



# COVENANT CHURCH

## H O U S T O N

A Service of Worship for the  
Fourth Sunday of Eastertide  
26 April 2026

God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road  
ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end.  
Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think  
I am following your will does not mean that I am  
actually doing so. But I believe that the desire  
to please you does, in fact, please you.  
And I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing.  
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that  
desire. And I know that if I do this, you will lead  
me by the right road, though I may know nothing  
about it. Therefore, I will trust you always,  
though I may seem to be lost and in  
the shadow of death. I will not fear,  
for you are ever with me, and you  
will never leave me to face  
my perils alone.

—from *Thoughts in Solitude* by Thomas Merton

I can't decide whether to enjoy the world or improve the world;  
that makes it difficult to plan the day.

—E.B. White



Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!  
**And also with you!**

Ring in the hour

Silence is kept

\*Prelude

Johann Pachelbel

“Bicinium on ‘Jesus Christ, our Savior, who turned God’s wrath away from us’”(1653-1706)

Call to Worship

+Opening Hymn #487

Laudes Domini

“When Morning Gilds the Skies”

**When morning gilds the skies,**

**My heart awaking cries:**

**May Jesus Christ be praised!**

**Alike at work and prayer**

**To Jesus I repair:**

**May Jesus Christ be praised!**

**Does sadness fill my mind?**

**A solace here I find:**

**May Jesus Christ be praised!**

**Or fades my earthly bliss?**

**My comfort still is this:**

**May Jesus Christ be praised!**

**Let earth's wide circle round**

**In joyful notes resound:**

**May Jesus Christ be praised!**

**Let air and sea and sky**

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

*+Please stand in body or spirit*

**From depth to height reply:  
May Jesus Christ be praised!**

**Be this, while life is mine,  
My canticle divine:  
May Jesus Christ be praised!  
Be this the eternal song  
Through all the ages long:  
May Jesus Christ be praised!**

**Then let us join to sing  
to Christ, our loving King:  
May Jesus Christ be praised!  
Be this the eternal song  
through all the ages long:  
May Jesus Christ be praised!**

<sup>+</sup>Opening Sentences

**God of letting go,  
We call on you as we tighten,  
Clench, and grip.  
When we cling to old habits,  
Playing it safe rather than just playing,  
We close ourselves from you.**

**Allow us to release ourselves:  
Loosen, open, and accept.  
We need not “let go” in some  
Final renunciation,  
But gently set aside our grips and gripes.**

**And let ourselves trust you.  
When we do this we open to the world  
That needs us to welcome what is**

*+Please stand in body or spirit*

Invitation

Scripture Lesson

Romans 7:15-25a; Psalm 145:8-14

These are our sacred stories.

**Thanks be to God.**

Time for Children

+ Response:

Truro

**Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.**

**The cross stands empty to the sky.**

**Let streets and homes with praises ring.**

**Love, drowned in death, shall never die.**

Call to Confession

Silent Confession

Unison Confession

**God of Grace,**

**This much we know about ourselves . . .**

**We are gifted people:**

**endowed with resources exceeding our needs;  
equipped with insight and energy and abilities  
surpassing necessity.**

**And, we are needy people;  
straining at self-worth,  
struggling to prove ourselves as if  
our value is constantly in question.**

**In this holy season . . .**

**Energize our giftedness:**

**focus us toward some hopeful vision greater than  
ourselves, some truly expansive view of the way  
we can be, and the way our world can be.**

**And, grace our neediness:**

**by your faith in us declare our worth to us,  
give us the courage to have confidence in ourselves,  
in each other, and even . . . in you.**

Words of Assurance

*+Please stand in body or spirit*

Music

Thomas Matthews  
(1915-1999)

“The Lord Is My Shepherd”

*The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:  
He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul:  
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.  
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil: For Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.  
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.  
Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

+Hymn #372

I Want to Be a Christian

“Lord, I Want to Be a Christian”

**Lord, I want to be a Christian  
in-a-my heart, in-a-my heart.  
Lord, I want to be a Christian in-a-my heart.  
In-a-my heart, in-a-my heart,  
Lord, I want to be a Christian in-a-my heart.**

**Lord, I want to be more loving  
in-a-my heart, in-a-my heart.  
Lord, I want to be more loving in-a-my heart.  
In-a-my heart, in-a-my heart,  
Lord, I want to be more loving in-a-my heart.**

**Lord, I want to be more holy  
in-a-my heart, in-a-my heart.  
Lord, I want to be more holy in-a-my heart.  
In-a-my heart, in-a-my heart,  
Lord, I want to be more holy in-a-my heart.**

+Please stand in body or spirit

**Lord, I want to be like Jesus  
in-a-my heart, in-a-my heart.  
Lord, I want to be like Jesus in-a-my heart.  
In-a-my heart, in-a-my heart,  
Lord, I want to be like Jesus in-a-my heart.**

Prayer

Offering

Offertory

“Largo”

Elizabeth Stirling  
(1819-1895)

+Prayer of Dedication

**Lift the veil  
that obscures  
the heart  
and there  
you will find  
what you are  
looking for.**

+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

**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.**

*+Please stand in body or spirit*

+Closing Hymn

Sursum Corda

“Eternal Spirit of the Living Christ”

**Eternal Spirit of the living Christ,  
I know not how to ask or what to say;  
I only know my need, as deep as life,  
and only you can teach me how to pray.**

**Come, pray in me the prayer I need this day;  
help me to see your purpose and your will,  
where I have failed, what I have done amiss;  
held in forgiving love, let me be still.**

**Come with the vision and the strength  
I need to serve my God and all humanity;  
fulfillment of my life in love outpoured—  
my life in you, O Christ, your love in me.**

Benediction

\*Postlude

“When Morning Gilds the Skies”

Dale Wood  
(1934-2003)

*+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 Marie Howe.

The Opening Sentences are by **Annie Christensen**.

The Unison Confession is by Jay Leach.

The soloist with the Covenant Singers is **Susan Reeves**.

**Deacon Dennis Robinson** gives the Prayer.

The Prayer of Dedication is by Kabir.

The Affirmation of Faith is by Maya Angelou.

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## About Today's Service

I wrote this prayer in response to the ubiquitous directive that we “Let it Go,” as Disney’s Frozen princess sings, and per the meditation apps that suggest that we all “let go of what doesn’t serve us,” and so forth. While this seems like good advice on the surface, it is also problematic. My sister’s yoga teacher told her class, rather than let it go and banish the woe, instead to gently set it to one side. I love this idea—not slamming it [whatever it is] down in fury, not slamming the door in its face, just setting it down for a bit. The imagery of clenching and grasping refers to the Tibetan concept of shenpa or “attachment.” Pema Chodron describes shenpa as being “hooked:” “When shenpa hooks us, we’re likely to get stuck. We could call shenpa ‘that sticky feeling.’” God is the opposite of sticky.

—*Annie Christensen*

## Announcements

Committees will meet **after church TODAY, April 26**.

**This afternoon at 4pm** Victor Vela will give a preview of his senior piano recital in the Covenant Sanctuary. We will take a free-will love offering to support his travel to a summer program for collaborative piano in Austria.

The Church-Wide Potluck will be hosted in homes across the city on **Saturday, May 2**. If you forgot to sign up and would like to attend, please contact Nita Lindley, Susan Reeves, or email the office.

The Young Adult Group will soon be holding a theological discussion dinner party. If you’d like to attend, please contact Jason Steiner.

## Calendar

Sun. April 26	12pm	Committee Meetings, Huff Fellowship Hall.
	4 pm	Victor Vela's Piano Recital, Sanctuary.
Mon. April 27	7pm	Insight Meditation, Huff Fellowship Hall.
Thurs. April 30	10am	Community Group, Zoom.
	1:15pm	Lunctime Lectionary Lab, Zoom.
	7pm	Covenant Singers Rehearsal, Sanctuary.
Sat. May 2	Evening	Church-Wide Potluck Night
Sun. May 3	9:30am	Adult Education, 2nd floor of Huff Fellowship Hall building or on Zoom: Brendon Young, Covenant's Artist in Residence, reflects on his spiritual and musical journey.
	9:30am	Handbell Rehearsal, Huff Fellowship Hall.
	9:30am	Inquirers Class, Library in Sanctuary building.
	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 & Communication

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.*