

COVENANT CHURCH

H O U S T O N

A Service of Worship for
9 August 2026

What's instructive is not
that he walked on water
but that he seemed so unharassed
by the possibility of complete
and utter catastrophe. Yes,
it could all fall apart, he seemed to say;
yes, the storm could turn your little ship
into a sudden coffin— yes. Faith, he told us then,
is not trusting things will one day be better.
Faith is trusting things could never be better. No matter what.

—“Storm on Galilee” by Teddy Macker

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ring in the hour

Silence is kept

*Prelude

“Prélude modal”

Jean Langlais
(1907-1991)

Call to Worship

+Opening Hymn #313

Down Ampney

“Come Down, O Love Divine”

**Come down, O Love divine, seek out this soul of mine
And visit it with Your own ardor glowing;
O Comforter, draw near, within my heart appear,
And kindle it, Your holy flame bestowing.**

**O let it freely burn, till earthly passions turn
To dust and ashes in its heat consuming;
And let Your glorious light shine ever on my sight,
And clothe me round, the while my path illuming.**

**And so the yearning strong with which the soul will long
Shall far outpass the power of human telling;
For none can guess God’s grace, till Love creates a place
Wherein the Holy Spirit makes a dwelling.**

+Opening Sentences

**The community of believers is the place where we learn the language of faith, hope,
and love. The speech and gestures of worship beckon us to a dance between our
woundings at the edge of adventure and experiences of bliss at the still center, a
rhythm of journeying and homecoming.**

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

+Please stand in body or spirit

Litany of Leave-Taking for Jason Steiner

Leader: Jason Steiner has been with and among us for three years. He has had many roles: organist, adult education leader, idea generator, bulletin creator, social media guru, friend, colleague, director, organizer, preacher, worship leader . . . What a gift he has been. We celebrate his time with us and his future. We celebrate his next steps as he pursues a Master of Divinity and continues to lean into his divine calling.

Jason: I am thankful for the ways that you supported me during my organ degree program, showing up en masse to my concerts and giving me grace and assistance navigating the treacherous waters of academia. I am thankful for the gift of time, and a job, for the past year, which gave me the space to discern my calling to seminary.

I am thankful to be in a church that is willing to play and experiment and change. You wore the fruit shirts. You put the Epiphany stars in your name tags. You built a pocket prairie in our backyard to give a worshipping home for the local bugs. I am thankful, too, for the bravery and intentionality you have all shown in this place—as worship leaders, poets, writers, hymn singers, and acolytes—and as caretakers of our church house, from the three-year-olds who recycle the extra bulletins after worship to the church ladies who pick up all the stray hairs off the seats each Friday morning. Participating and co-creating with you all in this community has changed my life.

People: Jason, you have shared so much of yourself with us. You are a visionary who has often helped us see ourselves and each other in new and expansive ways. You have given your time and expertise. You have embodied musicianship, spirituality, and welcome.

Leader: You will be greatly missed, and we reassure ourselves that while we will no longer share a city, we will always share gifts of this time together. We are so proud of you and will pray for you as you pursue the call of God. And so, now we give you our blessing: Wherever God leads you, may you go knowing we are with you.

Jason: You have expanded my imagination as to what a church can be. The gift of our time together will grow in me and bloom forward to the other congregations I will someday serve.

People: May you find where you go
a place of acceptance,
a place to worship,
a place to serve,
a place of joy,
a place of love.

**You are a part of us, and so we will continue to share in your life,
even when distance separates us.**

Scripture Lesson

Matthew 14:22-33

These are our sacred stories.

Thanks be to God.

Time for Children

⁺ Response:

Au Clair de la Lune

**Jesus' hands were kind hands, doing good to all,
Healing pain and sickness, blessing children small.
Let me watch you, Jesus, till I'm gentle too,
Till my hands are kind hands, quick to work for you.**

Call to Confession

Silent Confession

Unison Confession

**After all the hours of dressing up
and combing our hair and trying
to show our best face to the world,
we find ourselves bare, naked,
haunted, and painfully, wondrously clear,
full of visions and limitations, aware
of the great invitation to be kind. And
if we're lucky, we burn with hope.**

**It isn't safe, this life. Don't let anyone
tell you otherwise. But if you are able,**

+Please stand in body or spirit

as you listen to the screaming, sing.
Sing through the walls. Sing of miracles,
healing and light. Sing. Because when
all else is ash, still, we can sing. We can sing.

Words of Assurance

Music

Gwyneth Walker

“A Waterbird (Flying Into the Sun)”

(b. 1947)

*What I want is to see your face in a tree, in the sun coming out, in the air.
What I want is to hear the falcon-drum, and light again on your forearm.
To see in every palm your elegant silver coin shavings,
to turn with the wheel of the rain, to fall with the falling bread.
To swim like a huge fish in ocean water, to be Jacob recognizing Joseph.
To be a desert mountain instead of a city.
I'm tired of cowards. I want to live with lions. With Moses.
I want to sing like birds sing, not worrying who hears, or what they think.
I am a waterbird flying into the sun. What I want is to see your face
Beyond wanting, beyond place. I am a waterbird flying into the sun
Your old life was a frantic running from silence.
The speechless full moon comes out now.*

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

⁺Hymn #377

Pescador de Hombres

"Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore"

*Soloist sings **verse 1** in Spanish.*

*Then the Congregation sings **verses 1-4** in English.*

Soloist only:

Tú has venido a la orilla,

No has buscado nia sabios nia ricos,

Tan solo quieres que yo te siga.

⁺*Please stand in body or spirit*

Señor, me has mirado a los ojos
Y sonriendo has dicho mi nombre;
En la arena he dejado mi barca;
Junto a ti buscaré otro mar.

Congregation:

**You have come up to the lakeshore,
Looking neither for wise nor for wealthy.
You only wanted that I should follow.**

Refrain:

**O Lord, with Your eyes You have searched me,
And, while smiling, have called out my name.
Now my boat's left on the shoreline behind me.
Now with You I will seek other seas.**

**You know that I own so little,
In my boat there's no money nor weapons,
You'll only find there my nets and labor. (*Refrain*)**

**You need the caring of my hands.
Through my tiredness, may others find resting.
You need a love that just goes on loving. (*Refrain*)**

**You, who have fished other oceans,
Ever longed for by souls that are waiting,
My dear and good friend, as thus You call me. (*Refrain*)**

Prayer

Offering

Offertory

“Hymn of Promise”

Brenda Portman
(b. 1980)

+Prayer of Dedication

**Nothing worth doing is completed in our lifetime;
Therefore, we are saved by hope.**

+*Please stand in body or spirit*

**Nothing true or beautiful or good makes complete sense
in any immediate context of history;
Therefore, we are saved by faith.
Nothing we do, however virtuous,
can be accomplished alone;
Therefore, we are saved by love.
No virtuous act is quite as virtuous
from the standpoint of our friend or foe as from our own;
Therefore, we are saved by the final form of love
which is forgiveness.**

⁺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 live in the present moment is a miracle.
The miracle is not to walk on water.
The miracle is to walk on the green Earth
in the present moment, to appreciate
the peace and the beauty that are available now.
Peace is all around us—in the world and in nature—
and within us—in our bodies and our spirits.
Once we learn to touch this peace
we will be healed and transformed...
We need only to find ways to bring our body and mind
back to the present moment so we can touch
what is refreshing, healing, and wondrous.**

⁺Closing Hymn

Bethany

“Nearer, My God, To Thee”

**Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me,
still all my song shall be,
nearer, my God, to thee;
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!**

+Please stand in body or spirit

Though like the wanderer, the sun gone down,
darkness be over me, my rest a stone;
yet in my dreams I'd be
nearer, my God, to thee;
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

There let the way appear, steps unto heaven;
all that thou sendest me, in mercy given;
angels to beckon me
nearer, my God, to thee;
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

Then, with my waking thoughts bright with thy praise,
out of my stony griefs Bethel I'll raise;
so by my woes to be
nearer, my God, to thee;
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

Or if, on joyful wing cleaving the sky,
sun, moon, and stars forgot, upward I fly,
still all my song shall be,
nearer, my God, to thee;
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

Benediction

*Postlude

“Improvisation on ‘We Shall Overcome’”

Carl Haywood
(b. 1949)

+Please stand in body or spirit

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

Worship Notes

The worship leader and guitarist is **Mauricio Cuellar**.

The Call to Worship is from *Touch Holiness*, edited by Ruth C. Duck and Maren C. Tirabassi.

The Opening Sentences are from *Active Spirituality* by Kent Ira Groff.

The Unison Confession is “Instead of Losing Faith” by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer.

Norah Gharala is the soloist.

Deacon Emily Ramsey Holien gives the Prayer.

The Prayer of Dedication is from *Becoming: A Spiritual Guide for Navigating Adulthood* by Reinhold Niebuhr.

The Affirmation of Faith is from *Touching Peace: Practicing the Art of Mindful Living* by Thich Nhat Hanh.

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About Today's Service

“Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore” is the English translation of the song originally titled “Pescador de Hombres” (“Fisher of Men”), composed in 1979 by Spanish priest and composer Cesáreo Gabaráin after he visited Galilee. The song quickly became one of the most popular in Catholic churches worldwide. It was translated into English by Gertrude C. Suppe, George Lockwood, and Raquel Gutiérrez-Achon in 1988. It is said to have been one of Pope John Paul II’s favorite songs.

I learned it when I was 10 years old and used to sing it at school and at church. I have always found its melody calming and comforting, and its lyrics poetic. Hearing, playing, or singing this song brings back cherished memories of my childhood.

—*Mauricio Cuellar*

Announcements

Committees meet **after the worship service today.**

Please sign up to help with Pride Parade volunteer opportunities **Thursday, August 13 to Saturday, August 15.**

All singers are welcome to join the final Summer Pick-Up Choir meeting, with a single rehearsal directly before the worship service on **Sunday, August 16.**

We will bless students and educators during our next worship service on **August 16.**

Calendar

Sun. Aug. 9	12:30pm	Committee Meetings, Huff Fellowship Hall.
Mon. Aug. 10	7pm	Insight Meditation, Huff Fellowship Hall.
Thurs. Aug. 13	10am	Community Group, Zoom.
	1:15pm	Lunchtime Lectionary Lab, Zoom.
Fri. Aug. 15	7:30pm	Houston Pride Parade, Downtown Houston.
Sun. Aug. 16	9:30am	Adult Education, 2nd floor of Huff Fellowship Hall or on Zoom. Bill Kline speaks on rewilding the church.
	10:15am	Summer Pick-Up Choir, Sanctuary.

Information

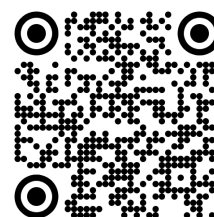
Childcare is provided in the children's area beginning at 9:30 a.m. Children aged 2 and under are invited to the nursery. Children aged 3 to 9 are invited to the children's area after the Time for Children.

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

Karen Kline, Interim Director of Music

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.