



*A Service of Worship for
the Fourth Sunday of Lent
22 March 2020*

I fell this morning
a shuffled foot over brick
raised by inconstant earth
that will not stay in

one place – like neighbor’s cat
I was slowly evicting, the
one that wanted to eat
my cat’s food put

on my decaying wooden
porch - wood rotting
from the rain of this
tropical clime, where

water has to keep
shuffling from earth to
sky; nothing staying
in place.

I fell flat over uneven
bricks; my knees breaking
the plane, my breath
adding to the water soaked

air and stars beyond skidding
clouds above me, which I,
carefully rolling over,
studied, contemplating my

possible brokenness or wholeness,
under a Buddha’s Hand, when
a cat came and meowed
questioningly, as I resolved

to lie again in
that beautiful place
on cold bricks
under the stars.

Kathleen Cook

Preparing for worship with silence
Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ringling in the hour
Silence is kept
Prelude

Margaret R. Tucker

“Resonance and Reflection”

Call to Worship
+Opening Prayer

**Living God, astound us one more with signs of your presence.
In the withered corners of our love, amaze us with small, swelling buds.
In the dead center of our despair, astonish us with tender shoots of hope.
Across the barren fields of betrayal, let our bewildered eyes open to the greening of forgiveness.
Into the frozen certainties of our endings, breathe warmth, that faith again may flower and exude the honey-damp fragrance of life.
All praise and thanks to you, surprising God. Amen.**

Scripture Lesson

Psalm 23

These are our sacred stories.

Thanks be to God.

Time for Children

+Response:

Tallis' Canon

*Go with us, Lord, 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

If I were to invent a sin to describe what that was—for how I lived—I would not say it was simply that I didn't stop to smell the roses. It was the sin of arrogance, of becoming impervious to life itself. I failed to love what was present and decided to love what was possible instead.

Words of Assurance

Special Music

Southern Harmony

“My Shepherd Will Supply My Need”

Silent reflection

Proclamation

Music

Franz Schubert

“Psalm 23”

**God is my Shepherd, I shall lack nothing.
God feedeth me in pastures green,
and leadeth me beside still waters,
The Lord restoreth my soul;
And leadeth me in paths of righteousness
To praise God’s holy Name.
Yea, though I walk through death’s dark shadowed valley,
Yet I will fear no evil, for thou dost shelter me:
thy rod and staff they comfort me.
Thou shalt prepare a table for me
before the face of all my foes,
thou has anointed my head with oil,
and my cup shall be full.
Thy goodness and thy mercy,
they shall ever follow me;
Yea, I shall dwell forever in the house of the Lord forevermore.**

Invitation

+Prayer of Dedication

**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.**

*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

What words tell the truth? What balms heal? What proverbs kindle the fires and passion of joy? What spirituality stirs the hunger for justice? We seek answers to these questions—not only for ourselves, but for our communities and our society. What are the ways of being with one another that enable life to flourish, rich with meaning? When violence has fractured communities, isolated people, and broken hearts, how can life be repaired? We ask these questions not to arrive at final answers, but because asking them is fundamental to living.

Benediction

Postlude

Green Fields America

“Stick to the Craythur”

Worship Notes

The acolyte lights the candles at the beginning of worship and carries the light out at the close of worship.

The worship leader is **Melissa Bernadoni**.

The prelude is "Resonance and Reflection" by Margaret R. Tucker, played by the Bayou City Bells of Houston, **David Lee**, Music Director.

The Call to Worship is “Love Abides” by Barbara Pescan.

The Opening Prayer is “Signs of Life” from *The Well is Deep: Prayers to Draw Up Living Water* by Virginia Rickeman.

The Unison Confession is a quote from *Everything Happens for a Reason: And Other Lies I've Loved* by Kate Bowler.

The Music is "My Shepherd Will Supply My Need" by Isaac Watts, sung by **Casey Okabayashi**.

Psalm 23 is sung by the Ohio State University Women's Glee Club.

The Prayer of Dedication is adapted from a prayer of Victoria Weinstein.

The Affirmation of Faith by Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker.

The postlude is "Stick to the Craythur" by Green Fields America, played by **Jacy Grannis**.

Education 10:00 - 10:40 a.m.

Covenant will not be holding in-person education through April 10.

Announcements

Covenant will be holding smaller groups on Zoom. Please see our email on Friday, March 20th for that information. We will also hold virtual coffee time each Sunday at 11am on Facebook.

Calendar

Sun. Mar. 22	9:00 a.m.	Worship Online
Sun. Mar. 29	9:00 a.m.	Worship Online

Helpful Information

Visitor Cards: If you're a visitor with us, please submit a [Visitors 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 currently not open, but we are responding to emails and phone calls.

*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

Laura Mayo, Senior Minister

Jodi Bash, Director of Children & Youth

Director of Communication

Fran Avera, Minister of Music, Emerita

David Lee, Interim Director of Music

Patrick Parker, Organist

Monique Cruz, Office and Financial Administrator

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