



*A Service of Worship for
Third Sunday of Lent
3 March 2024*

Earth mother, star mother,
You who are called by
a thousand names,
May all remember
we are cells in your body
and dance together.
You are the grain and the loaf
that sustains us each day.
As you are patient
with our struggles to learn,
so may we be patient
with ourselves and with each other.
We are radiant light
and sacred dark--the balance--
You are the embrace that heartens
and the freedom beyond fear.
Within you we are born,
we grow, live, and die--
You bring us around the circle
to rebirth,
within us You dance
forever.

Starhawk

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ring in the hour

Silence is kept

*Prelude

Margaretha Christina de Jong
(b. 1961)

“Präludium: Jesu, Meine Freude”

Call to Worship

+Opening Hymn #376

Hyfrydol

“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling”

**Love divine, all loves excelling, Joy of heaven to earth come down,
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling, All thy faithful mercies crown!
Jesus, Thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation, enter every trembling heart.**

**Breathe, O breathe Thy loving Spirit into every troubled breast!
Let us all in Thee inherit, let us find the promised rest;
Take away the love of sinning; Alpha and Omega be;
End of faith, as its beginning, set our hearts at liberty.**

**Come, Almighty to deliver, let us all Thy life receive;
Suddenly return, and never, nevermore Thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing, serve Thee as Thy hosts above;
Pray, and praise Thee without ceasing, glory in Thy perfect love.**

**Finish, then, Thy new creation; pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see Thy great salvation perfectly restored in Thee;
Changed from glory into glory, till in heav’n we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise.**

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

⁺Responsive Opening Sentences

Leader: Douglas Steere, a Quaker teacher, says that the ancient question, “Who am I?” inevitably leads to a deeper one, “Whose am I?”—because there is no identity outside of relationship. You can’t be a person by yourself.

People: To ask “Whose am I?” is to extend the question far beyond the little self-absorbed self, and wonder:

Leader: Who needs you? Who loves you? To whom are you accountable? To whom do you answer? Whose life is altered by your choices?

People: With whose life, whose lives, is your own all bound up, inextricably, in obvious or invisible ways.

Invitation

Scripture Lesson

Acts 8:26-40

These are our sacred stories.

Thanks be to God.

Time for Children

⁺Response:

THE SERVANT SONG

The musical score for 'The Servant Song' is written on three staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody is simple and hymn-like, using mostly half and quarter notes. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first line of music corresponds to the first line of lyrics, the second line to the second, and the third line to the third. The third line of music ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

I will hold the Christ - light for you In the night - time
of your fear; I will hold my hand out to you
Speak the peace you long _____ to hear.

Text: 87 87; Richard Gillard, b. 1953.

Music: SERVANT SONG; Richard Gillard; harm. by Betty Pulkingham, b. 1928.

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⁺Please stand in body or spirit

Call to Confession

Silent Confession

Unison Confession

**To become fully human means
learning to turn my gratitude for being alive
into some concrete common good.**

**It means growing gentler toward human weakness.
It means practicing forgiveness of my and everyone else's
hourly failures to live up to divine standards.**

**It means learning to forget myself on a regular basis
in order to attend to the other selves in my vicinity.
It means living so that "I'm only human"
does not become an excuse for anything.**

**It means receiving the human condition
as blessing and not curse,
in all its achingly frail and redemptive reality.**

Words of Assurance

Music

“Abide with Me”

Cathy Moglebust

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

+Hymn #499

“Wonder of Wonders, Here Revealed”

Pentecost

**Wonder of wonders, here revealed;
God's covenant with us is sealed.
And long before we know or pray,
God's love enfolds us every day.**

**Here in this sacrament we see
God's grace unbound, for all, for me!
May we respond with joyful praise
In loving service all our days.**

**This child of God, though young or old,
We welcome now into Christ's fold,
To know with us God's loving care;
Here all our joys and sorrows share.**

**Now we our vow of faith renew,
Stretch wide our sights to global view,
And claim with Christians far and near
A larger family held dear.**

Prayer

Offering
Offertory

Brenda Portman
(b. 1980)

“If God the Lord Were Not Our Constant Help”

+Prayer of Dedication

**God of love,
plunge me deep into a sense of sadness
at the pain of my sisters and brothers,

that I may learn again to cry as a child
until my tears baptize me
into a person who touches with care
those I now touch in prayer:
victims of violence,
people with broken bodies
with broken hearts,
with broken lives,
whom I remember now in silence before you.
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.***

⁺Affirmation of Faith

**Let us pray that we may notice and accept the Divinity of tiny things
the Divine of ordinary miracles and even in the awkward mistakes.**

**In frivolous conversation with friends
in wordless companionship with a loved one
in the work that seems futile one day
but resonates with meaning the next.**

In the shared meal, and the shopping list

**In the peaceful sleep
in the simple procession of the spring days.**

**We pray this moment to keep tender vigil over our precious, imperfect
lives.**

To know each one as a vessel, however cracked or broken, of the Holy.

**So may we strive to recognize the indwelling presence of God in all
people,**

in all living things, and even in ourselves. Amen.

⁺Closing Hymn #372

African-American Spiritual

“Lord, I Want to Be a Christian”

Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart, in my heart,

Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart.

In my heart, in my heart, in my heart, in my heart

Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart.

Lord, I want to be more loving in my heart, in my heart,

Lord, I want to be more loving in my heart.

In my heart, in my heart, in my heart, in my heart.

Lord, I want to be more loving in my heart.

Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart, in my heart,

Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart.

In my heart, in my heart, in my heart, in my heart.

Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart.

Lord, I want to like Jesus in my heart, in my heart.

Lord, I want to be like Jesus in my heart.

In my heart, in my heart, in my heart, in my heart.

Lord, I want to be like Jesus in my heart.

⁺*Please stand in body or spirit*

Benediction

*Postlude

Robert Schumann
(b. 1957)

“Allegro, Op. 70”

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

Worship Notes

The worship leader is the **McKinny Family**.

The Call to Worship is adapted from and inspired by the weekly order of worship.

The Responsive Opening Sentences are by Victoria Safford.

Sam Sherman, a member of the Missions Committee, gives the Invitation.

The Unison Confession is from *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are* by Brené Brown.

“Abide with Me” is played by the Covenant Handbells, with Alan Vaughan, flutist.

The Prayer of Dedication is adapted from *Guerillas of Grace* by Ted Loder.

The Affirmation of Faith is adapted from a prayer of Victoria Weinstein.

Karen Kline and **Susan Wegner** are playing the postlude.

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

Adult Education -“Labyrinth History, Covenant History.” After an introduction to labyrinths in history, David Ramsey will discuss the history of the Covenant labyrinth. David and Janice Ramsey, members of the Covenant congregation since 1974, were part of the team that helped build the labyrinth for the 2001 opening of Covenant's Sanctuary building on Caroline Street.

- *Rose Lange*

Children & Youth Education -

Children's Lesson

Title: Monica's Complicated Quilt

Lesson: Opening Our Hearts in Prayer

Youth Lesson

Scripture: John 2:13-22

- *Trena' Jamison*

Children and Youth Announcements

Events

- **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. Mar 3	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
	10:10am	Handbell Rehearsal, Sanctuary/Children's Area
	10:20am	Hospitality, Huff Fellowship Hall Building
	11:00am	Worship in-person, Sanctuary and via live-stream, YouTube
Tue. Mar 5	1:00 pm	Lunchtime Lectionary Lab, Zoom
Thurs. Mar 7	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.*