

# COVENANT CHURCH

## H O U S T O N

A Service of Worship for  
12 July 2026

May the tide  
never tire of its tender toil  
how over and over  
it forgives the Moon  
the daily exile  
and returns to turn  
mountains into sand  
as if to say,  
you too can have  
this homecoming  
you too possess  
this elemental power  
of turning  
the stone in the heart  
into golden dust.

—*Maria Popova, "Forgiveness"*



Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!

**And also with you!**

Ring in the hour

Silence is kept

\*Prelude

“Chant Donn   (Hommage    Jean Gallon)”

Maurice Durufl  

(1902-1986)

Call to Worship

+Opening Hymn #261

O Quanta Qualia

“God of Compassion, in Mercy Befriend Us”

**God of compassion, in mercy befriend us;**

**Giver of grace for our needs all-availing,**

**Wisdom and strength for each day do Thou send us,**

**Patience untiring and courage unfailing.**

**Wand’ring and lost, Thou has sought us and found us,**

**Stilled our rude hearts with Thy word of consoling;**

**Wrap now Thy peace, like a mantle, around us,**

**Guarding our thoughts and our passions controlling.**

**How shall we stray, with Thy hand to direct us,**

**Thou who the stars in their courses art guiding?**

**What shall we fear, with Thy power to protect us,**

**We who walk forth in Thy greatness confiding?**

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

*+Please stand in body or spirit*

<sup>+</sup>Opening Sentences

**Forgiveness does not relieve someone of responsibility for what they have done. Forgiveness does not erase accountability. It is not about turning a blind eye or even turning the other cheek. It is not about letting someone off the hook or saying it is okay to do something monstrous. Forgiveness is simply about understanding that every one of us is both inherently good and inherently flawed. Within every hopeless situation and every seemingly hopeless person lies the possibility of transformation.**

Invitation

Scripture Lesson

Psalm 14

These are our sacred stories.

**Thanks be to God.**

Time for Children

<sup>+</sup>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

**If prayer would do it  
I'd pray.  
If reading esteemed thinkers would do it  
I'd be halfway through the Patriarchs.  
If discourse would do it  
I'd be sitting with His Holiness  
every moment he was free.**

*+Please stand in body or spirit*

**If contemplation would do it  
I'd have translated the Periodic Table  
to hermit poems, converting  
matter to spirit.  
If even fighting would do it  
I'd already be a black belt.  
If anything other than love could do it  
I'd have done it already  
and left the hardest for last.**

Words of Assurance

Music

Alfred Fedak  
(b. 1953)

**"The Falconer"**

*Rise, my song, and stretch your wings, delight and need to trace.*

*Rise for those the gospel brings to seek a singing place.*

*This will be our singing day, word and tune will both be true.*

*Song, soar up, but not away, the falconer waits for you.*

*Rise, my song, and have no fear of soaring wide and high.*

*Christ the falconer is near, wherever you may fly.*

*See the human world below, showing scars and beauty too.*

*In a closing circle go, the falconer waits for you.*

*Soar, my song, with wings wide fanned, delight and need to trace.*

*Come to Christ's uplifted hand, and find a resting place.*

*One day soaring song shall see everything made whole and new.*

*Day of gladness, come to be! the falconer waits for you.*

Silent Reflection

Prayer

Offering

Offertory

Paul Hindemith  
(1895-1963)

**"Sonata II: 2nd Movement: Ruhig bewegt"**

<sup>+</sup>Prayer of Dedication

**Love, sacred mystery at the heart of all things, holy are you.  
May your domain spread out across the world.  
May all have what they need, today and all days.  
May we forgive ourselves for our failings and strive to do better.  
May we forgive others for their failings and  
    invite them to do better, even as they forgive themselves and us.  
If we must face difficulties, may we do so  
    with courage, humor, humility, and grace.  
If we must face evil, may we not be overcome  
    with it but may we overcome evil with love.  
For love is the measure of all things and the  
    hope of humanity, now and forever, Amen.**

<sup>+</sup>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

<sup>+</sup>Hymn #358

Baronita

"Help Us Accept Each Other"

**Help us accept each other as Christ accepted us;  
Teach us as sister, brother, each person to embrace.  
Be present, Lord, among us and bring us to believe  
We are ourselves accepted and meant to love and live.**

*+Please stand in body or spirit*

**Teach us, O Lord, your lessons, as in our daily life  
We struggle to be human and search for hope and faith.  
Teach us to care for people, for all, not just for some,  
To love them as we find them or as they may become.**

**Let your acceptance change us, so that we may be moved  
In living situations to do the truth in love;  
To practice your acceptance until we know by heart  
The table of forgiveness and laughter's healing art.**

**Lord, for today's encounters with all who are in need,  
Who hunger for acceptance, for righteousness and bread,  
We need new eyes for seeing, new hands for holding on:  
Renew us with your spirit; Lord, free us, make us one!**

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.*

<sup>+</sup>Communion Response

Lobe den Herren

**Grateful, we come now by Christ's invitation clear-spoken.  
We seek the nourishment found in fruit crushed and bread broken.  
Christ for us all! Come, let us answer the call,  
offering our lives as the token.**

<sup>+</sup>Affirmation of Faith

**The time will come  
when, with elation,  
you will greet yourself arriving  
at your own door, in your own mirror,  
and each will smile at the other's welcome,  
and say, sit here. Eat.**

*+Please stand in body or spirit*

**You will love again the stranger who was your self.  
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart  
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you  
all your life, whom you ignored  
for another, who knows you by heart.  
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,  
the photographs, the desperate notes,  
peel your own image from the mirror.  
Sit. Feast on your life.**

<sup>+</sup>Closing Hymn #374

Dickinson College

**“Lord, Make Us Servants of Your Peace”**

**Lord, make us servants of Your peace;  
Where there is hate, may we sow love;  
Where there is hurt, may we forgive;  
Where there is strife, may we make one.**

**Where all is doubt, may we sow faith;  
Where all is gloom, may we sow hope;  
Where all is night, may we sow light;  
Where all is tears, may we sow joy.**

**Jesus, our Lord, may we not seek  
To be consoled, but to console,  
Nor look to understanding hearts,  
But look for hearts to understand.**

**May we not look for love's return,  
But seek to love unselfishly,  
For in our giving we receive,  
And in forgiving are forgiv'n.**

*+Please stand in body or spirit*



**Dying, we live, and are reborn  
Through death's dark night to endless day:  
Lord, make us servants of Your peace  
To wake at last in heaven's light.**

Benediction

\*Postlude

“Postlude in D”

Healey Willan  
(1880-1968)

*+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 organist is Carl McAliley.

The Call to Worship is “The Reasons for Liturgy” by Amy Gottlieb.

The Opening Sentences are from *The Book of Forgiving: The Fourfold Path for Healing Ourselves and Our World* by Desmond Tutu.

The Unison Confession is “If Prayer Would Do It” by Stephen Levine.

The Prayer is given by **Deacon Dennis Robinson**.

The Prayer of Dedication is from “The Jesus Prayer: An Interpretation” by Amanda Udis-Kessler.

The Affirmation of Faith is “Love Afer Love” by Derek Wolcott.

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## **About Today's Service**

Amy Gottlieb is a novelist and poet. In a recent interview, she stated, “My immersion in Judaism and my literary work feed each other. I teach English literature and writing to college students, Jewish texts to adult learners, and creative non-fiction to clergy. I inhabit a liminal space between these overlapping worlds and find this convergent space ripe with possibility. Most of my work draws from this well in some way; I’m consistently energized by these intersections and frictions. I find the craft of poetry incredibly liberating, as it allows me to explore the nuances, juxtapositions, music, and precision of language, while working on a small canvas.”

Her poem “The Reasons for Liturgy” explores how we find spiritual endurance and meaning amid the inevitable messiness and chaos of life.

—*Raymond Stubblefield*

## Announcements

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

The next Summer Pick-Up Choir, which welcomes all singers, will be on August 16.

## Calendar

|                |        |                                                                                   |
|----------------|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mon. July 13   | 7pm    | Insight Meditation, Huff Fellowship Hall.                                         |
| Thurs. July 16 | 10am   | Community Group, Zoom.                                                            |
|                | 1:15pm | Lunchtime Lectionary Lab, Zoom.                                                   |
| Sun. July 19   | 9:30am | Adult Education Classroom, 2nd floor of Huff Fellowship Hall Building or on Zoom. |

## Information

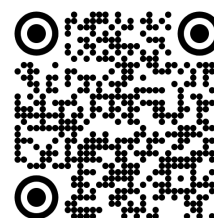
**Childcare** is provided in the children's area beginning at 9:30 a.m. Children aged 2 and under are invited to the nursery. Children aged 3 to 9 are invited to the children's area after the Time for Children.

**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 in her or his own 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.*