



COVENANT CHURCH

H O U S T O N

A Service of Worship for
7 June 2026

and the universe said I love you
and the universe said you have played the game well
and the universe said everything you need is within you
and the universe said you are stronger than you know
and the universe said you are the daylight
and the universe said you are the night
and the universe said the darkness you fight is within you
and the universe said the light you seek is within you
and the universe said you are not alone
and the universe said you are not separate from every other thing
and the universe said you are the universe tasting itself, talking to itself,
reading its own code
and the universe said I love you because you are love.

–from “End Poem” by Julian Gough

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ring in the hour

Silence is kept

*Prelude

“God, Be the Love to Search and Keep Me”

Chris Kovarik
(b. 1970)

Call to Worship

+Opening Hymn

Holy Manna

“Love Astounding”

**Love astounding, Love confounding limits fearful minds impose.
Love renewing, Love pursuing every heart until it knows
Love’s transforming, healing goodness, Love’s abiding gentle grace,
Love’s endurance, Love’s assurance, Love’s consoling strong embrace.**

**Love receiving Love believing, we rejoice with thanks and song,
Faith regaining, hope proclaiming; Love has taught us, we belong
Safe within Love’s tender keeping, safe from fear’s persistent call.
Love defending, Love unending, Love of God enfolding all.**

+Opening Sentences

**The religion of Jesus had no boundaries.
His idea of the Kingdom of Heaven was an inclusive fellowship...**

Invitation

Missions Invitation

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

+Please stand in body or spirit

Scripture Lesson

Hosea 5:15-6:6; Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

These are our sacred stories.

Thanks be to God.

Time for Children

First Sunday Food Offering

+ Response:

Merle's Tune

**One Spirit sends us onward in witness to the earth,
As ministers of justice, as midwives of new birth:
To lead the church with courage on ventures new begun,
Reformed yet still reforming, 'til God's whole will is done.**

Call to Confession

Silent Confession

Unison Confession

**I sometimes forget
that I was created for Joy.
My mind is too busy.
My Heart is too heavy
for me to remember
that I have been called to dance
the Sacred dance of life.
O Sacred One
Untangle my feet from all that ensnares.
Free my soul.
That we might dance
and that our dancing
might be contagious.
I sometimes forget
that I was created to smile
To Love
To be lifted up
And to lift others up.**

Words of Assurance

+Please stand in body or spirit

Music

Sherry K

“I Know That God Loves Me”

I know that God loves me.

*Proudly placed on this earth so that others might see
just how much my God loves me.*

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

+Hymn #405

Sharpthorne

“What Does the Lord Require”

What does the Lord require for praise and offering?

What sacrifice, desire, or tribute bid you bring?

Do justly; love mercy; walk humbly with your God.

Rulers of earth, give ear! Should you not justice know?

Will God your pleading hear, while crime and cruelty grow?

Do justly; love mercy; walk humbly with your God.

How shall our life fulfill God’s law so hard and high?

Let Christ endue our will with grace to fortify.

Then justly, in mercy, we’ll humbly walk with God.

Prayer

Offering

Offertory

Kristina Rizzotto

“The Prayer”

(b. 1989)

We donate all cash offerings on the first Sunday of each month, giving 100% of the cash offerings to one of the mission organizations that Covenant partners with on that Sunday. These funds will be above and beyond what Covenant has budgeted to give to Missions. Today’s cash offerings will go to Lone Star Legal Aid, which protects and advances the civil legal rights of low-income Texans through advocacy, legal representation, and community education to ensure equal access to justice.

+Please stand in body or spirit

+Responsive Prayer of Dedication

Leader: To love life, to love it even
when you have no stomach for it
and everything you've held dear
crumbles like burnt paper in your hands,
your throat filled with the silt of it.
When grief sits with you, its tropical heat
thickening the air, heavy as water
more fit for gills than lungs;
when grief weights you down like your own flesh
only more of it, an obesity of grief,
you think, How can a body withstand this?

***People:* Then you hold life like a face
between your palms, a plain face,
no charming smile, no violet eyes,
and you say, yes, I will take you
I will love you, again.**

+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

**I think we need more love in the world.
We need more tenderness.
We need more gentleness.
We need more fierce advocacy for justice.
We need more goodness.
And so many of us just need a little reminder from time to time
that love is there. Love is there, if you pay attention.
Love is there if you turn your hearts just a little bit.**

+Please stand in body or spirit

“Will You Come and Follow Me (The Summons)”

**“Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown; will you let my name be known;
Will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?”**

**“Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?”**

**“Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean, and do such as this unseen,
And admit to what I mean in you and you in me?”**

**“Will you love the 'you' you hide if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around,
Through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?”**

**Lord, your summons echoes true when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.
In your company I'll go where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.**

Benediction

+Postlude

“In Classic Style”

Gordon Young
(1919-1998)

+Please stand in body or spirit

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

Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Amanda Cox-Floyd**.

The Call to Worship is “Jesus at the Parade” by Bob Janis-Dillon.

The text of “Love Astounding” is by Jeannette M. Lindholm.

The Opening Sentences are by Leon Meeks.

Jeff Floyd gives the Missions Invitation.

The Unison Confession is by Hafiz.

Karen Kline conducts the Pride Pick-Up Choir in “I Know that God Loves Me.”

Rev. Denise Junious gives the proclamation.

Deacon Emily Ramsey Holien gives the prayer.

The Prayer of Dedication is “The Thing Is” by Ellen Bass.

The Affirmation of Faith is by Jeff Chu.

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About Today's Service

One of our readings this morning is by Jeff Chu. I am not sure when I first read Jeff Chu. He was friends with Rachel Held Evans and they co-authored the book *Wholehearted Faith*. He works with Sarah Bessey on Evolving Faith. Learn more at www.evolvingfaith.com. I heard Jeff Chu and Sarah Bessey together after the release of Chu's recent book *Good Soil: The Education of an Accidental Farmhand*. I find I resonate with Chu's theology. I appreciate his questions and his answers. I value his ability to wonder out loud with the reader about life and love and Jesus.

—*Laura Mayo*

Announcements

Covenant observes the 61st “birthday” of our worship services on **June 14**.

Join Covenant's Civic Engagement Working Group at First Unitarian Universalist church on **Wednesday, June 17**, for a summer postcard writing project.

Did you know Houston has a women's soccer team? The Young Adult Group is coordinating a Covenant outing to the Houston Dash's Pride Night on **August 1**. People of all ages are welcome. Please contact Jason Steiner if you'd like to attend (jason@covenanthouston.org).

Calendar

Mon. June 8	7pm	Insight Meditation, Huff Fellowship Hall.
Thurs. June 11	10am	Community Group, Zoom.
	1:15pm	Lunctime Lectionary Lab, Zoom.
Sun. June 14	9:30am	Adult Education, 2nd floor of Huff Fellowship Hall building or on Zoom: Rev. Laura Mayo explains what the Bible <i>really</i> says about LGBTQ people.

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

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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.