

COVENANT CHURCH

H O U S T O N

A Service of Worship for
26 July 2026

A theology that is informed by parables is necessarily
a risky and open-ended kind of reflection.
It recognizes not only the inconclusiveness of all conceptualization
when dealing with matters between God and human beings
(an insight as old as religion itself), but also the pain and
skepticism—the disease—of such reflection.
Theology of this sort is not neat and comfortable; but neither is
the life with and under God of which it attempts to speak.
—Sallie McFague, *Speaking in Parables*

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ring in the hour

Silence is kept

*Prelude

“Simple Gifts”

Dale Wood
(1934-2003)

Call to Worship

+Opening Hymn #487

Laudes Domini

“When Morning Gilds the Skies”

**When morning gilds the skies,
My heart awaking cries:
May Jesus Christ be praised!
Alike at work and prayer
To Jesus I repair:
May Jesus Christ be praised!**

**Does sadness fill my mind?
A solace here I find:
May Jesus Christ be praised!
Or fades my earthly bliss?
My comfort still is this:
May Jesus Christ be praised!**

**Let earth's wide circle round
In joyful notes resound:
May Jesus Christ be praised!
Let air and sea and sky
From depth to height reply:
May Jesus Christ be praised!**

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

+Please stand in body or spirit

**Be this, while life is mine,
My canticle divine:
May Jesus Christ be praised!
Be this the eternal song
Through all the ages long:
May Jesus Christ be praised!**

⁺Opening Sentences

**The truth is not a matter
of elaborating the details of a parable
but of making God's nearness visible;**

**God can be seen in everyday life,
beside the bread trough.
Jesus wants to open people's eyes to this.**

**The work of all people,
work for life,
is transparent to God's work.**

**Such an image may sharpen our gaze
to what is work for human life
and what is not—
and what that has to do with God.**

Invitation

Scripture Lesson

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

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

**If the Kingdom of God is within you,
then everywhere you go
you should leave a little heaven behind.**

People will know you to be a heaven leaver.

**You can learn to love your crooked neighbor
with your crooked heart**

**because you're connected to a power and grace
greater than your ego.**

Words of Assurance

Music

Leon A. Hoffmeister

(1893-1966)

"Because of Thy Great Bounty"

Because I have been given much, I too shall give.

Because of thy great bounty, Lord, each day I live

I shall divide my gifts from Thee with ev'ry person that I see

Who has the need of help from me.

Because I have been sheltered, fed by thy good care,

I cannot see another's lack and I not share

My glowing fire, my loaf of bread, my roof's safe shelter overhead,

That they too, may be comforted.

Because love has been lavished so upon me, Lord,

A wealth I know that was not meant for me to hoard,

I shall give love to all I see, to all who need my sympathy.

Thus shall I show my thanks to Thee.

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

"Wherever I May Wander"

**Wherever I may wander, wherever I may be,
I'm certain of my Maker's love; God's care is over me.
God made the great high mountains, and made the wild blue sea;
God made the sky where airplanes fly; God made the world, and me.**

**Throughout the whole creation I see God's loving care
For everyone in every land, God's children everywhere.
Wherever I may wander, wherever I may be,
I'm certain of my Maker's love; God's care is over me.**

Prayer

Offering

Offertory

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy

"Song Without Words in E Major"

(1809-1847)

⁺Prayer of Dedication

**Gracious God,
grant me
 a sense of humor
 that adds perspective to compassion,
 an openness of mind
 that adds surprise to joy
that with gladness of heart
I may link arm and aim
with the One who saw signs of your reign
 in salt and yeast,
 pearls and seeds,
 travelers and tax collectors,
 sowers and harlots,
 foreigners and fishermen,
and opens my eyes with these signs
 and my ears with the summons
 to follow something more
 of justice and joy.**

+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

**His disciples said to him, "When will the kingdom come?"
Jesus said, "It will not come by waiting for it.
It will not be a matter of saying 'here it is' or 'there it is.'
Rather, the kingdom of the father is spread out upon the earth,
and men do not see it."**

+Closing Hymn #452 (*please see hymnal for text*)

St. Michael

"O Day of God, Draw Nigh"

Benediction

*Postlude

David German
(b. 1954)

"Festive Trumpet Tune"

+*Please stand in body or spirit*

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

Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Perry Primm**.

The Call to Worship is by Nancy Rockwell.

The Opening Sentences are adapted from “God in Everyday Life: The Parables” in *Jesus of Nazareth* by Dorothee Soelle and Louise Schottroff.

The Unison Confession is from *Hope on a Tightrope: Words and Wisdom* by Cornel West.

The soloist is **Dale Thomas**.

The text of “Because of Thy Great Bounty” is by Grace Noll Crowell.

The Prayer is given by **Deacon Amanda Cox-Floyd**.

The Prayer of Dedication is from *Guerrillas of Grace* by Ted Loder.

The Affirmation of Faith is from The Gospel of Thomas.

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About Today's Service

Today's Affirmation of Faith comes from the Gospel of Thomas, a non-canonical sayings gospel likely written in the second century CE. Non-canonical means it wasn't included in the Bible—Laura will teach you a longer synonym for this today during the Time for Children. A “sayings gospel” is a collection of pithy little quips by Jesus. The Gospel of Thomas was not written by the apostle Thomas; no one is really sure why it's named after him. About two-thirds of the content of the Gospel of Thomas is found in the Biblical canon, including a variation on the parable of the sower. The rest is strange and fun. You can find the complete text for free online, including my favorite line and the finale of the gospel: “For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.”

—Jason Steiner

Announcements

Join Ann Christensen and Ruddy Cravens in discussing and attending *A Comedy of Errors* at Miller Outdoor Theatre in Hermann Park on **August 4**. The deadline to sign up is Saturday, **August 1**, and a \$10 donation per ticket benefits Children & Youth Auction.

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.

Committees will meet on **August 9**.

Calendar

Mon. July 27	7pm	Insight Meditation, Huff Fellowship Hall.
Thurs. July 30	10am	Community Group, Zoom.
	1:15pm	Lunchtime Lectionary Lab, Zoom.
Sat. Aug. 1	7pm	Houston Dash Game, Shell Energy Stadium.
Sun. Aug. 2	9:30am	Adult Education Classroom, 2nd floor of Huff Fellowship Hall Building or on Zoom.

Information

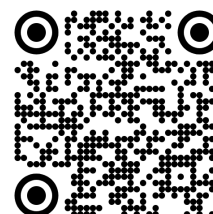
Childcare is provided in the children's area beginning at 9:30 a.m. Children aged 2 and under are invited to the nursery. Children aged 3 to 9 are invited to the children's area after the Time for Children.

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 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.