



# COVENANT CHURCH

## H O U S T O N

A Service of Worship for  
13 September 2026

We are born and have our being in a place of memory.  
We chart our lives by everything we remember  
from the mundane moment to the majestic.  
We know ourselves through the art and act of remembering.  
Memories offer us a world where there is no death,  
where we are sustained by rituals of regard and recollection.

—*bell hooks*



Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!

**And also with you!**

Ring in the hour

Silence is kept

\*Prelude

Marcel Dupré

*“Antiphon, Op. 18, No. 5: ‘How Fair and Pleasant Art Thou’”* (1886-1971)

Call to Worship

+Opening Hymn #420, verse 1

Cwm Rhondda

*Please stand and join the choir in singing **verse 1** when directed.*

*“God of Grace and God of Glory”*

**God of grace and God of glory, on Thy people pour Thy power;  
Crown Thine ancient church’s story; bring its bud to glorious flower.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the facing of this hour,  
For the facing of this hour.**

+Opening Sentences

**If you could only sense how important you are  
to the lives of those you meet;  
how important you can be  
to the people you may never even dream of.  
There is something of yourself that you leave  
at every meeting with another person.**

Invitation

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

*+Please stand in body or spirit*

Scripture Lesson

Deuteronomy 8:11-18; Psalm 77:11-15

These are our sacred stories.

**Thanks be to God.**

Time for Children

<sup>+</sup> 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

**Most of us lead far more meaningful lives than we know.  
Often finding meaning is not about doing things differently; it is about seeing  
familiar things in new ways. When we find new eyes, the unsuspected blessing in  
work we have done for many years may take us completely by surprise. We can see  
life in many ways: with the eye, with the mind, with the intuition. But perhaps it is  
only by those who speak the language of meaning, who have remembered how to  
see with the heart, that life is ever deeply known or served.**

Words of Assurance

Music

“Meditation” from *Thaïs*

Jules Massenet  
(1842-1912)

Silent Reflection

Prayer

Litany of Celebration

## Litany of Celebration

**Leader:** Today we honor and commemorate Laura Mayo's twenty years of faithful leadership and service to Covenant Church.

For two decades, you have walked with us, challenged us, and helped us embody a gospel of love, justice, and inclusion.

**People:** We thank you, and we celebrate our shared journey.

**Leader:** You have proclaimed God's love for all with your words from the pulpit, on panels, on the radio, in articles, in leading educational offerings, working with our children and our youth, and with the way you live your life in marches, in interfaith gatherings, food pantries, shared meals, and community events.

**People:** May God's love continue to guide your voice and your vision.

**Leader:** For twenty years of tireless commitment to justice, for standing with the marginalized, and reminding us that our faith is lived out in the streets and in our communities...

**People:** ... we are grateful. We will continue to join you in compassionate, faithful service to one another and our neighbors.

**Leader:** For the quiet spaces of pastoral care—for holding our grief, celebrating our joys, blessing our unions, dedicating our babies, baptising us, inviting us to the communion table, leading memorial services, reminding us of our inherent worth, and for holding always before us a love that never dies...

**People:** ... we are grateful. May the comfort you have given so freely be returned to you tenfold.

**Leader:** For your vision that honors tradition while bravely stepping into the future, refusing to let fear dictate the boundaries of our community...

**People:** ... we are grateful. May your imagination remain bold, creative, and free.

**Leader:** For the times you have challenged us to think deeply, love fiercely, and to build wider tables...

**People:** ...we are grateful.

**Leader:** And now, we offer you our blessing for the days and years ahead. May the Divine source of all love grant you deep rest, fresh inspiration, and a lasting sense of joy in this sacred calling.

**Laura:** I am grateful for each of you. I am grateful for this church. I am grateful to be a minister among you. It has been a bountiful gift to serve alongside you these many years. We have worshiped and worked together. We have cared for each other in times of tremendous

joy and sorrow. We have shared our resources and sought divine guidance as a community. The rituals of our church are rich with meaning, and I find they have become richer still in sharing them with people I have come to know and love. I have baptized you and held your babies for baby dedications. I have officiated your weddings. I have blessed your pets. I have led memorial services for those who are with us now in the love that never dies. I have marched with you and cheered with you and cried with you. We have participated together in sacred meals: communion during worship and many, many holy meals in homes, restaurants, and the Huff Fellowship Hall. Thank you for sharing yourselves and our church.

**People: We bless your past twenty years of service, we celebrate your presence among us today, and we look forward to the future with hope.**

**All: How good it is to be together. Amen.**

Offering

Offertory

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy

“Prelude in G Major, Op. 37, No. 2”

(1809-1847)

*+Please stand in body or spirit*

<sup>+</sup>Prayer of Dedication

**We have important work.**

**But none of us can do this work alone.**

**As much as we need constructive self-examination  
and critical dialogue, we need each other.**

**We may never come to think alike  
or to act alike. I hope not.**

**But by participating in each other's faith journeys,  
by reaching out to each other and sharing in the struggles  
to name and claim our theologies,  
we can strengthen our public prophetic voice  
and deepen our sense of community  
and our commitment to a shared faith tradition.**

**May it be so.**

<sup>+</sup>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*

## THE CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table

+Hymn #339

Slane

“Be Thou My Vision”

**Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;  
Nought be all else to me, save that Thou art -  
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,  
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.**

**Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise,  
Thou mine inheritance, now and always:  
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,  
Great God of heaven, my treasure Thou art.**

**Be Thou my wisdom, and Thou my true word;  
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all.**

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

Love Unknown

**Here is our common wealth in sharing what is good,  
As though all human kind around one table stood,  
This bread to break, this wine to taste:  
One people in the name of Christ.**

+Affirmation of Faith

**The heart of most spiritual practice is simply this: Remember. Remember who you are. Remember what you love. Remember what is sacred. Remember what is true. Remember that you will die, and that this day is a gift. Remember how you wish to live.**

*+Please stand in body or spirit*

<sup>+</sup>Closing Hymn #450

Jerusalem

“O Day of Peace”

**O day of peace that dimly shines  
Through all our hopes and prayers and dreams,  
Guide us to justice, truth, and love,  
Delivered from our selfish schemes.  
May swords of hate fall from our hands,  
Our hearts from envy find release,  
Till by God’s grace our warring world  
Shall see Christ’s promised reign of peace.**

**Then shall the wolf dwell with the lamb,  
Nor shall the fierce devour the small;  
As beasts and cattle calmly graze,  
A little child shall lead them all.  
Then enemies shall learn to love,  
All creatures find their true accord;  
The hope of peace shall be fulfilled,  
For all the earth shall know the Lord.**

Benediction

Choral Benediction

“A Gaelic Blessing”

John Rutter  
(b. 1945)

<sup>\*</sup>Postlude

“Sortie from *Suite Liturgique*”

Denis Bédard  
(b. 1950)

*+Please stand in body or spirit*

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

## Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Deborah Lin**.

The Call to Worship was written by Raymond Stubblefield, with readings from Andrew C. Kennedy and David Whyte.

The Epigraph is from *Belonging: A Culture of Place*.

The Opening Sentences are by Fred Rogers.

The Unison Confession is by Rachel Naomi Remen.

The violinists are Cho-Liang Lin (Jimmy) and his student Qian Chang.

**Deacon Eric Avera** gives the Prayer.

The Litany is led by **Church Council Chair Jay Hooker** and **Diaconate Chair Michelle Bennack**.

The Prayer of Dedication is adapted from *Faith without Certainty: Liberal Theology in the 21st Century* by Paul Rasor.

The Affirmation of Faith is from *How, Then, Shall We Live?* by Wayne Muller.

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## About Today's Service

The bountiful music today reflects the singular joy of celebrating Laura's 20th Anniversary. We are honored to welcome violinist Cho-Liang Lin (Jimmy) and his student Qian Chang to our service. Jimmy is an internationally renowned soloist and has appeared with most of the major orchestras in the world. He is currently a Professor of Violin at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University and is the husband of Debbie Lin, our worship leader today. The two violinists will play a duet arrangement of the familiar "Meditation" from *Thaïs* by Jules Massenet for our special music. The Covenant Singers return to sing in worship today and will sing two selections: "God of Grace and God of Glory," arranged by Dan Forrest, and "A Gaelic Blessing" by John Rutter. The first selection will be our opening hymn and will conclude with the congregation joining the choir in singing the final verse. The choir offers the Rutter as a benediction response for the congregation and specifically for Laura as a blessing in gratitude for her wise leadership and loving care for all of us.

—Karen Kline

## Announcements

A church-wide luncheon follows this service **today**. Proceed to Huff Fellowship Hall to celebrate our beloved minister Laura Mayo's 20 years of working at Covenant.

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

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

## Calendar

|                 |         |                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sun. Sept. 13   | 12:30pm | Laura Mayo Celebration Luncheon, Huff Fellowship Hall.                                                                                                   |
| Mon. Sept. 14   | 7pm     | Insight Meditation, Huff Fellowship Hall.                                                                                                                |
| Thurs. Sept. 17 | 10am    | Community Group, Zoom.                                                                                                                                   |
|                 | 1:15pm  | Lunchtime Lectionary Lab, Zoom.                                                                                                                          |
|                 | 7pm     | Covenant Singers Rehearsal, Sanctuary.                                                                                                                   |
| Sat. Sept. 19   | 3pm     | Memorial Service for Dan Cook, Sanctuary.                                                                                                                |
| Sun. Sept. 20   | 9:30am  | Adult Education, 2nd floor of Huff Fellowship Hall or on Zoom. We will continue discussing <i>Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time</i> by Marcus Borg. |

## 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.*