



*A Service of Worship for
4 October 2020*

Gracious God,
who made the covenant promise with our ancestors,
we gather here today a rebellious people.
We want to act out your intentions for us,
but we keep getting mixed up
by all the glitter of the world around us.
You tell us to honor creation,
and we use other people and animals and plant life
only to meet our wants.
You offer daily bread to every living creature,
and we steal that bread from our brothers and sisters
in the name of our greed.
You promise us new life,
and we shrink back from it in fear.
Heal us, God, lest we destroy ourselves.
We need your presence among us. Amen.

from the U.N. Environmental Sabbath

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ringling in the hour

Silence is kept

Prelude
Parker

arr. Anthony Burger, adapt. Patrick

"Just as I Am"

Call to Worship

†Opening Prayer

**Creator, open our hearts
to peace and healing between all people**

**Creator, open our hearts
to provide and protect for all children of the earth.**

**Creator, open our hearts
to respect for the earth, and all the gifts of the earth.**

**Creator, open our hearts
to end exclusion, violence, and fear among all.**

Thank you for the gifts of this day and every day.

Scripture Lesson

Isaiah 58:6-12

These are our sacred stories.

Thanks be to God.

Time for Children

†Response:

Hymn to Joy

*Joyful, Joyful, we adore thee, God of glory, Lord of love;
Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee, Opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; Drive the gloom of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness, Fill us with the light of day.*

Call to Confession

Silent Confession

Unison Confession

**O God of great faithfulness,
we confess that sometimes
we feel like giving up
in a world where it seems
poverty and violence
will always be with us.
Our hope succumbs to despair.
We confess that denial
and distraction
are sometimes less painful
than vision and commitment.
We confess that often we lose
our vision - your vision - of a world
where righteousness and peace
will kiss each other.
We plod through our work
and don't dare to dream
your dream of a world made new.**

Words of Assurance

Silent Reflection

Invitation

[†]Prayer of Dedication

**Let us offer the world the best flowers and fruits
of our practice: lucidity, solidity,
brotherhood and sisterhood,
understanding, and compassion.
Let us give rise to the determination
to look deeply into the nature of fear, anger, hatred,
and violence and to give rise to the eyes of compassion.
Breathing in, we are aware of violence
within ourselves and within the world.
Breathing out, we are determined to look
with the eyes of compassion at the violence
within ourselves and the world.**

**We know that with the energy of mindfulness, concentration,
and awakened wisdom, we can lessen violence every day.
We know that responding to violence
with compassion is our only path.**

*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

Communion Prayer

**To your table
you bid us come.
You have set the places,
you have poured the wine,
and there is always room,
you say,
for one more.**

**And so we come.
From the streets
and from the alleys
we come.**

**From the deserts
and from the hills
we come.**

**From the ravages of poverty
and from the palaces of privilege
we come.**

**Running,
limping,
carried,
we come.**

**We are bloodied with our wars,
we are wearied with our wounds,**

**we carry our dead within us,
and we reckon with their ghosts.**

**We hold the seeds of healing,
we dream of a new creation,
we know the things
that make for peace,
and we struggle
to give them wings.**

**And yet, to your table
we come.
Hungering for your bread,
we come;
thirsting for your wine,
we come;
singing your song
in every language,
speaking your name
in every tongue,
in conflict and in communion,
in discord and in desire,
we come,
O God of Wisdom,
we come.**

Invitation to the Table

Sharing the Bread and the Cup

You are welcome to use whatever elements you have for communion this Sunday.

Music

Harold Freidell

"Draw Us In the Spirit's Tether"

[†]Affirmation of Faith

**Let no one be discouraged by the belief that there is nothing
one man or one woman can do against the enormous array
of the world's ills—against misery and ignorance, injustice and violence...**

**Few will have the greatness to bend history itself;
but each of us can work to change a small portion of events,
and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation...**

**It is from the numberless diverse acts of courage and belief
that human history is shaped. Each time a person stands up for an ideal,
or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice,
that person sends a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other
from a million different centers of energy and daring,
those ripples build a current
which can sweep down the mightiest walls
of oppression and resistance.**

Benediction

Postlude

arr. Anthony Burger, adapt. Patrick Parker

"Sweet Hour of Prayer / Trust and Obey"

Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Jim Wallace**.

The Call to Worship is *From Flames of the Spirit*, edited by Ruth C. Duck.

The Opening Prayer is from the Native American, Mi'kmaq Tribe, by Alicia Longriver.

The Unison Confession is developed from the Children's Defense Fund for a Children's Sabbath service.

The Prayer of Dedication is adapted from *Creating True Peace: Ending Violence in Yourself, Your Family, Your Community, and the World* by Thich Nhat Hanh.

The Communion Prayer is "Table Blessing" by Jan Richardson.

"Draw Us In the Spirit's Tether" is sung by The Covenant Singers.

The Affirmation of Faith is adapted from Robert Kennedy, as quoted by Jeffrey Sachs in *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*.

More About Selected Authors from Today:

Alycia Longriver was a participant in the "Sunbow 5 Walk" in which a small coalition of Native Americans walked from Cape Cod, Massachusetts to California on a journey that covered more than 3,000 miles and took more than seven months to complete. Ms. Longriver states, "In 1995 I walked with a group across the US, speaking to other groups, and praying all the way (15 million steps) for the healing of people and the earth. I prayed asking, Creator 'to bring', but after the walk realized we already have these things. It is a matter of opening our hearts to the gifts within." She is a member of the Mi'kmaq Tribe.

Thich Nhat Hanh is a Vietnamese Buddhist monk and peace activist. He lives in Plum Village spiritual community in the South of France and travels extensively giving talks on peace and spiritual values. He has been a lifelong peace-activist dedicated to finding peaceful solutions to conflicts. Thich Nhat Hanh has also written extensively on ways to find inner peace and inner happiness. He is credited with coining the term ‘Engaged Buddhism’ – a series of teachings which seek to bring practical Buddhist wisdom into daily life.

Education 9:00 - 9:40 a.m.

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

Rice Sociology Professor Stephen Klineberg will speak to the adult education class on Sunday, October 4. He will be talking about his book, *Prophetic City: Houston on the Cusp of a Changing America* as reflected in 35 years of the Houston Area Surveys. He is a great speaker and one of the best-known Rice professors in the city. You can read more about Stephen Klineberg [here](#).

Zoom links and materials are available on the Online Gatherings page on our website: <https://www.covenanthouston.org/covenant-gatherings.html>

Announcements

Sunday schedule for October 4:

9:00 - Adult Education with Zoom

10:00 - Worship via videos on the worship website

11:00 - Gather together for coffee time with Zoom

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

Calendar

Sun. Oct. 4	9:00 a.m.	Adult Education via Zoom
	11:00 a.m.	Coffee Time via Zoom
Mon. Oct. 5	1:00 p.m.	Book Group, Zoom Meeting
Wed. Oct. 7	7:00 p.m.	Covenant Singers, Zoom Meeting
Thur. Oct. 8	10:00 a.m.	Community Group, Zoom Meeting
Thur. Oct. 8	8:00 p.m.	Community Group, Zoom Meeting
Fri. Oct. 9	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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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.