

COVENANT CHURCH

H O U S T O N

A Service of Worship for
23 August 2026

In the sequel to [Ignazio Silone's] *Bread and Wine*, *The Seed Beneath the Snow*, Spina finally moves out of his own house and into the barn, sharing a stall with the deaf man, Infante. A remarkable bond is established between them. Spina taught Infante a new word, "brotherhood." Infante was already able to sound out "bread," which came out as "brod," and with the help of gestures Spina communicated to him that when people share the same bread they are "brod-ers" or companions. "Brother" comes from brod, which stands for bread. Infante made the connection. By the very next day he was feeding bits of bread to the mice who shared their abode, and who ran across the straw on the lookout for bread crumbs. He accompanied the gesture by saying to Spina, "Brod-ers." From this point on, Infante began to offer bread to the donkey each day, so that the donkey could also be a brother.

—Robert McAfee Brown

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!

And also with you!

Ring in the hour

Silence is kept

*Prelude

Dénis Bédard

“Récit' from *Suite du Premier Ton*”

(b. 1950)

Call to Worship

+Opening Hymn

Assurance

“Blessed Assurance Found in This Place”

Blessed assurance found in this place

Gathering together, homecoming and grace

Welcome the stranger into the fold,

Telling and listening, those heavy loads.

This is our story; this is our song;

Seeing Your faces all the day long.

This is our story; this is our song;

Showing your caring all the day long.

Blessed assurance found in your words,

Stories of hardship and trials overcome

Promises made and covenants kept

Journeys sustained by mercy and grace.

This is our story; this is our song;

Telling the kingdom all the day long.

This is our story; this is our song;

Learning the wonders all the day long.

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

+Please stand in body or spirit

**Blessed assurance in songs that we sing,
Lifting our spirits for hours and days
Sharing the work of care for the world
Sharing our planet, your gift to us all
These are our stories; these are our songs;
Singing your great love all our days long.
These are our stories; these are our songs;
Singing your praises all the day long.**

⁺Opening Sentences

**We must delight in each other, make others' conditions our own,
rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together,
always having before our eyes our community as members of the same body.**

Invitation

Scripture Lesson

Romans 12:1-8

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

There is one table.

All our divisions are a lie.

+Please stand in body or spirit

**All our hierarchies are a delusion.
We are all different, and equal.
There is no greater or lesser,
no more or less worthy,
no superior or inferior,
no better or worse.
Not in God's eyes.
There is no ladder, no pyramid.
Only a circle, where last is first
and first is last.**

**Our hard work
is to repent of our evil hierarchies,
to be done with comparing,
creating insiders and outsiders.
We do it by coming to the one table,
sitting with our companion sinners,
our beloved siblings, all.
They're all here, friend, at the table.
Sit with them,
as God sits with you.**

Words of Assurance

Music

"The Lamb"

Theodore Chanler
(1902-1961)

Silent Reflection

Prayer

Offering

Offertory

"Communion, Op. 15, No. 1"

Alexandre Guilmant
(1837-1911)

⁺Prayer of Dedication

**We accept bread at his table, broken and shared, a living sign.
Here in this world, dying and living, we are each other's bread
and wine. This is the place where we can receive what we need to
increase: our justice and God's peace.**

⁺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

⁺Hymn #436

Whitfield

"We Are Your People"

**We are your people: Lord, by your grace,
You dare to make us Christ to our neighbors of every nation and race.**

**Called to portray you, help us to live
Closer than neighbors, open to strangers, able to clash and forgive.**

**Glad of tradition, help us to see
In all life's changing where you are leading, where our best efforts should be.**

**Joined in community, breaking your bread,
May we discover gifts in each other, willing to lead and be led.**

**Lord, as we minister in different ways,
May all we're doing show that you're living, meeting your love with our praise.**

+Please stand in body or spirit

Sharing the Bread and Cup

Our communion elements include both wine and water, and gluten-free and vegan crackers. All are always welcome to communion at Covenant.

⁺Communion Response

Beach Spring

**By the loaves you break and give us,
send us in your name to share
Bread for which the millions hunger,
words that tell your love and care.
By your body broken for us, by your wine of life outpoured,
Jesus, feed again your people. Be our Host, our Life, our Lord.**

⁺Affirmation of Faith

**Our shared search is part of the human condition.
Some of us know what we seek and others stumble along unsure.
Yet we all come to this place with a yearning—
to find or make meaning, to live conscious lives,
to grow in kindness, to renew and remake the world
in the image of love.
Today we affirm not that we are all the same
or that we know exactly what we are doing
but that we are resolved to ask, seek, and knock together.
Today we affirm that whatever God is
is revealed to us slowly, in increments, patches and scraps of light
pricking the shadows
glimpsed only by the wide-eyed and the curious.**

⁺Closing Hymn #504

Union Seminary

“Draw Us in the Spirit’s Tether”

**Draw us in the Spirit’s tether, for when humbly in Your name
Two or three are met together, You are in the midst of them;
Alleluia! Alleluia! Touch we now Your garment’s hem.**

+Please stand in body or spirit

**As disciples used to gather in the name of Christ to sup,
Then with thanks to God the Father break the bread and bless the cup,
Alleluia! Alleluia! So now bind our friendship up.**

**All our meals and all our living make as sacraments of You,
That by caring, helping, giving, we may be disciples true.
Alleluia! Alleluia! We will serve with faith anew.**

Benediction

*Postlude

“Vingt-quatre Pièces, No. 24: Allegro vivo”

André Fleury
(1903-1995)

+Please stand in body or spirit

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

Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Lloyd Bennack**.

The Call to Worship is by Ann Aspen Wilson in *Imaging the Word*, Volume 3.

The text of “Blessed Assurance Found in This Place” is by **Kathleen Cook**.

The Opening Sentences are by John Winthrop, First Governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony.

The Unison Confession is “One Table” by Steve Garnaas-Holmes.

Joyce Courtois is the soloist.

Deacon Dennis Robinson gives the Prayer.

The Prayer of Dedication is by Huub Oosterhuis.

The Affirmation of Faith is by Jeremy Rutledge.

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About Today's Service

Covenant is rich in poetry and perhaps even richer in poets. There are many among us who create beautiful and compelling poetry. Some years ago the worship committee sent a message to everyone in the congregation we could think of who was a writer of poetry, asking these gifted writers to consider composing hymns for use in worship. Today's hymn by Kathleen Cook came from that invitation. I am so grateful that we all find ways to share our talents with each other.

—*Laura Mayo*

Announcements

A memorial service for **Dan Cook** will be held at Covenant on **September 19**, at 3pm.

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

Mon. Aug. 23	7pm	Insight Meditation, Huff Fellowship Hall.
Thurs. Aug. 27	10am	Community Group, Zoom.
	1:15pm	Lunchtime Lectionary Lab, Zoom.
Sat. Aug. 29	10am	Choir Workshop, Sanctuary and Huff Fellowship Hall.
	2:30pm	Thelma Jean Goodrich Memorial Service, Sanctuary.
Sun. Aug. 30	9:30am	Adult Education, 2nd floor of Huff Fellowship Hall or on Zoom. Biblical scholar Jesse Rainbow presents.

Information

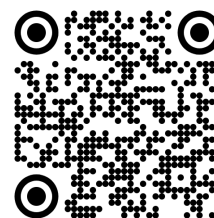
Childcare is provided in the children's area beginning at 9:30 a.m. Children aged 2 and under are invited to the nursery. Children aged 3 to 9 are invited to the children's area after the Time for Children.

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

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.