



COVENANT CHURCH

H O U S T O N

A Service of Worship for
Ascension Sunday
17 May 2026

Sometimes worship is a parade, a celebration, a gathering of people
expressing their joy.

Sometimes worship is an adventure, a quest, a gathering of people
searching for meaning.

Sometimes worship is a funeral, a fast, a gathering of people
seeking comfort in their grief.

Among us today are people who have come to march,
people who have come to search, people who have come to weep...

Yet we have all come to acknowledge God and to touch each other.

Come with open minds, open hearts, open arms; that we might all find that for which
we have come and that, as well, we all might be surprised.

–John W. Howell

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ringling in the hour

Silence is kept

*Prelude

Rob Landes

“Shall We Gather at the River”

Choral Introit

Laudate Pueri

“Praise the Lord!”

Call to Worship

+ Hymn #138

Nicaea

“Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty”

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!

Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;

Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty!

God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,

Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;

Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,

Who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide Thee,

Thought the eye of sinfulness Thy glory may not see,

Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee

Perfect in power, in love and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!

All Thy works shall praise Thy name, in earth and sky and sea;

Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty!

God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

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

+Please stand in body or spirit

+Opening Sentences

**To be alive: not just the carcass
But the spark.
That's crudely put, but...
If we're not supposed to dance,
Why all this music?**

Houston Faith Votes Invitation

Invitation

Scripture Lesson

Psalm 47

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

**One of the most important things to have learned in life
is that choosing joy in a world rife with reasons for despair
is a countercultural act of courage and resistance,
choosing it not despite the abounding sorrow we barely survive but because of it,
because joy — like music, like love —
is one of those entirely unnecessary miracles of consciousness
that give meaning to survival with its bright allegiance to the most alive part of us.**

Words of Assurance

+Please stand in body or spirit

“Jazz Missa Brevis”

*I. Kyrie**Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison.*

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

*II. Gloria**Gloria in excelsis Deo. Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.**Laudamus te; benedicimus te; adoramus te; glorificamus te.**Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam.**Domine Deus, Rex coelestis, Deus Pater omnipotens.**Domine Fili unigenite Jesu Christe.**Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris.**Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.**Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram.**Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, O miserere nobis.**Quoniam tu solus Sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu solus Altissimus,**Jesu Christe, cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.*

Glory be to God in the highest. And on earth peace to those of good will.

We praise Thee; we bless Thee; we worship Thee; we glorify Thee.

We give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory.

Lord God, Heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.

Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son.

Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father.

Who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.

Who takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer.

Thou that sittest at the right hand of God, have mercy upon us.

For thou only art holy, thou only art the Lord, thou only art the most high,

Jesus Christ, with the Holy Ghost in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

III. Sanctus

*Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua. Hosanna in excelsis.*

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Hosanna in the highest.

IV. Benedictus

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Hosanna in excelsis.

Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

V. Agnus Dei

*Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.*

Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, grant us peace.

Silent Reflection

Prayer

Offering

Offertory

Rob Landes

“Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing”

+Prayer of Dedication

**To worship is to stand in awe
under a heaven of stars,
before a flower, a leaf in sunlight,
or a grain of sand.**

**To worship is to be silent, receptive,
before a tree astir with the wind,
or the passing shadow of a cloud.**

**To worship is to work with dedication and with skill;
it is to pause from work and listen to a strain of music.**

**To worship is to sing with the singing beauty of the earth;
it is to listen through a storm to the still small voice within.**

+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

**Worship is a loneliness seeking communion;
it is a thirsty land crying out for rain.**

**Worship is a kindred fire within our hearts;
it moves through deeds of kindness and through acts of love.**

**Worship is the mystery within us
reaching out to the mystery beyond.**

**It is an inarticulate silence yearning to speak;
it is the window of the moment open to the sky of the eternal.**

+Please stand in body or spirit

+Closing Hymn #464

Hymn to Joy

“Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee”

**Joyful, joyful, we adore thee, God of glory, Lord of love;
Hearts unfold like flowers before thee, opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; Drive the gloom of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day.**

**All thy works with joy surround thee, earth and heaven reflect thy rays,
Stars and angels sing around thee, center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing sea,
Chanting bird and flowing fountain, call us to rejoice in thee.**

**Mortals, join the happy chorus which the morning stars began;
Love divine is reigning o’er us, joining all in heaven’s plan.
Ever singing, march we onward, victors in the midst of strife,
Joyful music leads us sunward in the triumph song of life.**

Choral Benediction

Laudate Pueri

“Praise the Lord!”

Benediction

*Postlude

Rob Landes

“This Little Light of Mine”

+Please stand in body or spirit

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

Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Lisa Sparkes**.

The Call to Worship is “Praise Song for the Day: A Poem for Barack Obama’s Presidential Inauguration” by Elizabeth Alexander.

The Opening Sentences are “To Be Alive” by Gregory Orr.

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

The Unison Confession is by Maria Popova.

Deacon Nita Lindley gives the Prayer.

The Prayer of Dedication and Affirmation of Faith are by Jacob Trapp reprinted in *Singing the Living Tradition*, the 1993 Unitarian Universalist Association hymnal.

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The Covenant Singers

Soprano	Alto	Tenor	Bass
Ayden Adler†	Charlotte Bowers	Sebastian Alexander	Lewis Garvin
Thelma Jean Goodrich*	Joyce Courtois	Eric Avera*	Drew McDiarmid
Emily Ramsey Holien	Heather Laureles	Robert Carter	Ken Parker
Karen Kline	Laura Mitchell	Jay Hooker	Perry Primm
Sabrina Neff	Kiersten Scott-Collyer	David Reeves	David Ramsey
Nancy Preston	Lisa Sparkes	Shannon Stewart	Frank Shonka
Susan Reeves	Dale Thomas	K.T. Tilford	Van Wheeler*
Sharron Sanborn		Jeff Turner	
Liz Turner			

The Rob Landes Trio is Rob Landes, piano; Tim Solook, drums; and Joe Abuso, bass.

* *Not singing this Sunday*

† *Guest singer*

About Today's Service

The work that the Covenant Singers present this morning is by acclaimed English composer, pianist, and jazz musician Will Todd. His compositions are noted for their intense melody and harmony, which are often colored by jazz. About his *Jazz Missa Brevis*, he says, "In writing *Jazz Missa Brevis* for Portsmouth Cathedral Choir, I have aimed to create simple and lasting music that will work equally well in liturgy or in concert. Drawing on my own piano playing style, all of the movements began life as extended improvisations which I then honed and developed into the completed movements."

—David Lee

Announcements

Next Sunday, **May 24**, will be Pentecost. Wear red as we celebrate the Holy Spirit's presence in and among us.

We will hold a brief Congregational Business Meeting after worship on **May 24**.

The 2026 Pictorial Directory is available upon request at office@covenanthouston.org.

Please see the newsletter to sign up for Pride Houston with Covenant, or scan the QR Code on the next page of this bulletin.

Calendar

Sun. May 17	12:15pm	Youth Fellowship, Huff Fellowship Hall building.
Mon. May 18	7pm	Insight Meditation, Huff Fellowship Hall.
	7pm	Houston Sacred Harp, Sanctuary.
Thurs. May 21	10am	Community Group, Zoom.
	1:15pm	Luncheon Lectionary Lab, Zoom.
	7:15pm	Covenant Singers Rehearsal, Sanctuary.
Sat. May 23	8am	Art As Prayer, Huff Fellowship Hall.
Sun. May 24		No Adult Education (Memorial Day Weekend).
	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

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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.