



COVENANT CHURCH

H O U S T O N

A Service of Worship for
5 July 2026

In the end, your life will be
measured not by what you have,
It will be measured by the fruit you bear and the life you live.
It will be measured
by what kind of love
you really have.

—from *Hope on a Tightrope: Words and Wisdom* by Cornel West

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ring in the hour

Silence is kept

*Prelude

“Down a Country Lane”

Aaron Copland
(1900-1990)

Call to Worship

+Opening Hymn #455

Lasst uns erfreuen

“All Creatures of Our God and King”

**All creatures of our God and King,
Lift up your voice and with us sing,
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Thou burning sun with golden beam,
Thou silver moon with softer gleam,
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**Thou rushing wind that art so strong,
Ye clouds that sail in heav’n along,
O sing ye! Alleluia!
Thou rising morn, in praise rejoice,
Ye lights of evening, find a voice!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**Thou flowing water, pure and clear,
Make music for thy Lord to hear,
Alleluia! Alleluia!**

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

+Please stand in body or spirit

**Thou fire so masterful and bright,
That givest us both warmth and light,
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**Thou fertile earth, that day by day
Unfoldest blessings on your way,
O sing ye! Alleluia!
The flowers and fruits that in thee grow,
Let them God's glory also show!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**And everyone of tender heart,
Forgiving others, take your part,
O sing ye! Alleluia!
Ye who long pain and sorrow bear,
Praise God and cast on God your care!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**All creatures, your Creator bless,
And worship God in humbleness.
O sing ye! Alleluia!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
And praise the Spirit, Three in One!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

⁺Opening Sentences

**We confess the wisdom of the garden:
that the seeds we tend most carefully
will be the food shared at our table.**

Invitation and Missions Invitation

Scripture Lesson

Isaiah 55:10-13; Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

These are our sacred stories.

Thanks be to God.

+Please stand in body or spirit

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

**Connections are made slowly,
sometimes they grow underground.
You cannot always tell by looking
what is happening.
More than half a tree is spread out
in the soil under your feet.
Penetrate quietly as the earthworm
that blows no trumpet.
Fight persistently as the creeper
that brings down the tree.
Spread like the squash plant that
overruns the garden.
Gnaw in the dark and use the sun
to make sugar.
Weave real connections, create
real nodes, build real houses.**

Words of Assurance

Music

Leonard Bernstein
(1918-1990)

"A Simple Song"

Sing God a simple song: Lauda, Laude...

Make it up as you go along: Lauda, Laude...

Sing like you like to sing. God loves all simple things, for God is the simplest of all.

+Please stand in body or spirit

*I will sing the Lord a new song to praise Him, to bless Him, to bless the Lord.
I will sing His praises while I live. All of my days.*

*Blessed is the man who loves the Lord, blessed is the man who praises Him.
Lauda, Lauda, Laude... and walks His ways.*

*I will lift up my eyes to the hills from whence comes my help.
I will lift up my voice to the Lord singing Lauda, Laude.
For the Lord is my shade, is the shade up on my right hand,
And the sun shall not smite me by day nor the moon by night.*

*Blessed is the man who loves the Lord, Lauda, Lauda, Laude... and walks His ways.
Lauda, Lauda, Laude, Lauda, Lauda di da di day... all of my days.*

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

⁺Hymn #553

East Acklam

"For the Fruit of All Creation"

**For the fruit of all creation, thanks be to God.
For the gifts to every nation, thanks be to God.
For the plowing, sowing, reaping, silent growth while we are sleeping,
Future needs in earth's safekeeping, thanks be to God.**

**In the just reward of labor, God's will be done.
In the help we give our neighbor, God's will be done.
In our world-wide task of caring for the hungry and despairing,
In the harvests we are sharing, God's will be done.**

**For the harvests of the Spirit, thanks be to God.
For the good we all inherit, thanks be to God.
For the wonders that astound us, for the truths that still confound us,
Most of all that love has found us, thanks be to God.**

⁺*Please stand in body or spirit*

Prayer

Offering

Offertory

Aaron David Miller

“All Things Bright and Beautiful”

(b. 1972)

We will donate all cash offerings on the first Sunday of each month. This means that we will give 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 Fundación Latinoamericana De Acción Social. FLAS was started by Elia Chino in 1994 to address the particular needs of the Latino LGBTQIA+ community.

+Prayer of Dedication

Live a life you can endure: make

love that is loving.

Keep tangling and interweaving

and taking more in, a thicket and

bramble wilderness to the outside

but to us interconnected

with rabbit runs and burrows

and lairs.

Live as if you like yourself, and it

may happen:

Reach out, keep reaching out,

keep bringing in.

This is how we are going to live for

a long time: not always,

For every gardener knows that after

the digging, after the planting,

after the long season of tending

and growth, the harvest comes.

+Please stand in body or spirit

+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

**To be of the Earth is to know
the restlessness of being a seed
the darkness of being planted
the struggle toward the light
the pain of growth into the light
the joy of bursting and bearing fruit
the love of being food for someone
the scattering of your seeds
the decay of the seasons
the mystery of death and
the miracle of birth.**

+Closing Hymn

Hyfrydol

“Fruitful Trees, the Spirit’s Sowing”

**Fruitful trees, the Spirit’s sowing,
may we ripen and increase,
fruit to life eternal growing,
rich in love and joy and peace.
Laden branches freely bearing
gifts the Giver loves to bless;
here is fruit that grows by sharing,
patience, kindness, gentleness.**

**Rooted deep in Christ our Master,
Christ our pattern and our goal,
teach us, as the years fly faster,
goodness, faith, and self-control.**

+Please stand in body or spirit

**Fruitful trees, the Spirit's tending,
may we grow till harvests cease;
till we taste, in life unending,
heaven's love and joy and peace.**

Benediction

*Postlude

“Improvisation on ‘The Fruit of the Spirit’”

+Please stand in body or spirit

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

Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Kiersten Scott-Collyer**.

The Call to Worship is by Anne Hillman, reprinted in *Life Prayers from Around the World*, edited by Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon.

The Opening Sentences are by Jeremy Rutledge.

David Reeves gives the Invitation for Missions Committee.

The Unison Confession and Prayer of Dedication are from “Connections Are Made Slowly” by Marge Piercy.

The soloist is **Casey Okabayashi**.

The Affirmation of Faith is by John Soos.

The text of “Fruitful Trees, the Spirit’s Sowing” is by Timothy Dudley-Smith.

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About Today’s Service

A small catechism on Fruit Shirt Sunday:

Q: What is Fruit Shirt Sunday?

A: Look around you for the answer.

Q: How did Fruit Shirt Sunday begin?

A: Sometime in the spring of 2025, Richard Johnson and I realized we both owned fruit-patterned shirts. We thought it would be nice to coordinate wearing them to church sometime. Clearly, it escalated.

Q: What is a “fruit”?

A: David Ramsey answered this beautifully on Facebook last year, saying, “A fruit is a mature ovary. In addition to grapes and peaches, tomatoes and pumpkins are fruits. Sweet potatoes and carrots, celery and rhubarb are not fruits. However, if you show up at church on Fruit Shirt Sunday in a carrot shirt, I will still be glad to see you there.”

Q: Does it matter?

A: Of course it matters.

–Jason Steiner

Announcements

Summer Pick-Up Choir meets a week from today on **July 12**.

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). The deadline to sign up is **Monday, July 27**, and earlier is better.

Calendar

Mon. July 6	7pm	Insight Meditation, Huff Fellowship Hall.
Thurs. July 9	10am	Community Group, Zoom.
Sat. July 11	9am	Art as Prayer, Huff Fellowship Hall.
Sun. July 12	9:30am	Adult Education Classroom, 2nd floor of Huff Fellowship Hall Building: Rob Zaretsky will be our speaker.
	10am	Summer Pick-Up Choir, 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

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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.