



# COVENANT CHURCH

## H O U S T O N

A Service of Worship for  
21 June 2026

If you are looking for verses with which to support slavery, you will find them.

If you are looking for verses with which to abolish slavery, you will find them.

If you are looking for verses with which to oppress women, you will find them.

If you are looking for verses with which to liberate or honor women, you will find them.

If you are looking for reasons to wage war, you will find them.

If you are looking for reasons to promote peace, you will find them.

If you are looking for an outdated, irrelevant ancient text, you will find it.

If you are looking for truth, believe me, you will find it.

This is why there are times when the most instructive question to bring to the text is not “What does it say?”, but “What am I looking for?” I suspect Jesus knew this when he said, “Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened.”

If you want to do violence in this world, you will always find the weapons.

If you want to heal, you will always find the balm.

—from *A Year of Biblical Womanhood* by Rachel Held Evans



Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!

**And also with you!**

Ring in the hour

Silence is kept

<sup>†</sup>Prelude

arr. A. Ogletree, 1870

“The Traveler”

*Trav’ler haste, the night comes on, many a shining hour is gone;  
Storm is gathering in the west, and you are so far from home.*

*Rising tempest sweeps the sky, rains descend, the winds are high,  
Waters swell and death and fear sets thy path no refuge near.*

*Oh, come, trav’ler, haste away, you must walk while it is day.*

*Oh, come, trav’ler, haste away, you will find Christ in the way.*

Call to Worship

<sup>†</sup>Opening Hymn

Morning Song

“Awake, Awake to Love and Work”

**Awake, awake to love and work! The lark is in the sky;  
The fields are wet with diamond dew, the worlds awake to cry  
Their blessings on the Lord of life, as he goes meekly by.**

**Come, let thy voice be one with theirs, shout with their shouts of praise;  
See how the giant sun soars up, great Lord of years and days!  
So let the love of Jesus come and set thy souls ablaze.**

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

*+Please stand in body or spirit*

**To give and give, and give again, what God hath given thee;  
To spend thyself nor count the cost; to serve right gloriously  
The God who gave all worlds that are, and all that are to be.**

+Responsive Opening Sentences

After the creation story, the sacred stories of the Bible are,  
to a large extent, stories about the human predicament and its solution.

**Our lives east of Eden are marked by exile,  
and we need to return and reconnect;**

by bondage,  
and we need liberation;

**by blindness and deafness,  
and we need to see and hear again;**

by fragmentation,  
and we need wholeness;

**by violence and conflict,  
and we need to learn justice and peace;**

by self- and other-centeredness,  
and we need to center in God.

**Such are the central claims of [the Bible's] stories of human beings.**

Invitation

Scripture Lesson

Matthew 10:24-39

These are our sacred stories.

**Thanks be to God.**

Time for Children

+ 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.**

*+Please stand in body or spirit*

Call to Confession

Silent Confession

Unison Confession

**We confess that we are still learning the way of love—**

**timidly, afraid of what will be asked for...**

**suspiciously, not trusting in the unknown...**

**half-heartedly, reluctant to take risks with our living.**

**Yet we confess that we aspire to walk the path of love—**

**restless, wanting to discover what awaits...**

**imaginatively, envisioning the possibilities...**

**freely, searching out the holy and the human in every place.**

**Help us, O god, to become a people**

**who both wander in the wilderness**

**and gather around a common table**

**with enough grace and humor**

**to speak and share your love.**

Words of Assurance

Music

arr. *The Sacred Harp*, 1835

“Restoration”

*Come, Thou Fount of ev'ry blessing, tune my heart to sing Thy grace.*

*Streams of mercy, never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise.*

*Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above;*

*Praise the mount — O fix me on it — mount of Thy redeeming love!*

*I will rise and go to Jesus, He'll embrace me in His arms;*

*In the arms of my dear Savior; oh! there are ten thousand charms.*

Silent Reflection

Prayer

+Please stand in body or spirit

Offering

Offertory

William Billings, 1770

“Africa”

*Now shall my inward joys arise, and burst into a song;  
Almighty love inspires my heart, and pleasure tunes my tongue.*

*God, on His thirsty Zion’s hill, some mercy drops has thrown;  
And solemn oaths have bound His love to show’r salvation down.*

*Why do we then indulge our fears, suspicions and complaints?  
Is He a God, and shall His grace grow weary of His saints?*

+Prayer of Dedication

**Our task now is to mend our broken world;  
if religion cannot do that, it is worthless.  
And what our world needs now  
is not belief, not certainty,  
but compassionate action  
and practically expressed respect  
for the sacred value of all human beings,  
even our enemies.**

+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.**

## THE CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table

+*Please stand in body or spirit*

"The Lone, Wild Bird"

**The lone, wild bird in lofty flight  
Is still with Thee, nor leaves Thy sight.  
And I am Thine! I rest in Thee.  
Great Spirit, come, and rest in me.**

**The ends of earth are in Thy hand,  
The sea's dark deep and far off land.  
And I am Thine! I rest in Thee.  
Great Spirit, come, and rest in me.**

Sharing the Bread and Cup

*Our communion elements include both wine and white grape juice, and bread and gluten-free and vegan crackers. All are always welcome to communion at Covenant.*

+Communion Response

New Britain

**Through many dangers, toils and snares  
I have already come:  
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.**

+Affirmation of Faith

**There need to be stories;  
love has to be told, danced,  
sung and whistled...  
Love has to be evoked  
over and over again.**

*+Please stand in body or spirit*

“My Shepherd Will Supply My Need”

**My Shepherd will supply my need; Jehovah is His name:  
In pastures fresh He makes me feed, beside the living stream.  
He brings my wandering spirit back, when I forsake His ways;  
And leads me, for His mercy’s sake, in paths of truth and grace.**

**When I walk through the shades of death Your presence is my stay;  
One word of Your supporting breath drives all my fears away.  
Your hand, in sight of all my foes, does still my table spread;  
My cup with blessings overflows, Your oil anoints my head.**

**The sure provisions of my God attend me all my days;  
O may Your House be my abode, and all my work be praise.  
There would I find a settled rest, while others go and come;  
No more a stranger, or a guest, but like a child at home.**

Benediction

+Postlude

Caleb Hatch, 2026

“Colorado”

*O they tell me of a home far beyond the skies, O they tell me of a home far away.*

*O they tell me of a home where no storm clouds rise, O they tell me of an unclouded day.*

*O they tell me of a home where my friends have gone, O they tell me of that land far away,*

*O they tell me of a home where no storm clouds rise, O they tell me of an unclouded day.*

*O they tell me that He smiles on His children there, and his smile drives all their sorrows away;*

*And they tell me that no tears ever come again, in that lovely land of unclouded day.*

*I am on my journey home far away, far away, I’m on my journey to unclouded days.*

+Please stand in body or spirit

\*Please hold silence and remain seated during the postlude

## Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Fran Avera**.

The Call to Worship is by Frederic Brussat.

The Opening Sentences are adapted from *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time* by Marcus Borg.

The Unison Confession is by Jeremy Rutledge.

**Deacon Dennis Robinson** gives the prayer.

The Prayer of Dedication is from *The Spiral Staircase: My Climb Out of Darkness* by Karen Armstrong.

The Affirmation of Faith is from “Where Love Is, There Is God” in *The Mystery of Death* by Dorothee Sölle.

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## About Today's Service

All of today's music is sourced from shape-note singing, the oldest form of written music distinct to the post-colonization United States. Shape-note music was written to be sung a capella, in three- or four-part dispersed harmony, by amateur musicians to help them build music literacy. Traces of shape-note tunes show up all throughout our hymnal—all three of today's hymns were originally shape-note tunes! The historic practice of shape-note singing is preserved in local groups across the world who gather regularly and annually to sing together from a variety of shape-note tunebooks. Today's singers are a mixed group of Covenant members and a few non-members who sing shape notes in our sanctuary on third Monday evenings.

It is also a living compositional tradition. Caleb Hatch, who is singing lead today, wrote today's postlude in the style of the Sacred Harp. He writes, “Among several things, Sacred Harp music has granted me a space to reconcile and redefine my relationship with Christianity. Many compositions, both my own and otherwise, reclaim tunes and texts that had significance in my fundamentalist upbringing. The tune ‘Colorado’ is set to the poetry of the well known hymn ‘The Unclouded Day,’ a song that I would often sing with my siblings and teach my friends while hiking in the mountains. It is dedicated to the Sacred Harp singers of Colorado.”

–Jason Steiner

## Announcements

Fruit Shirt Sunday draws near on **July 5**.

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.** Tickets are \$19 each. Please contact Jason Steiner if you'd like to attend ([jason@covenanthouston.org](mailto:jason@covenanthouston.org)).

## Calendar

Mon. June 22	7pm	Insight Meditation, Huff Fellowship Hall.
Thurs. June 25	10am	Community Group, Zoom.
	1:15pm	Lunctime Lectionary Lab, Zoom.
Fri. June 26	6pm	Collab-Lab for Pre-K students and families, Parking Lot.
Sun. June 28	9:30am	Adult Education, 2nd floor of Huff Fellowship Hall building or on Zoom: Elia Chino shares her story and the history of FLAS, a local nonprofit providing medical resources to LGBTQ Latine Houstonians.

## 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.*