



COVENANT CHURCH
HOUSTON

A Service of Worship for
18 October 2026

Your gifts—whatever you discover them to be—
can be used to bless or curse the world.

The mind's power, the strength of the hands, the reaches of the heart,
the gift of speaking, listening, imagining, seeing, waiting.
Any of these can serve to feed the hungry, bind up wounds, welcome the stranger, praise
what is sacred, do the work of justice or offer love.

Any of these can draw down the prison door, hoard bread, abandon the poor, obscure
what is holy, comply with injustice or withhold love.

You must answer this question: What will you do with your gifts?
Choose to bless the world.

The choice to bless the world is more than an act of will, a moving forward into the
world with the intention to do good.
It is an act of recognition, a confession of surprise, a grateful acknowledgment that in
the midst of a broken world
unspeakable beauty, grace and mystery abide.

There is an embrace of kindness that encompasses all life, even yours.
And while there is injustice, anesthetization, or evil there moves a holy disturbance, a
benevolent rage, a revolutionary love, protesting, urging, insisting that which is sacred
will not be defiled.

Those who bless the world live their life
as a gesture of thanks for this beauty and this rage.
The choice to bless the world can take you into solitude to search for the sources of
power and grace; native wisdom, healing, and liberation.

More, the choice will draw you into community, the endeavor shared, the heritage
passed on, the companionship of struggle, the importance of keeping faith, the life of
ritual and praise, the comfort of human friendship, the company of earth, the chorus of
life welcoming you.

None of us alone can save the world.
Together—that is another possibility, waiting.
—Rebecca Parker *“Choose to Bless the World”*

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ring in the hour

Silence is kept

*Prelude

Johann Kaspar Ferdinand Fischer

“Prelude and Fughetta”

(1656-1746)

Call to Worship

+Opening Hymn #324

Open My Eyes

“Open My Eyes”

**Open my eyes, that I may see glimpses of truth Thou hast for me;
Place in my hands the wonderful key that shall unclasp and set me free.
Silently now I wait for Thee, ready, my God, Thy will to see;
Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!**

**Open my ears, that I may hear voices of truth Thou sendest clear;
And while the wave notes fall on my ear, everything false will disappear.
Silently now I wait for Thee, ready, my God, Thy will to see;
Open my ears, illumine me, Spirit divine!**

**Open my mouth, and let me bear gladly the warm truth everywhere;
Open my heart, and let me prepare Love with thy children thus to share.
Silently now I wait for Thee, ready, my God, Thy will to see;
Open my heart, illumine me, Spirit divine!**

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

+Please stand in body or spirit

⁺Opening Sentences

**God,
help me this day to add love to the world.
Not fear, not anxiety
about what I owe or am owed, but love.**

**Help me know my freedom—
not to do what I please,
but to fulfill my call to love,**

**my only goal not that I prevail
but that others receive love.**

**In calm interactions,
or in moments of anxiety or conflict,
let me contribute love.**

**In silence or in confrontation,
in public endeavor or quiet prayer,
in heroic action or mundane chores,
let me add love to the world.**

**O God of Love,
let your love overflow:
fulfill your love in me. Amen.**

Invitation

Scripture Lesson

Matthew 22:15-22

These are our sacred stories.

Thanks be to God.

Time for Children

⁺ Response:

Au Claire 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

All life is a call and a response.

God calls us into creation, God calls us into life.

God calls each of us to move among the creations of this world and bring joy and renewing love.

God calls us to love, to plunge ourselves into the hurts and the horrors, to give ourselves fully to those who are in need.

God calls us to be present to those who are without love.

God calls us to dance, to move out of our joy and sadness, shedding our self consciousness and clothing ourselves with peace.

No longer can we afford to wait. We are builders of the Body of Christ.

God calls us this day!

Words of Assurance

Music

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

“Truly the Lord Is Good”

(1756-1791)

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

⁺Hymn #391

Hendon

“Take My Life”

Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee.

Take my moments and my days; let them flow in ceaseless praise,

Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of Thy love.

Take my feet, and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee,

Swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing, always, only, for my King.

Take my lips, and let them be filled with messages from Thee,

Filled with messages from Thee.

+Please stand in body or spirit

**Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect, and use every power as Thou shalt choose,
Every power as Thou shalt choose.**

**Take my will, and make it Thine; it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is Thine own; it shall be Thy royal throne,
It shall be Thy royal throne.**

**Take my love; my Lord, I pour at Thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself, and I will be Ever, only, all for Thee,
Ever, only, all for Thee.**

Prayer

Stewardship Invitation

Offering

Offertory

“Prelude on “Old 100th””

Johann Walther
(1684 -1748)

⁺Prayer of Dedication

**O God, through the offering of these gifts may we become a more open people...
open-minded in hearing your Word and wisdom,
open-hearted in healing a broken world,
open-handed in heeding your call for charity and acts of love.
With thanks for all good gifts, we present a portion of our substance and the whole
of ourselves. Amen.**

⁺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

We are grateful, God, that your Spirit is at work within us, nudging and stretching us, causing us to grow in understanding and service. May these offerings be an expression of our gratitude from all your gifts; and may our lives be an expression of your love for the world.

⁺Closing Hymn #335

O Waly Waly

“Though I May Speak”

**Though I may speak with bravest fire,
And have the gift to all inspire,
And have not love, my words are vain;
As sounding brass, and hopeless gain.**

**Though I may give all I possess,
And striving so my love profess,
But not be giv’n by love within,
The profit soon turns strangely thin.**

**Come, Spirit, come, our hearts control,
Our spirits long to be made whole.
Let inward love guide every deed;
By this we worship and are freed.**

Benediction

⁺Postlude

Dietrich Buxtehude
(1637-1707)

“Fugue in G Major”

+Please stand in body or spirit

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

Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Casey Okabayashi**.

Howard Maple is our guest organist.

The Call to Worship and Opening Sentences are by Steve Garnaas-Holmes.

The Unison Confession is from *Bread for the Journey* edited by Ruth C. Duck.

Deacon Amanda Cox-Floyd gives the Prayer.

Erica Middleton gives the Stewardship Invitation.

The Prayer of Dedication is from *Touch Holiness*, edited by Ruth C. Duck and Maren C. Tirabassi.

The Affirmation of Faith is from *Worship for All Seasons, Volume 3* edited by Thomas Harding.

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About Today's Service

We are joining with houses of worship across our city to compete in goodness October 19 to November 1 (on November 1, bring your normal First Sunday food offering AND additional food for our hungry neighbors for the Competing in Goodness competition)! Our collection bin is in the narthex.

From the sponsors: Will the Christians beat the Muslims, who may beat the Jews or the Sikhs? It isn't a crazy idea; it's Competing For Goodness! Our program brings faith communities together to see who can raise the most food for their local faith-based food pantry! Through a friendly competition every year, faith centers compete against one another to collect non-perishable items for their neighbors. Sponsored by Bridges: a multi-faith organization focused on bringing faith communities together.

—*Laura Mayo*

Announcements

Forms linked in our newsletter allow you to nominate people for Council and the Diaconate by **tomorrow, October 19**, and to give feedback on our music program to our music search committees.

For stewardship you may email your **pledge** to finance@covenanthouston.org, or place your pledge in the wood pledge box in the Narthex, or mail it to the church.

Trunk-or-Treat is **this Saturday**, October 24; sign up at the Welcome Table.

Inquirers classes for those new to our community will begin on **Sunday, October 25**.

Calendar

Sun. Oct. 18	12:30pm	Youth Service Project, Huff Fellowship Building.
Mon. Oct. 19	7pm	Insight Meditation, Huff Fellowship Hall.
	7pm	Houston Sacred Harp, Narthex.
Thurs. Oct. 22	10am	Community Group, Zoom.
	1:15pm	Lunchtime Lectionary Lab, Zoom.
	7pm	Covenant Singers Rehearsal, Sanctuary.
Sat. Oct. 24	5pm	Trunk-or-Treat, Parking Lot by Huff Fellowship Hall.
Sun. Oct. 25	9:30am	Adult Education, 2nd floor of Huff Fellowship Hall or on Zoom. Celia Lightfoot shares about a documentary on the fragility of democracy.
	9:30am	Inquirers Class, Library in Sanctuary Building.

Information

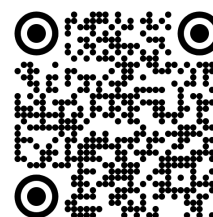
Childcare is provided in the children's area beginning at 9:30 a.m. Children aged 2 and under are invited to the nursery. Children aged 3 to 9 are invited to the children's area after the Time for Children.

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.