



*A Service of Worship for
21 January 2024*

I accepted the teaching of Jesus,
the way of love,
the way of nonviolence,
the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation.
The idea that hate is too heavy a burden to bear.
I don't want to go down that road.
I've seen too much hate, seen too much violence.
And I know love is a better way.

John Lewis

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ring in the hour

Silence is kept

*Prelude

Margaret Sandresky
(b. 1921)

“Agnus Dei” from *L’homme armé Organ Mass*

Call to Worship

+Opening Hymn #469

“Morning Has Broken”

Bunessan

**Morning has broken like the first morning,
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird.
Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!
Praise for them springing fresh from the Word!**

**Sweet the rain’s new fall sunlit from heaven,
Like the first dewfall on the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden,
Sprung in completeness where God’s feet pass.**

**Mine is the sunlight! Mine is the morning
Born of the one light Eden saw play!
Praise with elation, praise every morning,
God’s re-creation of the new day!**

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

⁺Opening Sentences

We picture God as a dove and we are comforted and distressed.

We do not always know what to make

of the descriptions of God in our sacred stories.

The Bible is almost as mysterious as the divine

and yet we claim it as our own.

**Indeed, our sacred stories compel us to search after the mysterious
divine, to search and even sometimes to find.**

At the waters of baptism we have not seen the heavens

torn apart, we have heard no voice.

We have, however, experienced something at these waters,

something too profound to be touched by words.

Invitation

Scripture Lesson

Genesis 1:1-5, Mark 1:4-11

These are our sacred stories.

Thanks be to God.

Time for Children

⁺Response:

Tallis' Canon

Go with us, Lord, and guide the way

Through this and every coming day,

That in Your Spirit strong and true

Our lives may be our gift to You.

Call to Confession

Silent Confession

Unison Confession

As if we could call you

anything other than

beloved

and blessed

drenched as we are

in our love for you

washed as we are

**by our delight in you
born anew as we are
by the grace that flows
from the heart of the one
who bore you to us.**

Words of Assurance

Music

arr. David N. Johnson

“The Lone Wild Bird”

*The lone, wild bird in lofty flight
Is still with Thee, nor leaves Thy sight.
And I am Thine! I rest in Thee.
Great Spirit, come, and rest in me.*

*The ends of earth are in Thy hand,
The sea's dark deep and far off land.
And I am Thine! I rest in Thee.
Great Spirit, come, and rest in me.*

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

Prayer

Baptism of Sebastian Alexander

⁺Baptism Hymn #498

Kingdom

“Child of Blessing, Child of Promise”

**Child of blessing, child of promise,
Baptized with the Spirit's sign,
With this water God has sealed you
Unto love and grace divine.**

⁺*Please stand in body or spirit*

**Child of love, our love's expression,
Love's creation, loved indeed!
Fresh from God, refresh our spirits,
Into joy and laughter lead.**

**Child of joy, our dearest treasure,
God's you are; from God you came.
Back to God we humbly give you:
Live as one who bears Christ's name.**

**Child of God, your loving Parent,
Learn to listen for God's call.
Grow to laugh and sing and worship,
Trust and love God more than all.**

Baptismal Litany

Today we gather to baptize Sebastian Alexander.

We remember that Jesus himself went to the river and asked John if he could be baptized.

As we try to follow the teachings of Jesus – challenging teachings about loving our neighbors and our Earth, caring for the poor and the marginalized, forgiving ourselves and others, making peace, and working for justice – we practice together, in community.

Ritual is one way we express our connection to each other and to God.
Today we will celebrate the ritual of baptism for Sebastian.

Sebastian, just as Jesus did, you have come to be baptized. Will you seek to follow the teachings of Jesus by practicing compassion, forgiveness, and equality and by caring for your neighbor as you care for yourself? *I will.*

To the family: Will Sebastian’s parents, brother, grandparents, and uncle please stand. You are part of the wonderful person Sebastian is becoming. Sebastian will need your support in working for peace and justice. Will you continue to provide support and guidance? *We will.*

And I ask our community: Will we, the community of Covenant Church, support Sebastian and each other in living out Jesus’ teachings? *We will.*

Then Sebastian, I baptize you in the spirit of Jesus.

Baptism

Offering

Offertory

Jerry Westenkueller
(b. 1966)

“Holy Manna”

+Prayer of Dedication

**We honor and give thanks for the rivers and streams,
which give us the sacred water of life.
And we honor and give thanks to Spirit,
who embodies all goodness.**

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.***

+Affirmation of Faith

**In joining this church, having passed through ritual waters or not,
we understand ourselves to be a vital part of this community.
We understand that we are God’s children,
That we are beloved.
May thoughts of baptism on this day remind us of who and whose we
are.**

“All Things Bright and Beautiful”

Refrain:

**All things bright and beautiful, All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful: The Lord God made them all.**

**Each little flower that opens, Each little bird that sings:
God made their glowing colors, God made their tiny wings.**

Refrain

**The purple-headed mountain, The river running by,
The sunset, and the morning That brightens up the sky,**

Refrain

**The cold wind in the winter, The pleasant summer sun,
The ripe fruit in the garden: God made them every one.**

Refrain

**God gave us eyes to see them, And lips that we might tell
How great is God Almighty, Who has made all things well.**

Refrain

Benediction

^{*}Postlude

John Rutter
(b. 1945)

“Toccata in 7”

^{}Please hold silence and remain seated during the prelude*

⁺Please stand in body or spirit

Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Jay Hooker**.

The Call to Worship “Wild Geese” by Mary Oliver.

The Opening Sentences are by **Laura Mayo**.

The Unison Confession is “Blessing the Baptism” by Jan Richardson.

The soloist on “The Lone Wild Bird” is **Emily Holien**.

The Prayer of Dedication is a prayer from the Iroquois tradition.

The Affirmation of Faith is by **Laura Mayo**.

The Benediction is given by **Rev. Dr. Jimmy D. Neff**, Sebastian Alexander’s grandfather.

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Education 9:30 - 10:20 a.m.

Adult Education - This Sunday Bill Kline will present “My Hermeneutical Exploration,” reflections on his month-long attempt to unravel why he resonated so strongly with Laura’s proclamation of December 10. Hermeneutics is the branch of knowledge that encompasses how we perceive, interpret and articulate philosophical matters, primarily religion.

- *Bill Kline*

Children & Youth Education -

Children's Lesson

Title: Touching the Moon

Lesson: Practicing Humility

Youth Lesson

Scripture: Mark 1:14-20

- *Trena’ Jamison*

Children and Youth Announcements

Events

- **February 4:** Mentor and Youth
- **February 4:** Children's Activity
- **February 25: CHILDREN & YOUTH AUCTION**
 - **Donation and Food list (please see newsletter for link)**
- **March 29:** Youth Lock-In
- **March 30:** Annual Easter Egg Hunt
- **April 21:** Children & Youth Sunday
- **June 9-13, 2024:** McMurry University Youth Camp Passport **(please see newsletter for sign-up link).**
- **July 27-30, 2024:** Heart of Texas Camp Brownwood, TX Children Camp Passport, **(please see newsletter for sign-up link).**

Calendar

Sun. Jan 21	9:30am	Adult Education, Adult Education classroom on the 2nd floor of the Huff Fellowship Hall Building
	9:30am	Children & Youth Education, Room B, 2nd floor of the Huff Fellowship Hall Building
	9:30am	Inquirer's Class, Sanctuary/Library
	10:20am	Hospitality, Huff Fellowship Hall Building
	10:40am	Covenant Singers Rehearsal, Sanctuary
	11:00am	Worship in-person, Sanctuary and via live-stream, YouTube
	12:00pm	Social Justice Meeting, Adult Education classroom on the 2nd floor of the Huff Fellowship Hall Building
	12:15pm	Handbell Rehearsal, Sanctuary/Children's Area

Tue. Jan 23	1:00 pm	Lunchtime Lectionary Lab, Zoom
Thurs. Jan 25	10:00 am	Community Group, Zoom

Helpful Information

Childcare: 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.

Visitor's Card: If you're a visitor with us, please submit a Visitor's Card.

Celebrations and Concerns: If you would like to share a celebration or concern with the Covenant community, please submit a Celebrations and Concerns Form.

Membership: If you are interested in learning more about Covenant, we encourage you to talk with one of the ministers or the worship leader. Email Office@covenanthouston.org.

Newsletter: To subscribe to the newsletter, send a request to office@covenanthouston.org.

Office Hours: The church office is open Monday through Friday from 10am to 2pm.

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.

*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

Brian Buck, Facilities Coordinator

Monique Cruz, Office and Financial Administrator

Trena' Jamison, Director of Children and Youth

David Lee, Director of Music

Laura Mayo, Senior Minister

Jason Steiner, Organist

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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.*