



*A Service of Worship for  
Palm/Passion Sunday  
5 April 2020*



To be a Christian –  
a follower of Jesus Christ –  
is to love wisdom,  
love justice,  
and love freedom.

This is the radical love  
that embraces questioning,  
prophetic witness, and hope.

To be a Christian  
is to live dangerously, honestly, freely –  
to step in the name of love as if you may land on nothing,  
yet to keep stepping because the something that sustains you  
no empire can give you and no empire can take away.

Cornel West

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!

**And also with you!**

Ringling in the hour

Silence is kept

Prelude

“Sarabande”  
from Partita No. 1

J.S. Bach

Call to Worship

+Opening Sentences

Today we enter Holy Week with its cycle of life, death, and new life.

Hosannah! Blessed is the one who comes in God’s name.

**Jesus, the holy one, the whole one, enters Jerusalem  
as he rides on the back of a donkey colt.**

**Crowds wave palm branches and cry out,**

Hosannah! Blessed in the one who comes in God’s name.

**Jesus, holy one, enter the gates of our hearts today  
as we join you in the time of Passion.**

**With you, let us remember and celebrate your birth, your calling, your ministry.**

**Hosannah! Blessed is the one who comes in God’s name.**

Jesus our mentor of wholeness, guide us through the streets of our journey.

Open our eyes and our ears to the guiding of God’s spirit  
who calls us to costly faithfulness and joyous wholeness.

**Let us sing with all our selves.**

**Hosannah! Blessed is the one who comes in God’s name.**

**Hosannah is the highest heaven. Amen.**

Scripture Lesson

Matthew 21:1-11

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

**Thou who art the soul and heart of life, save us from fear - the fear of days and nights yet to be, the fear of the known and the unknown, the fear that builds high walls around our spirits and our lives, the fear that closes in and envelopes us, the fear that nibbles at the edges of every satisfaction. Free us from fear of failure and success, of shame and pain, of death and fear of life as well. Open our eyes that we may see thy glory in humbleness and simplicity, commonness strewn generously across our path all our days. May we recognize thee riding upon a simple beast of burden, down the crooked streets of Jerusalem. May we not require the palms of victory and praise, the accolades and shouts of the multitude to see thy glory in gentleness, patience, loving kindness and, yes, pain and sometimes death. Thy way of peace - of faith, hope, and love - still is our path, our joy, our way.**

**Amen.**

Words of Assurance

Music

Sterling Alexander

Music

Nora Bennett



“Jesus was killed. This is one of those facts that everybody knows, but whose significance is often overlooked. He didn’t simply die; he was executed. We as Christians participate in the only major religious tradition whose founder was executed by established authority. And if we ask the historical question, “Why was he killed?” the historical answer is because he was a social prophet and movement initiator, a passionate advocate of God’s justice, and radical critic of the domination system who had attracted a following. If Jesus had been only a mystic, healer, and wisdom teacher, he almost certainly would not have been executed. Rather, he was killed because of his politics - because of his passion for God’s justice.”

Marcus J. Borg

Scripture Lesson:

Matthew 27:11-54

Silent reflection

Proclamation

Prayer

### Blessing When the World is Ending

Look, the world is always ending somewhere.

Somewhere the sun has come crashing down.

Somewhere it has gone completely dark.

Somewhere it has ended with the gun, the knife, the fist.

Somewhere it has ended with the slammed door, the shattered hope.

Somewhere it has ended with the utter quiet that follows the news from the phone, the television, the hospital room.

Somewhere it has ended with a tenderness that will break your heart.

But, listen, this blessing means to be anything but morose. It has not come to cause despair.

It is simply here because there is nothing a blessing is better suited for than an ending, nothing that cries out more for a blessing than when a world is falling apart.

This blessing will not fix you, will not mend you, will not give you false comfort; it will not talk to you about one door opening when another one closes.

It will simply sit itself beside you among the shards and gently turn your face toward the direction from which the light will come, gathering itself about you as the world begins again.

Invitation

<sup>+</sup>Prayer of Dedication

**Brief was his triumph,  
followed swiftly by his anguish!  
Yet we can hear hosannas still,  
echoing to us through the centuries,  
and when we remember him,  
love takes possession of our hearts.**

<sup>\*</sup>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.**

<sup>+</sup>Affirmation of Faith

**Through Jesus' life and teachings  
we see that God's power consists  
not in coercion but in God's willingness  
to forgive and have mercy.**

**God wills nothing less than that  
we should love our enemies  
and forgive one another.**

**Jesus challenged both the militaristic  
and ritualistic notions of what God's kingdom required.**

**He issued this challenge not only through his teaching  
but through his life. The announcement of the reality  
of the kingdom, its presence here and now,  
Is embodied in life.**

**In him we see that living a life of forgiveness and peace  
is not an impossible ideal  
but an opportunity now present.**

**“Blest Be the Tie That Binds”**  
*You are invited to join in singing*

**Blest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love;  
The fellowship of kindred minds  
Is like to that above.**

**Before our Maker’s throne,  
We pour our ardent prayers;  
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,  
Our comforts, and our cares.**

**We share our mutual woes,  
Our mutual burdens bear;  
And often for each other flows  
The sympathizing tear.**

**When we asunder part,  
It gives us inward pain;  
But we shall still be joined in heart,  
And hope to meet again.**

Benediction

Postlude  
Mozart

Wolfgang Amadeus

**“Adagio”**  
from Sonata No. 14 in C minor

## **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 **Beverly Rodgers**.

The prelude is played by Karen Kline, piano.

The Call to Worship is adapted from *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted* by Obery Hendricks, Jr.

The Opening Sentences are from "Passion Sunday" by Beth Richardson, reprinted in *Imaging the Word, Volume I*, edited by Kenneth T. Lawrence.

The Unison Confession is a Palm Sunday Prayer by David A. Johnson.

**Sterling Alexander**, clarinet.

**Nora Bennett**, piano.

Jan Richardson from *Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons*.

The Prayer of Dedication is an adapted prayer of A. Powell Davies in *Celebrating Easter and Spring: An Anthology of Unitarian Universalist Readings* compiled and edited by Carl Seaburg and Mark Harris.

The Affirmation of Faith is adapted from "Jesus and the Kingdom of God" in *The Peaceable Kingdom* by Stanley Hauerwas.

"Blest Be the Tie That Binds" is sung by members of the Covenant Singers.

The postlude is played by **Natalia Escobar Meija**, piano.

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

Covenant will not be holding in-person education through April 30.

## **Announcements**

Covenant will be holding smaller groups on Zoom. We will also hold virtual coffee time each Sunday at 11am on Facebook.

## **Calendar**

Sun. Apr. 5	9:00 a.m.	Worship Online
Mon. Apr. 6	1:00 p.m.	Book Group, <a href="#">Zoom Meeting</a>
Tue. Apr. 7	4:00 p.m.	Kid's Corner, <a href="#">Zoom Meeting</a>
Wed. Apr. 8	1:00 p.m.	Posted Devotional, <a href="#">View Devotional</a>
Wed. Apr. 8	7:00 p.m.	Covenant Singers, <a href="#">Zoom Meeting</a>
Thur. April 9	10:00 a.m.	Community Group, <a href="#">Zoom Meeting</a>
Thur. April 9	6:00 p.m.	Youth Group, <a href="#">Zoom Meeting</a>
Thur. April 9	8:00 p.m.	Community Group, <a href="#">Zoom Meeting</a>
Fri. April 10	1:00 p.m.	Bible Study, <a href="#">Zoom Meeting</a>

## **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](mailto:Office@covenanthouston.org).

**Newsletter:** To subscribe to the newsletter, send a request to [office@covenanthouston.org](mailto: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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*Pursuant to Section 30.07, Penal Code (trespass by license holder with an openly carried handgun), a person licensed under Subchapter H, Chapter 411, Government Code (handgun licensing law), may not enter this property with a handgun that is carried openly.*