

COVENANT CHURCH

H O U S T O N

A Service of Worship for
16 August 2026

The prophetic figures in Israelite history
give voice to divine compassion and justice in order to
awaken human compassion and justice.

—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

“Ballade en mode Phrygien”

Jehan Alain
(1911-1940)

Call to Worship

+Opening Hymn

Two Oaks

“Let Us Build a House/All Are Welcome”

**Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:
all are welcome; all are welcome;
all are welcome in this place.**

**Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God’s children dare to seek
to dream God’s reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God’s grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:
all are welcome; all are welcome;
all are welcome in this place.**

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

+Please stand in body or spirit

**Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine, and wheat;
a banquet hall on holy ground
where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us:
all are welcome; all are welcome;
all are welcome in this place.**

**Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger:
all are welcome; all are welcome;
all are welcome in this place.**

**Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace;
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:
all are welcome; all are welcome;
all are welcome in this place.**

⁺Opening Sentences

**Welcome to this place of possibility!
This is love's hearth, the home of hope,
a refuge for minds in search of truth unfolding, ever beautiful,
ever strange.**

+Please stand in body or spirit

**Here, compassion is our shelter,
freedom our protection from the storms of bigotry and hate.
In this place, may we find comfort and courage.
Here may our sight become vision to see the unseen,
to glimpse the good that is yet to be.**

Invitation

Bible Dedication for Rosalie Longoria

Minister: Every week we read from the sacred stories together and each of us understands them a bit differently. Listening together we can hear many things.

People: Thus we are joined as a community of interpreters, giving and receiving in our search for what is sacred.

Director of Children and Youth: One of our customs is to offer our children the sacred stories in the hopes that they will read them carefully and offer us their insights.

People: For we affirm that every person has access to the divine and all of us gathered are illumined by an inner light.

Minister: There is one among us, Rosalie Longoria, who is in her eleventh year of life. In our Covenant tradition, we honor this age by welcoming her into the community of interpreters. Together we have much to learn from each other. Rosalie, we would like to give you the stories that are sacred to us.

Director of Children and Youth: Will you read them and think about them always, remembering that they are meant to teach us love for God, our neighbors, and our world?

Rosalie: I will read these sacred stories and learn from them what they mean.

People: Then together we will join with you, Rosalie, and with others in the great and ongoing conversation among interpreters. We will share our understanding, our experiences, our questions, and our hopes as we read from the sacred stories and open ourselves to the dialogue that follows. We welcome and affirm you as a companion in this process.

These are our sacred stories.

Thanks be to God.

Time for Children: Back to School Litany of Blessing

Leader: Will students, of all ages, please stand. We are proud of you. We support who you are and who you are becoming. We pray that as you learn and grow you will develop compassionate hearts and minds.

People: As your faith community, we pledge to be with you on your educational journey. We will do all that we are able to ensure that your schools are positive places filled with hope and the resources you need as you pursue your education. We want you to know that you are loved, you are held in our prayers, and you matter to us.

Leader: Will the teachers, administrators, counselors, school volunteers, support staff, and all who work in education, please stand. Being involved in education is a high calling. Those who work with our children help shape the future. We give thanks for everyone who works in education.

People: We celebrate your calling and pledge to support you and others in our communities who are involved in education. We want you to know that you are loved, you are held in our prayers, and you matter to us.

Leader: As we recognize those who work in schools, we recognize as well those who work with students at home. Will parents or guardians of our students, please stand. Education involves a partnership between school, home, and community. The support of parents and guardians is essential to a student's success. Today we recognize you for the support you give the students in your home.

People: We pledge our support to parents and guardians. We will work to encourage and strengthen those in our church who provide care for students. We want you to know that you are loved, you are held in our prayers, and you matter to us.

All: May the Lord bless you and keep you, may the Lord's face shine upon you and give you peace. Amen.

⁺ 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

**Compassion asks us to go where it hurts,
to enter into the places of pain,
to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish.
Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery,
to mourn with those who are lonely,
to weep with those in tears.
Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak,
vulnerable with the vulnerable,
and powerless with the powerless.
Compassion means full immersion
in the condition of being human.**

Words of Assurance

Music

Irish melody, arr. Daniel Damon

"Spirit, Open My Heart"

(b. 1955)

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

⁺ Hymn #343

Beecher

"Called as Partners in Christ's Service"

**Called as partners in Christ's service, called to ministries of grace,
We respond with deep commitment fresh new lines of faith to trace.
May we learn the art of sharing, side by side and friend with friend,
Equal partners in our caring to fulfill God's chosen end.**

⁺ *Please stand in body or spirit*

**Christ's example, Christ's inspiring, Christ's clear call to work and worth,
Let us follow, never faltering, reconciling folk on earth.
Men and women, richer, poorer, all God's people, young and old,
Blending human skills together gracious gifts from God unfold.**

**Thus new patterns for Christ's mission, in a small or global sense,
Help us bear each other's burdens, breaking down each wall or fence.
Words of comfort, words of vision, words of challenge, said with care,
Bring new power and strength for action, make us colleagues, free and fair.**

**So God grant us for tomorrow ways to order human life
That surround each person's sorrow with a calm that conquers strife.
Make us partners in our living, our compassion to increase,
Messengers of faith, thus giving hope and confidence and peace.**

Prayer

Offering

Offertory

“Andante” from Prélude Liturgique No. 22”

Gaston Litaize
(1909-1991)

+Prayer of Dedication

**By acting compassionately, by helping to restore justice
and to encourage peace, we are acknowledging that
we are all part of one another.**

+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

**What we choose
changes us.**

**Who we love
transforms us.**

**How we create
remakes us.**

**Where we live
reshapes us.**

**So in all our choosing,
O God, make us wise;
in all our loving,
O Christ, make us bold;
in all our creating,
O Spirit, give us courage;
in all our living
may we become whole.**

⁺Closing Hymn #402

Dickinson College

“Now Praise the Hidden God of Love”

**Now praise the hidden God of love,
In whom we all must live and move,
Who shepherds us at every stage,
Through youth, maturity, and age:**

**Who challenged us, when we were young,
To storm the citadels of wrong;
In care for others taught us how
God’s true community must grow:**

**Who bids us never lose our zest,
Though age is urging us to rest,
But proves to us that we have still
A work to do, a place to fill.**

⁺*Please stand in body or spirit*

Benediction

*Postlude

“‘Allegro’ from Trio Sonata No. 1, BWV 525”

Johann Sebastian Bach

(1685-1750)

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

Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Amy Cuellar**.

The Call to Worship is by Kathy Huff.

The Opening Sentences are from Marianne Hachten Cotter in *Rejoice Together: Prayers, Meditations, and Other Readings for Family, Individual, and Small Group Worship*, edited by Helen Pickett.

The Bible Dedication is for **Rosalie Longoria**.

The Unison Confession is by Henri J.M. Nouwen.

The text of “Spirit, Open My Heart” is by Ruth C. Duck (1947-2024).

Deacon Amanda Cox-Floyd gives the Prayer.

The Prayer of Dedication is by Ram Dass.

The Affirmation of Faith is from *In Wisdom's Path* by Jan Richardson.

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About Today's Service

In my memory, the first time I heard the hymn “Let Us Build a House” (also known as “All Are Welcome”), I was in Divinity School. I was in Wait Chapel for a University-wide chapel service. There were hundreds of us. Based on volume, it was a new hymn to many of us. But as the verses progressed and we became familiar with the tune, we got louder and louder. We were inspired by beautifully compelling words such as “Here the outcast and the stranger/ bear the image of God's face;/ let us bring an end to fear and danger:/ All are welcome.” The lyrics of this hymn give tune and meter to a theology we at Covenant seek to embody in our lives and in our worship. I hope this hymn speaks to you as much as it speaks to me and that we will raise our voices to “proclaim from floor to rafter: ALL ARE WELCOME IN THIS PLACE.”

—*Laura Mayo*

Announcements

The Youth Social Hour approaches on **August 30**. Our youth will enjoy Go-Kart Racing; please contact Trena' Jamison at trena@covenanthouston.org.

Please see the newsletter to register for a church-wide lunch on **September 13**. We will celebrate our beloved minister's 20 years of working at Covenant.

We're meeting at Camp Allen for an All-Church Retreat, **October 2-4**. Register online!

Calendar

Sun. Aug. 16	12:30pm	Youth Fellowship, Huff Fellowship Hall.
Mon. Aug. 17	7pm	Insight Meditation, Huff Fellowship Hall.
	7pm	Houston Sacred Harp, Narthex.
Thurs. Aug. 20	10am	Community Group, Zoom.
	1:15pm	Lunchtime Lectionary Lab, Zoom.
Sun. Aug. 23	9:30am	Adult Education, 2nd floor of Huff Fellowship Hall or on Zoom. Bill Kline updates us on the Covenant Archiving Project.

Information

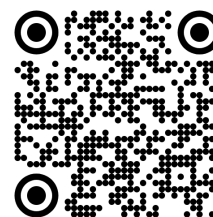
Childcare is provided in the children's area beginning at 9:30 a.m. Children aged 2 and under are invited to the nursery. Children aged 3 to 9 are invited to the children's area after the Time for Children.

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
Carl McAliley, Interim Organist
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.