



COVENANT CHURCH

H O U S T O N

A Service of Worship for
19 July 2026

It is said that after Jacob wrestled with God, he walked with a limp.
So it has been with the Bible and me.
I have wrestled with the Bible, and it has left me with a limp.
But I am glad. I am glad because this limp has slowed me down a bit.
It has humbled me. It has forced me to stop running so fast and sure
down the path of certainty that I forget to listen,
to pay attention, to ask questions, to build altars, to wait.
—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

*Prelude

“Cantabile” from *Manuale*, Op. 79

Flor Peeters
(1903-1986)

Call to Worship

+Opening Hymn #263

St. Denio

“Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise”

**Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.**

**Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above
Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.**

**To all, life thou givest, to both great and small;
In all life Thou livest, the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish like leaves on the tree,
Then wither and perish; but naught changeth Thee.**

**Thou reignest in glory, Thou rulest in light,
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;
All praise we would render; O help us to see
'Tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee!**

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

+Please stand in body or spirit

⁺Opening Sentences

**The whole message of the Christian scripture is based
in the idea of metanoia, the change of heart that happens
when we meet God face-to-face. Even a cursory knowledge of
history reveals that Christianity is a religion about change.**

Invitation

Scripture Lesson

Genesis 32:3-31

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.**

Call to Confession

Silent Confession

Unison Confession

**O God of our restless hearts' desiring,
whom we both fear and love,
believe and doubt,
honor and betray,
teach us by the contradictions
of our own nature
the meaning and purpose
that are striving to find room
in our lives.**

Words of Assurance

+Please stand in body or spirit

Music

Henry Purcell
(1659-1695)

*“We Sing to Him” from Harmonia Sacra
We sing to Him, whose wisdom formed the ear,
our songs, let Him who gave us voices, hear;
we joy in God, who is the Spring of mirth,
who loves the harmony of Heaven and Earth;
our humble sonnets shall that praise rehearse,
who is the music of the Universe.
And whilst we sing we consecrate our art,
And offer up with every tongue a heart.*

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

⁺Hymn

Morning Song

“As Jacob Did in Days of Old”

**As Jacob did in days of old,
So will my soul do now—
Wrestle and on my God I’ll hold,
Nor will I let thee go.**

**Like Jacob, I am weak and faint,
And overwhelmed with woe;
Lord, hear and pity my complaint.
For I’ll not let thee go.**

**I come, encouraged by thy word
That mercy thou wilt show;
Except thou bless me, dearest Lord,
I will not let thee go.**

**I come to ask forgiveness free,
Though I have been thy foe;
Except thou grant it, Lord to me,
I will not let thee go.**

+Please stand in body or spirit

Prayer

Offering

Offertory

“Concerto in A Minor”

Antonio Vivaldi
(1678-1741)

⁺Prayer of Dedication

God of challenges and surprises:

You call us into the wilderness,

there to search us and test us.

You wait for us to make the hard choices

through which we grow in faith and service.

But often we fear those times of decision.

We are drawn to easy answers and instant solutions.

**We are tempted by our desire for security, for comfort,
for control over our own lives.**

**We listen to the voices of ambition and compromise,
of laziness and self-absorption.**

Forgive us, God.

Renew a right spirit within us.

Strengthen us to be open to your leading in our lives.

**Give us the vision and courage to follow you
on the journey to which we are called.**

⁺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.

+Please stand in body or spirit

⁺Affirmation of Faith

Faith is the quality that allows us to find a way to go on, to feel empowered, to—no matter what—keep on trying. This is not a sentimental faith that everything will be just fine, according to our wishes or our timetable. Rather, it is an awakened faith that gives us the courage to go into the unknown, the remembrance that nothing is fixed, and the understanding that as long as we are alive, possibility is alive. It is the power of faith that inspires us to step forward into the center of our lives—to participate, to link up, to reach out to others and let others reach out to us, to work for a better world. And it is the vitality of faith that tells us, however easy it is to forget or be overcome by fear, that the place for communicating, for loving, for sheltering, for trying, is right where we are.

⁺Closing Hymn #540

Randolph

“God Be With You Till We Meet Again ”

**God be with you till we meet again;
Loving counsels guide, uphold you,
With a Shepherd’s care enfold you:
God be with you till we meet again.**

**God be with you till we meet again;
Unseen wings protecting hide you,
Daily manna still provide you:
God be with you till we meet again.**

**God be with you till we meet again;
When life’s perils thick confound you,
Put unfailing arms around you:
God be with you till we meet again.**

**God be with you till we meet again;
Keep love’s banner floating o’er you,
Smite death’s threatening wave before you:
God be with you till we meet again.**

+Please stand in body or spirit

Benediction

*Postlude

Henry Purcell

“Hallelujah” from *An Evening Hymn*

+*Please stand in body or spirit*

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

Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Jadyn Grannis**.

The organist is Carl McAliley.

The Call to Worship is “The Invitation” by Oriah Mountain Dreamer.

The Opening Sentences are by Diana Butler Bass.

The Unison Confession is from *The Language of the Heart* by Powell Davies.

The soloist is Mary Hines Lee.

The hymn text of “As Jacob Did in Days of Old” is by Samuel Medley.

The Prayer of Dedication is from *Worship for All Seasons*, Volume 2, edited by Thomas Harding.

The Affirmation of Faith is by Sharon Salzberg.

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About Today's Service

Our epigraph this morning is by Rachel Held Evans. I have long appreciated her writing. Through many books and articles Rachel Held Evans documented and explored her own transition from religious certainty to an expansive faith of doubt and questioning. Her second book, *A Year of Biblical Womanhood* is, in my opinion, amazing (perhaps especially for those of us who grew up in more fundamentalist circles of Christianity). *Faith Unraveled* is another of her books that I find deeply meaningful. It is the narrative of her deconstruction, reconstruction, curiosity, and faith. I have many of her books and I am glad to loan them. She died in 2019. And while I never knew her personally, I have mourned the loss of her powerful voice. She managed to speak to some of the most meaningful and often painful aspects of life and of Christianity with humor and personal connection.

—*Laura Mayo*

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

Calendar

Sun. July 19	12:30pm	Youth Fellowship, Huff Fellowship Hall.
Mon. July 20	7pm	Insight Meditation, Huff Fellowship Hall.
	7pm	Houston Sacred Harp, Narthex.
Thurs. July 23	10am	Community Group, Zoom.
	1:15pm	Lunchtime Lectionary Lab, Zoom.
Sun. July 26	9:30am	Adult Education Classroom, 2nd floor of Huff Fellowship Hall Building or on Zoom. Bill Kline presents on greatness.

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

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.