COVENANT CHURCH
HOUSTON

A Service of Worship for
8 November 2026

The strange fragments of our lives can only be comprehended
when we accept our insecurities and uncertainties,
when we accept that we will never know what life is about
or what it is supposed to mean, when we accept that we are ordinary.
We must do the best we can, not for ourselves,
the commandments teach us, but for those around us.
It is in this darkness, this mystery of existence, that we learn to trust.
Trust is the compound that unites us.
Life comes with giving life to others.
We are the product of what came before.
The children asleep in the rooms above me are what will follow.
The quality of our life, of all life, is determined
by what we give and what we sacrifice.
We live, the commandments tell us,
not by exalting our life but by being willing to lose it.
—*Chris Hedges*

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ringing in the hour
Silence is kept

*Prelude — Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-1847)
"Andante religioso from Sonata No. 4"

Call to Worship

+Opening 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.

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.

**Please hold silence and remain seated during the prelude*
+Please stand in body or spirit

+Opening Prayer

Spirit of life and love, we have gathered here in search of answers to hard questions.
We have come in search of understanding, in search of community.
We have come in search of hope and healing.
Let this be a place not only of searching, but of discovery.
Let this be a place not only of learning, but of wisdom.
Let this be a place not only of meeting, but of connection.
And let this be a place where healing fosters giving and hope fosters service.
This is our prayer: that we may create here a circle of love,
ever expanding, ever growing, as we seek to know you,
the source of our being.
Amen and blessed be.

Invitation

Scripture Lesson Matthew 25:1-13

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

When I have no words,
thank you for hearing
the prayer in the silence,
the plea in the flame,
the benediction in my breathing,
the desire in my dark.

Words of Assurance

+*Please stand in body or spirit*

Music — Arr. by Andre J. Thomas

"Keep Your Lamps!" (b. 1952)

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

+Hymn — Ville du Havre

"It Is Well With My Soul"

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, faith has taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

Refrain: **It is well with my soul,**
It is well, it is well with my soul.

Though trouble should come and though trials be near,
Let this steady assurance control:
That kindness and love will embrace us all here,
And peace will still comfort my soul. (*Refrain*)

Prayer

Offering

Offertory — Joseph Jongen

"Petit Prélude (Aria)" (1873-1953)

+Prayer of Dedication

Beauty and grace are performed
whether or not we will or sense them.
The least we can do is try to be there.

+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

It's not a test, not a sentencing.
It's a party.
It's not campaigners nervously watching returns.
It's a wedding.
A celebration of love,
a joy that gives us joy,
a faithfulness that involves
the whole village of us.
Those who expect gloom, or an end,
will be surprised.
But no matter how much oil you have
the lovers will join—
God and us—
and the party will go on.
The musicians are warming up.
Even as darkness gathers,
turn your face toward joy.

+Closing Hymn #538 Sicilian Mariners

"Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing"

Lord, dismiss us with Thy blessing;
Fill our hearts with joy and peace;
Let us each, Thy love possessing,
Triumph in redeeming grace.
O refresh us, O refresh us,
Traveling through this wilderness.

Thanks we give and adoration
For Thy gospel's joyful sound;
May the fruits of Thy salvation
In our hearts and lives abound.
Ever faithful, Ever faithful
To the truth may we be found; (over)

+Please stand in body or spirit

So that when Thy love shall call us,
Savior, from the world away,
Let no fear of death appall us,
Glad Thy summons to obey.
May we ever, May we ever
Reign with Thee in endless day.

Benediction

*Postlude — Johann Sebastian Bach
"Fugue in E-flat Major, BWV 552" (1685-1750)

+Please stand in body or spirit
**Please hold silence and remain seated during the postlude*

Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Sally Ridgway**.
The Epigraph is from *Losing Moses on the Freeway: The Ten Commandments in America* by Chris Hedges.
The Call to Worship is by Christina Rosetti.
The Opening Prayer is by Sue Ayer.
The Unison Confession is from *In Wisdom's Path: Discovering the Sacred in Every Season* by Jan Richardson.
Moses Mason is the drummer.
The lyrics to "It Is Well With My Soul" are by Kimberley Debus.
Deacon Amanda Cox-Floyd gives the Prayer.
The Prayer of Dedication is by Annie Dillard.
The Affirmation of Faith is "Bridesmaids" by Steve Garnaas-Holmes.
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About Today's Service

Today's Prayer of Dedication is a quote from Annie Dillard's 1974 Pulitzer Prize-winning nonfiction book *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. Annie Dillard once described herself as a "theologian looking high and low for God." Raised Presbyterian, she explored a wide range of spiritual traditions— including Hasidic Judaism, Sufism, Buddhism, and Inuit spirituality— before eventually converting to Roman Catholicism and drawing deeply on Jesuit thinker Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. One of my favorite quotes from Annie Dillard is from *Teaching a Stone to Talk*:

"On the whole, I do not find Christians, outside of the catacombs, sufficiently sensible of conditions. Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies' straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews."
—*Raymond Stubblefield*

Announcements

Committees meet **after the worship service today**.

Please join our free lunchtime concert with Artist in Residence José Piña on **Wed., Nov. 11 from noon to 12:30pm** at Live Oaks Meeting House, 1318 W. 26th Street.

You may sign up in the Narthex, or with the link in your newsletter, for Diaconate-hosted small group lunches at local restaurants on either **Nov. 15** or **Nov. 22**. All are welcome.

Calendar

Sun. Nov. 8	12:30pm	Committee Meetings, Huff Fellowship Hall.
Mon. Nov. 9	7pm	Insight Meditation, Huff Fellowship Hall.
Wed. Nov. 11	12pm	José Piña's Deep Resonance Concert, 1318 W. 26th St.
Thurs. Nov. 12	10am	Community Group, Zoom.
	1:15pm	Lunchtime Lectionary Lab, Zoom.
	7pm	Covenant Singers Rehearsal, Sanctuary.
Sat. Nov. 14	9am	Walk to Defeat ALS with Perry Primm, 1300 Holman St.
Sun. Nov.15	9:30am	Adult Education, 2nd floor of Huff Fellowship Hall or on Zoom. Jeff Floyd presents on the last Sunday of Pentecost.
	9:30am	Inquirers Class, Library in Sanctuary Building.
	12:30pm	Committee Meetings, Huff Fellowship Hall.

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

4949 Caroline Street
Houston, Texas 77004
713-668-8830

www.covenanthouston.org
office@covenanthouston.org

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.