How can we fail to be restored,
When reached by love that never ends?**

**From every ailment flesh endures
Our bodies clamor to be freed;
Yet in our hearts we would confess
That wholeness is our deepest need.**

+Please stand in body or spirit

**How strong, O Lord, are our desires,
How weak our knowledge of ourselves!
Release in us those healing truths
Unconscious pride resists or shelves.**

**In conflicts that destroy our health
We recognize the world's disease;
Our common life declares our ills:
Is there no cure, O Christ, for these?**

**Grant that we all, made one in faith,
In Your community may find
The wholeness that, enriching us,
Shall reach the whole of humankind.**

Prayer

Offering

Offertory

“Meditation on ‘Pange lingua’”

Mary Beth Bennett

(b. 1954)

+Prayer of Dedication

**May I live this day
Compassionate of heart,
Clear in word,
Gracious in awareness,
Courageous in thought,
Generous in love.**

+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 love, and we don't have to
earn or prove or deserve this fact.
And if we can recognize that
we've never been separate from it,
and bring it forth outside of us,
this is what saves us.**

+Closing Hymn

St. Helena

“There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy”

There's a wide-ness
For the love of

in God's mer - cy, Like the wide-ness of the_ sea; There's a kind-ness in God's jus -
God is broad - er Than the mea - sure of the_mind; And the heart of the e - ter -

tice, Which is more than lib - er - ty. There is no place where earth's sor - rows
nal Is most won - der - ful - ly_ kind. If our love were but more faith - ful,

Are more felt than up in heav'n; There is no place
We would glad - ly trust God's Word; And our lives re -

where earth's fail - ings Have such kind - ly judg - ment given.
flect thanks - giv - ing For the good - ness of our Lord.

Benediction

+Postlude

Jessica French

“Final Variation on ‘Jesu, Dulcis Memoria’”

(b. 1984)

+Please stand in body or spirit

*Please hold silence and remain seated during the postlude

Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Laura Mitchell**.

The Call to Worship is by Maria Popova.

The Opening Sentences are adapted from *A Feminist Ethic of Risk* by Sharon Welch.

The Unison Confession is “Blessing” by Jan Richardson.

Deacon Bridget O’Toole gives the prayer.

The Prayer of Dedication is excerpted from “Matins” as printed in *Benedictus* by John O’Donohue.

The Affirmation of Faith is from *Mary Magdalene Revealed: The First Apostle, Her Feminist Gospel & the Christianity We Haven’t Tried Yet* by Meggan Watterson.

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About Today’s Service

Calvin Hampton was renowned in the mid-twentieth century as a pioneer in the field of organ and church music. His career was centered in New York City, where he was best known for fusing rock, gospel, and electronic music into organ repertoire and for a free concert series at Calvary Church titled “Fridays at Midnight.” Hymnologist Erik Routley once described him as “the greatest living composer of hymn tunes.” The melody of today’s closing hymn, “St. Helena,” is likely Hampton’s most well-known composition. He wrote it specifically to set the text “There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy.” It was first published in the Episcopal *Hymnal 1982* and is now sung and beloved by ecumenical congregations throughout the country. I feel like the shifting meter reflects the wideness of the sea. Hampton died from AIDS in 1984. He was forty-five years old. In the years since then, this hymn has picked up an underground function in the ongoing struggle for LGBT equality in worship spaces, signaling to young queer people in unaffirming churches that God’s mercy is wide enough to cover them as well.

—*Jason Steiner*

Announcements

Spring Organ Recital Series: Tuesdays at 12:15pm, continuing through March 24.

Spring Equinox Labyrinth Walk after church on March 22.

All Church Workday and Deacon Trivia Night approach on Saturday, March 28.

Subscribe to the Covenant Lent devotional at CovenantLent2026.substack.com.

Good Friday Tenebrae worship service will be held at 7pm on Friday, April 3.

The Easter Egg Hunt approaches at 10AM on Saturday, April 4. Please contact Trena’ Jamison if you would like to donate candy or eggs.

Calendar

Mon. March 9	7pm	Insight Meditation, Huff Fellowship Hall.
	7pm	Houston Sacred Harp, Sanctuary.
Tues. March 10	12:15pm	Spring Organ Recital Series: Molly Berghout, Sanctuary.
Thurs. March 12	10am	Community Group, Zoom.
	1:15pm	Lunctime Lectionary Lab, Zoom.
	7:15pm	Covenant Singers Rehearsal, Sanctuary.
Sun. March 15	9:30am	Adult Education, 2nd floor of Huff Fellowship Hall building or on Zoom: David Ramsey presents on science.
	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.