

*A Service of Worship for  
First Sunday of Lent  
18 February 2024*

blessed are you who are raging.  
blessed are you who are mourning.  
blessed are you who feel numb.  
blessed are you who feel sick. and tired. and sick and tired.  
blessed are you who refuse to turn away.  
blessed are you who need to turn away.  
blessed are you who keep breathing deep.  
blessed are you who are tending to your own needs.  
blessed are you who are tending to the needs of another.  
blessed are you who have been calling.  
blessed are you who have been organizing.  
blessed are you who have been testifying.  
blessed are you who have been hearing.  
blessed are you who have been resisting.  
blessed are you who feel broken open beyond repair.  
blessed are you who are raw beyond words.  
blessed are you who are working hotlines and crisis care centers and bearing witness to the forces of  
violence and trauma unleashed and unloosed.  
blessed are you who are marching.  
blessed are you who are weeping.  
blessed are you who preach and know that divinity resides in despised, abused, violated flesh.  
blessed are you who know deep in your bones that you are good. and beautiful. and beloved. and  
sacred. and worthy. and believed. and held. and capable of healing beyond your wildest imagination.  
blessed are you who remind others they are good. and beautiful. and beloved. and sacred. and worthy.  
and believed. and held. and capable of healing beyond their wildest imagination.  
blessed are we when we dare to dream of a world without sexual violence, without white supremacy,  
without misogyny, without police brutality, without anti-trans and anti-queer violence.  
blessed are we when we stay tender.  
blessed are we when we stay fierce.  
blessed are we when we dare to imagine repair, and transformation.  
blessed are we when we labor together to make it so.

Rev. Anna Blaedel



Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!  
**And also with you!**

Ring in the hour

Silence is kept

\*Prelude

Mary Beth Bennett  
(b. 1954)

“Like the Murmur of the Dove's Song”

Call to Worship

+Opening Hymn #146

Vineyard Haven

“Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart!”

**Rejoice, ye pure in heart! Rejoice, give thanks, and sing!**  
**Your festal banner wave on high, the cross of Christ your King.**  
**Hosanna, hosanna! Rejoice, give thanks, and sing!**

**Yes, on through life's long path, still chanting as ye go;**  
**From youth to age, by night and day, in gladness and in woe.**  
**Hosanna, hosanna! Rejoice, give thanks, and sing!**

**At last the march shall end; the wearied ones shall rest; The**  
**pilgrims find their home at last, Jerusalem the blest. Hosanna,**  
**hosanna! Rejoice, give thanks, and sing!**

**Then on, ye pure in heart! Rejoice, give thanks, and sing!**  
**Your festal banner wave on high, the cross of Christ your King.**  
**Hosanna, hosanna! Rejoice, give thanks, and sing!**

*\*Please hold silence and remain seated during the prelude*

*+Please stand in body or spirit*

## <sup>+</sup>Responsive Opening Sentences

We come to worship together!

**Different people, different lives, different histories,**

Yet we are all children of the same Parent,

**Created lovingly by the Source of all life.**

**Different people, different lives, different histories.**

Yet we all have one Teacher,

**Jesus, who is so close to God that he is said to be the living word that  
God spoke. Different people, different lives, different histories.**

Yet one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

**Let us open ourselves to the word of God, which is at work in us.**

Invitation

Scripture Lesson

Acts 1:1-5; History of Covenant

These are our sacred stories.

**Thanks be to God.**

Time for Children

<sup>+</sup>Response:

### THE SERVANT SONG

1, 6. Will you let me be your ser - vant, Let me be as

1, 6. Christ to you; Pray that I may have the grace to

1, 6. Let you be my ser - vant, too.

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

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

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Call to Confession

Silent Confession

Unison Confession

**We must delight in each other,  
make others' conditions our own,  
rejoice together, mourn together,  
labor and suffer together,  
always having before our eyes our community  
as members of the same body.**

Words of Assurance

Music

William Mathias

“As Truly As God Is Our Father”

*As truly as God is our Father, so just as truly is God our Mother.  
In our Father, God Almighty, we have our being;  
In our merciful Mother we are remade and restored.  
Our fragmented lives are knit together.  
And by giving and yielding ourselves, through grace,  
To the Holy Spirit we are made whole.  
It is I, the strength and goodness of Fatherhood.  
It is I, the wisdom of Motherhood.  
It is I, the light and grace of holy love.  
It is I, the Trinity.  
I am the sovereign goodness in all things.  
It is I who teach you to love.  
It is I who teach you to desire.  
It is I who am the reward of all true desiring.  
All shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well. Amen.*

Silent Reflection

Prayer

Offering

Offertory

Johann Sebastian Bach  
(1685-1750)

“O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde groß”

+Prayer of Dedication

**Love is the doctrine of this church,  
The quest of truth is its sacrament,  
And service is its prayer.**

**To dwell together in peace,  
To seek knowledge in freedom,  
To serve human need,  
To the end that all souls shall grow into harmony  
with the Divine-**

**Thus do we covenant with each other  
and with God.**

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.***

## **THE CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION**

Invitation to the Table

+Hymn

Ellacombe

**“O God, You Give Us Grapes and Grain”**

**O God, you give us grapes and grain; you give us salt and oil.  
You bless us with refreshing rain and sun — and rich, dark soil.  
And so your care for all these things means we can be well-fed.  
Creation praises you and sings — as you give wine and bread.**

**You sent us Christ, who walked the fields and saw your love abound;  
he spoke of trees and crops and yields, and growth beneath the ground.  
He spoke of ordinary things like sheep and mustard seeds,  
and chicks beneath their mothers' wings; Christ taught your love through these.**

**One day at table, Jesus prayed, and blessed the bread and wine.  
These things of earth that you had made became your gift, your sign:  
You love the world! You sent your Son! And now, through wine and bread,  
our Lord is present once again and so your church is fed.**

*+Please stand in body or spirit*

**Your Spirit moves across the earth — the earth that you made good.  
May we see your creation's worth and love it as we should.  
As we now share the bread and wine, as Christ is here anew,  
God, give us strength to go and care for all the earth with you.**

Sharing the Bread and the Cup

*Our communion elements include both wine and water, and gluten free and  
vegan crackers. All are always welcome to communion at Covenant.*

<sup>+</sup>Affirmation of Faith

**We affirm—  
that God is love  
Jesus teaches love  
and an ageless Spirit  
breathes love through us  
just like our ancestors.**

**We affirm—  
our love for all life  
human, animal, and plant  
equal in nature's eye  
possessing limitless value  
and beauty.**

**We affirm—  
our love of truth  
found or made  
through the process  
of searching for it  
in stories, symbols, and experiences.**

**We affirm—  
our love of community  
as we welcome all comers  
and work for a world  
where everyone's needs are met  
and the people and the land live in peace.**

“Like the Murmur of the Dove’s Song”

**Like the murmur of the dove's song,  
like the challenge of her flight,  
like the vigor of the wind's rush,  
like the new flame's eager might:  
Come, Holy Spirit, come.**

**To the members of Christ's body,  
to the branches of the Vine,  
to the Church in faith assembled,  
To her midst as gift and sign:  
Come, Holy Spirit, come.**

**With the healing of division,  
With the ceaseless voice of prayer,  
With the power to love and witness,  
With the peace beyond compare:  
Come, Holy Spirit, come.**

Benediction

<sup>\*</sup>Postlude

Libby Larsen  
(b. 1950)

“Come, Holy Ghost, Our Souls Inspire”

*<sup>\*</sup>Please hold silence and remain seated during the prelude*

*<sup>+</sup>Please stand in body or spirit*



## **Worship Notes**

The worship leaders are **David and Susan Reeves**.

The Call to Worship is adapted from *Guerrillas of Grace* by Ted Loder.

The Opening Prayer is from *Touch Holiness*, edited by Ruth C. Duck and Maren C. Tirabassi.

The Unison Confession is by John Winthrop, First Governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony.

**Deacon Annie Christensen** gives the prayer.

The text of “O God, You Give Us Grapes and Grain” is by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette.

The Prayer of Dedication is arranged by L. Griswold Williams in *Singing the Living Tradition*, the 1993 Unitarian Universalist hymnal.

The Affirmation of Faith is by **Jeremy Rutledge** inspired by Covenant’s Mission Statement.

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

Adult Education - This Sunday Bill Kline will warm us up for our climate action kickoff lunch with “Size Matters: Why climate action requires theology-scale thinking and global cooperation.”

- *Bill Kline*

Children & Youth Education -

Children's Lesson

Title: Courageous Corrie

Lesson: Courage

Youth Lesson

Scripture: Mark 1:9-15

- *Trena' Jamison*

## **Announcements**

**Inauguration of Covenant’s Year of Climate Action Celebration**

**Today, 12PM - 2PM, Huff Fellowship Hall**

Covenant’s Year of Climate Action on February 18, 12-2PM in the Huff Fellowship Hall to feature all things fostering our climate action: planet-friendly food, scintillating questions, a thought-provoking speaker, heartening music, and last-but-not-least, the good company of fellow pilgrims in this year-long journey.

## Children and Youth Announcements

### Events

- **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. Feb 18	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	Handbell Rehearsal, Sanctuary/Children's Area
	10:20am	Hospitality, Huff Fellowship Hall Building
	10:30am	Covenant Singers Rehearsal, Sanctuary
	11:00am	Worship in-person, Sanctuary and via live-stream, YouTube
	12:00pm	Inauguration of Covenant's Year of Climate Action Celebration, Huff Fellowship Hall
Tue. Feb 20	1:00 pm	Lunchtime Lectionary Lab, Zoom
Thurs. Feb 22	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](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 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.*