



*A Service of Worship for
23 August 2020*

It's very important [for people to view Jesus as black]
because you've got a lot of white images of Christ.
In reality, Christ was not white, not European.
That's important to the psychic and to the spiritual consciousness
of black people who live in a white society
in which their lord and savior looks
just like people who victimize them.
God is whatever color God needs to be
in order to let people know they're not nobodies,
they're somebodies.

- James H. Cone

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ringling in the hour

Silence is kept

Prelude

G. F. Handel

“Air” from Water Music

Call to Worship

+Opening Prayer

**Maker of the universe,
fashioner of the stars,
who dwells within time and beyond time,
hear this prayer:**

**if I have failed to perceive you
when you have appeared
in the face of a friend,
if I have neglected to feed you
when you have come
with the hunger of a stranger,
if I have not embraced you when you have sought me out
of a sister or brother’s poverty,
if I have not laughed and played with you
when you greeted me with the delight of a child,
forgive me.**

**Open my eyes, my hands, my arms, my heart
to know your appearing and to celebrate
the flesh-shaped mystery of Emmanuel,
God with us.**

**Make my heart a dwelling place ready to receive you
in even the bleakest spaces,
to delight at your appearing even as the animals
who made welcome for the birth of wonder.**

Scripture Lesson

Matthew 16:13-28

These are our sacred stories.

Thanks be to God.

Time for Children

†Response:

Tallis' Canon

*Go with us, Lord, and 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

**O Holy and Haunting Presence
whose spirit moves quietly
but surely
in the sound and fury of the world
and of our lives,
you know us
as rushing water knows the rock
and releases its beauty
to reflect new light.**

**Open us
to the insistent abrasiveness of your grace,
for we often trivialize love
by abandoning the struggles
which accompany its joys
and rejecting the changes
which lead to its fulfillments.**

**Release us
from the dark fury
of assuming we are unloved
when the day calls for sacrifice
and the night for courage.**

**Release us
from the ominous fear
of thinking some sin
or failure of ours
can separate us from you
when life demands hard choices,
and the battle, high risks.**

**Release us
from the dangerous illusions
of independence
when the human family summons us
to the realities and promises
of interdependence
among races, sexes, nations.**

**Release us
from being possessed
by riches we do not need
and grievances that weary us
when you call us to share
our very selves
with neighbors
and to reflect for the world
the light of the kingdom
within us.**

Words of Assurance

Music

Gabriel Fauré

“Sicilienne”

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

Invitation

†Prayer of Dedication

**A transformed version of the Jesus tradition,
adapted for our day, would lay less emphasis
on believing things about Jesus
and more emphasis
on imitating Jesus.**

**It would be a practice system
rather than a belief system.**

**We will attempt to follow this practice
because we believe it to be good for us
and for the world.**

**The test of our faith will not be
the metaphysical convictions**

**we hold in our minds concerning Jesus,
but the evidence our lives will offer
of our commitment to his practice
of subversive love.**

*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

**By calling ourselves progressive,
we mean that we are Christians who**

**Have found an approach to God
through the life and teachings of Jesus;**

**Find more grace in search for understanding
than we do in dogmatic certainty—
more value in questioning than absolutes;**

**Form ourselves into communities
dedicated to equipping one another
for the work we feel called to do:
striving for peace and justice among all people,
protecting and restoring the integrity of all God's creation,
and bringing hope to those Jesus called
the least of his sisters and brothers; and**

**Recognize that being followers of Jesus is costly,
and entails selfless love,
conscientious resistance to evil,
and renunciation of privilege.**

Benediction

Postlude

Appalachian Folk Tune

“Simple Gifts”

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 **Joyce Courtois**.

The prelude is played by Patrick Parker, organ.

The Call to Worship is *Blessing for Knowing* by Jan Richardson.

The Opening Prayer is from “Sacred Journeys: A Woman’s Book of Daily Prayer.”

The Unison Confession is from Guerillas of Grace, a poem, “Release Me”, by Ted Loder.

“Sicilienne” is played by **Susan Wegner**, cello; Patrick Parker, piano.

The Prayer of Dedication is adapted from Doubts and Loves: What is Left of Christianity by Richard Holloway.

The Affirmation of Faith is adapted from “The 8 Points” of The Center for Progressive Christianity.

The postlude is played by **Jacy Grannis**, viola.

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

Adult Education recorded education sessions will be made available on this page: [Adult Education Recordings](#).

Please join me Sunday, August 23, as we talk about race, culture, and identity. As we look within to see who we are, what we believe, and those things we hope for, we can look out to see how that affects those around us. We will look at Toni Morrison and her book, *The Bluest Eye* to see what she said about issues that still affect us today. As we open a safe space of equitable sharing, we will look at how we can become the change that is needed in our world today. Will we be allies or saviors in our world to affect change? I look forward to seeing you on Zoom at 10am this Sunday.

- *Laura Mitchell*

Zoom links are available on the Online Gatherings page on our website:

<https://www.covenanthouston.org/covenant-gatherings.html>

Announcements

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

Calendar

Sun. Aug 23	9:00 a.m.	Worship Online
	10:00 a.m.	Adult Education via Zoom
	11:00 a.m.	Facebook Live coffee time
Tue. Aug 25	7:00 p.m.	Inquirer's Class, Zoom Meeting
Tue. Aug 25	3:30 p.m.	Kids Corner, Zoom Meeting
Wed. Aug 26	7:00 p.m.	Covenant Singers, Zoom Meeting
Thur. Aug 27	10:00 a.m.	Community Group, Zoom Meeting
Thur. Aug 27	8:00 p.m.	Community Group, Zoom Meeting
Fri. Aug 28	1:00 p.m.	Lunchtime Lectionary Lab, Zoom

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

4949 Caroline Street

Houston, Texas 77004

713-668-8830

office@covenanthouston.org

www.covenanthouston.org

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