

COVENANT CHURCH

H O U S T O N

A Service of Worship for
27 September 2026

To be a Christian is to live dangerously, honestly, freely –
to step in the name of love as if you may land on nothing,
yet to keep stepping because the something that sustains you
no empire can give you and no empire can take away.
—Cornel West

As swimmers dare
to lie face to the sky
and water bears them,
as hawks rest upon air
and air sustains them,
so would I learn to attain
freefall, and float
into Creator Spirit's deep embrace,
knowing no effort earns
that all-surrounding grace.
—Denise Levertov

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ring in the hour
Silence is kept

*Prelude

Colin Ashworth

“A Maidwell Meditation”

Call to Worship

+Opening Hymn #405

Sharphorne

“What Does the Lord Require”

What does the Lord require for praise and offering?

What sacrifice, desire, or tribute bid you bring?

Do justly; love mercy; walk humbly with your God.

Rulers of earth, give ear! Should you not justice know?

Will God your pleading hear, while crime and cruelty grow?

Do justly; love mercy; walk humbly with your God.

How shall our life fulfill God’s law so hard and high?

Let Christ endue our will with grace to fortify.

Then justly, in mercy, we’ll humbly walk with God.

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

+Please stand in body or spirit

⁺Opening Sentences

Leader: From the midst of our real lives with their very real problems,
We come to seek courage and strength
from the presence of God and the support of one another.
As persons who love imperfectly and are loved imperfectly,
We come to be renewed by the perfect love of God,
proclaimed in the community of love and faith.
As persons who never live up to their high calling in Jesus Christ,
We come to be encouraged to do our best for one more week.

**ALL: Let us worship, with hearts open to the love of God, with
hands outstretched to one another, and with whole selves
willing to accept the cost and joy of being disciples of the
Christ. Amen**

Invitation

Scripture Lessons

Romans 12:9-21; Matthew 18:21-35

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.**

+Please stand in body or spirit

Call to Confession

Silent Confession

Unison Confession

We give our money;

Yet poverty continues to rage, and critical societal needs are not met.

We give our food;

But hunger does not decrease.

We give our time and energy;

Not knowing if our efforts will be appreciated,

Not knowing if we have made a difference.

We despair of ever giving again.

Show us, O God, that our gifts do matter.

**Show us where our five loaves and two fishes have multiplied
and have made a difference.**

Remind us where our giving has sparked new and beautiful relationships.

And give us the courage and strength to give again.

Words of Assurance

Music

Karen Marrolli

“The Stranger’s Guise”

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

+Hymn #428

Schumann

“We Give Thee but Thine Own”

We give Thee but Thine own, Whate’er the gift may be;

All that we have is Thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from Thee.

May we Thy bounties thus as stewards true receive,

And gladly, as Thou blessest us, to Thee our firstfruits give.

+Please stand in body or spirit

To comfort and to bless, to find a balm for woe,
To tend the lonely in distress, is angels' work below.

The captive to release, to God the lost to bring,
To teach the way of life and peace— it is a Christ-like thing.

And we believe Thy Word, though dim our faith may be;
Whate'er for Thine we do, O Lord, we do it unto Thee.

Prayer

Offering

Offertory

“Grand Choeur in G Major”

Théodore Salomé
(1834-1896)

+Prayer of Dedication

Leader: It is easy to pray when the sun shines
And we are grateful for another glorious day of being.
It is hard to pray when wind and rain and thunder
Plague our every step and spoil our every plan.

People: It is easy to be virtuous when life goes well
And our existence is a journey from bliss to beauty and back.
It is hard to be virtuous when life assaults us
And our very being is a pilgrimage from bad to worse to
worst.

Leader: It is easy to be cheerful when health bursts in us
So that we can feel the very pulse of life.
It is hard to be happy when pain and fatigue beset us
And we wonder if we can go on.

People: It is easy to do good when our goodness is rewarded
And we feel the power of pride in accomplishment.
It is hard to do good when we suffer for our efforts
And are troubled because we have been misunderstood.

Leader: It is easy to feel religious impulses well up inside us
When inspiration lives at our elbow and walks on our path.

People: It is hard to feel religious
when we are tired with work to be done
And discouragement seems to mark our every move.

+Please stand in body or spirit

**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

**O God of order and neatness, we give thanks for what is good.
We are grateful for manifold blessings bestowed upon us.
O God of chaos and disorder, be with us also when life is messy.
Bless our coming in and our going out from this day forth.**

⁺Closing Hymn #354, *choir introduction, verses 1-4 all*

Guide My Feet

"Guide My Feet"

**Guide my feet while I run this race,
Guide my feet while I run this race,
Guide my feet while I run this race,
For I don't want to run this race in vain!**

**Hold my hand while I run this race,
Hold my hand while I run this race,
Hold my hand while I run this race,
For I don't want to run this race in vain!**

**Stand by me while I run this race,
Stand by me while I run this race,
Stand by me while I run this race,
For I don't want to run this race in vain!**

**I'm your child while I run this race,
I'm your child while I run this race,
I'm your child while I run this race,
For I don't want to run this race in vain!**

**Search my heart while I run this race,
Search my heart while I run this race,
Search my heart while I run this race,
For I don't want to run this race in vain!**

Benediction

*Postlude

“Blessed Ye Who Live in Faith Unswerving”

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

+Please stand in body or spirit

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

Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Barbara McKittrick**.

The Call to Worship is “We Lay Down Our Burdens” by Kate Steinberg.

The Opening Sentences are from *Bread for the Journey*, edited by Ruth C. Duck.

Jacy Grannis is the violinist.

Deacon Dennis Robinson gives the Prayer.

The Prayer of Dedication and the Affirmation of Faith are from *In the Holy Quiet of This Hour* by Richard S. Gilbert.

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About Today's Service

Today we explore what it means to live a Christian life. Two descriptions are given in the epigraph. First Cornel West, a noted African American philosopher, scholar, and educator writes of the risk and uncertainty, but also the sustaining rewards of being a Christian.

The second author, Denise Levertov, came to the United States from England after World War II. She was an avowed agnostic most of her life, but said she found God and Christian faith through writing poetry. She became a Roman Catholic late in life because of the church's commitment to social justice.

—*Barbara McKittrick*

Announcements

This afternoon at 2pm you are invited to attend the Texas Impact voter engagement event at Good Hope Missionary Baptist Church, 3015 N. MacGregor Way.

We're meeting at Camp Allen for an All-Church Retreat, **October 2-4**. Use the QR code below to register online!

Please use the link in your newsletter to give feedback on our music program to the music director search committee.

Calendar

Sun. Sept. 27	12:30pm	Congregational Business Meeting, Sanctuary.
	2pm	Ready-Set-Vote, Good Hope church, 3015 MacGregor Way.
Mon. Sept. 28	7pm	Insight Meditation, Huff Fellowship Hall.
	7pm	Houston Sacred Harp, Narthex.
Thurs. Oct. 1	10am	Community Group, Zoom.
	1:15pm	Lunchtime Lectionary Lab, Zoom.
	7pm	Covenant Singers Rehearsal, Sanctuary.
Fri. Oct. 2	6pm	All-Church Retreat begins (see below), Camp Allen.
Sun. Oct. 4		There will be no Adult Education due to the Retreat.



**UNITY IN
COMMUNITY**
Covenant Church
10.02.2026 – 10.04.2026



Retreat Sign-Up by September 28

Please use this QR code to fill out the form individually for each person by **September 28**. The cost is \$55 per person. If you are unable to pay that, please pay what you can. We want everyone to be able to attend. If you are able to pay more than the cost/person to help cover the cost, that is appreciated.

Information

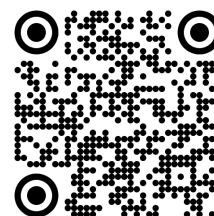
Childcare is provided in the children's area beginning at 9:30 a.m. Children aged 2 and under are invited to the nursery. Children aged 3 to 9 are invited to the children's area after the Time for Children.

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 Music Director
Heather Laureles, Director of Administration & Communication
Laura Mayo, Senior Minister
Carl McAliley, Interim Organist
José Piña, Artist in Residence
Raymond Stubblefield, Minister of Congregational Life
Szuyu Su, Artist in Residence

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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.