



*A Service of Worship for
Second Sunday of Eastertide
14 April 2024*

Why do you go to the forest in search of the Divine?
God lives in all, and abides with you too.
As fragrance dwells in a flower, or reflection in a mirror,
so the Divine dwells inside everything;
seek therefore in your own heart.

Tegh Bahadur, of the Sikh religion

If we knew how to listen to God,
if we knew how to look around us,
our whole life would become a prayer.

Michel Quoist

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ringing in the hour

Silence is kept

*Prelude

Aaron David Miller
(b. 1972)

“Vignette — Willow Tree”

Call to Worship

+Opening Hymn #330

Shepherd’s Pipes

“Deep In the Shadows of the Past”

**Deep in the shadows of the past, Far out from settled lands,
Some nomads traveled with their God Across the desert sands.
The dawn of hope for human-kind Was glimpsed by them alone:
A promise calling them ahead, A future yet unknown.**

**While others bowed to changeless gods They met a mystery:
God with an uncompleted name, “I am what I will be”;
And by their tents, around their fires, In story, song, and law
They praised, remembered, handed on A past that promised more.**

**From Abraham to Nazareth The promise changed and grew,
While some, remembering the past, Recorded what they knew,
And some, in letters or laments, In prophecy and praise,
Recovered, held, and re-expressed New hope for changing days.**

**For all the writings that survived, For leaders, long ago,
Who sifted, chose, and then preserved the Bible that we know,
Give thanks, and find its promise yet Our comfort, strength, and call,
The working model for our faith, Alive with hope for all.**

**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.

Invitation

Scripture Lesson

Genesis 3:1-2, Psalm 4

These are our sacred stories.

Thanks be to God.

Time for Children

+Response:

Hymn to Joy

Mortals, join the happy chorus which the morning stars began;

Love divine is reigning o'er us, joining all in heaven's plan.

Ever singing, march we onward, victors in the midst of strife,

Joyful music leads us homeward, in the triumph song of life.

Call to Confession

Silent Confession

Unison Confession

**Amid all the noise in our lives,
we take this moment to sit in silence—
to give thanks for another day,
to give thanks for all those in our lives
who have brought us warmth and love,
to give thanks for the gift of life.**

**Let us open ourselves, here, now,
to the process of becoming more whole—
of living more fully,
of giving and forgiving more freely,
of understanding more completely.**

Words of Assurance

Music

John Rutter

“The Lord Bless You and Keep You”
*The Lord bless you and keep you:
The Lord make his face to shine upon you
and be gracious unto you.
The Lord lift up the light of her countenance upon you,
and give you peace.
Amen.*

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

“O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go” v 1-3

**O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.**

**O light that followest all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to Thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in Thy sunshine’s blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be.**

**O joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to Thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain
That morn shall tearless be.**

Prayer

Offering

Offertory

“Tantum Ergo”

Juliette Folville
(1870 - 1946)

+Prayer of Dedication

**You have made your dwelling
among us, God,
and you are present
wherever people live—
we cling to this grace.
Let us honor your presence
and make us wise and strong enough
to build each other up
into your city on earth,
the body of Christ,
a world fit to live in,
today and for ever.**

*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

**We have entered into a new consciousness of God...
we are now God's dwelling place.
There is no supernatural deity beyond the sky working miracles.
There is only a God-infused humanity through whom
the Source of Life, the Source of Love, and the Ground of Being lives.
We are the God-bearers of the world.
We must rise to this new vocation.
For in each of us is the promise of "Emmanuel,"
which means God with us.
The only way that God can be with us
now and through the ages
is for each of us to allow God
to live and love through us,
through our humanity.**

+Closing Hymn #544

Ar Hyd Y Nos

"Day is Done"

**Day is done, but love unfailing
Dwells ever here;
Shadows fall, but hope, prevailing,
Calms every fear.
God, our Maker, none forsaking,
Take our hearts, of Love's own making,
Watch our sleeping, guard our waking,
Be always near.

Dark descends, but light unending
Shines through our night;
You are with us, ever lending
New strength to sight:**

**One in love, Your truth confessing,
One in hope of heaven's blessing,
May we see, in love's possessing,
Love's endless light!**

**Eyes will close, but You unsleeping
Watch by our side;
Death may come, in love's safekeeping
Still we abide.
God of love, all evil quelling,
Sin forgiving, fear dispelling,
Stay with us, our hearts indwelling,
This eventide.**

Benediction

*Postlude

Benedetto Marcello
(1686-1739)

“Psalm XIX: ‘The Heavens Declare the Glory of God’”

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

Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Bill Howze**.

The guest proclaimer is **Rich Doty**.

The Call to Worship is from *The Heart Is a Little to the Left* by William Sloane Coffin.

The Opening Prayer is a prayer of Sue Ayer from the *1997 Unitarian Universalist Ministers' Association Worship Materials Collection*.

The Unison Confession is from Timothy Haley in *Rejoice Together: Prayers, Meditations, and Other Readings*, edited by Helen Pickett.

The Covenant Singers are directed by **Jason Steiner**.

Prayer by **Deacon Moses Mason**.

The Prayer of Dedication is an adapted prayer of Huub Oosterhuis in *Your Word is Near*.

The Affirmation of Faith is adapted from *The Sins of Scripture: Exposing the Bible's Text of Hate to Reveal the God of Love* by John Shelby Spong.

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

Adult Education - Liz Turner will discuss the history and the practice of Taizé Prayer. Over some decades, Liz and husband Al attended Prayer at the Taizé Community, an ecumenical monastic fellowship in the Burgundy region of France. Liz also helps organize regular Taizé-style Prayer in Houston at the Villa de Matel, motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.

- *Rose Lange*

Children & Youth Education -

Children's Lesson

Title: A Lion in the Garden

Lesson: Forgiving and Healing

Youth Lesson

1 John 3:1-7

- *Trena' Jamison*

Children and Youth Announcements

Events

- **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. Apr 14	9:30am	Adult Education, Adult Education classroom on the 2nd floor of the Huff Fellowship Hall Building
	9:3am	Children & Youth Education, Room B, 2nd floor of the Huff Fellowship Hall Building
	9:30am	Handbell Rehearsal, Children's Classroom/Sanctuary
	10:20am	Hospitality, Huff Fellowship Hall Building
	10:40am	Covenant Singers Rehearsal, Sanctuary
	11:00am	Sunday Worship in-person, Sanctuary and via live-stream, YouTube
	12:00pm	All Church Committee Meetings, Huff Fellowship Hall
Tue. Apr 16	1:00pm	Lunchtime Lectionary Lab, Zoom
Thurs. Apr 18	10:00am	Community Group, Zoom
	7:15pm	Covenant Singers Rehearsal, Sanctuary

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.*