



*A Service of Worship for  
the Fifth Sunday of Lent  
29 March 2020*

Frequently I remember something  
H. Richard Niebuhr wrote after  
having spent a number years trying  
to formulate a comprehensive perspective on faith.

He likens faith to a cube.

From any one angle of vision, he points out,  
The observer can see and describe  
at least three sides of the cube.

But the cube has back sides,  
a bottom and insides as well.

Several angles of vision  
have to be coordinated simultaneously  
to do any real justice  
in a characterization of faith.

James W. Fowler

Preparing for worship with silence  
Gathering in peace

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

Ringling in the hour  
Silence is kept  
Prelude

J.S. Bach

“Blessed Jesus, We Are Here”

Call to Worship

+Opening Sentences

**Our task now is to mend our broken world;  
if religion cannot do that, it is worthless.  
And what our world needs now  
is not belief, not certainty,  
but compassionate action  
and practically expressed respect  
for the sacred value of all human beings,  
even our enemies.**

Scripture Lesson

Ezekiel 37:1-14

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

**Belief in Jesus is most endangered when we are anxious to preserve it. When we are afraid of changes to established customs of thinking and living; we see reforms as destructive and thus would much prefer to hide Jesus in a golden shrine - untouchable and therefore also touching no one, unchangeable and therefore never changing anyone, eternally valid and therefore as far removed as possible from our reality.**

Words of Assurance

Silent reflection

Music

Livingston Gearheart

“Dry Bones”

Proclamation

Music

Ralph Vaughan Williams

“The Call”

Invitation

+Prayer of Dedication

**We shall have to develop a more dynamic understanding of God as one who accompanies creation in its evolving story like a pianist in a silent movie. We can choose the metaphor of the jazz session that constantly makes new music by listening to what’s happening around it and applying the best of the tradition to the current context. The genius of improvisation seems to be a metaphor for actual human experience. God invites us to join the music, to listen to one another, to keep the music flowing.**

\*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

**I do not think being a Christian is primarily about believing. It is not about believing in the Bible or the gospels or the Christian teachings about Jesus, but about a relationship to the One whom we see through the lens of Christian tradition as a whole.**

**Our preoccupation with believing is because many of the central teachings of Christianity have come into question in the modern world. Thinking of the Christian life as being primarily about believing in God, the Bible, and Jesus, is thus a modern mistake, with profound consequences. One can believe all the right things and remain a jerk, or worse. Saints have been heretical, and people with correct beliefs have been cruel oppressors and brutal persecutors. Rather, the Christian life is about relationship to the God to whom tradition points. What matters is the relationship, for it can and does and will transform our lives.**

Benediction

Postlude

Camille Saint-Saens

“The Swan”

### **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 **Bill Martin**.

The prelude is "Blessed Jesus, We Are Here" by J.S. Bach.

The Call to Worship is from *If God Does Not Die* by Bernard Martin.

The Opening Sentences is from *The Spiral Staircase: My Climb Out of Darkness* by Karen Armstrong.

The Unison Confession is adapted from Dorothee Soelle and Luise Schottoroff.

"Dry Bones" is a 2017 archive recording of the Covenant Singers.

**Ryan McKinny** is singing "The Call" from Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Mystical Songs*.

The Prayer of Dedication is adapted from Richard Holloway's chapter, "Ethical Jazz," in *Godless Morality: Keeping Religion Out of Ethics*.

The Affirmation of Faith is adapted from the chapter, "A Vision of the Christian Life," in *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* by Marcus Borg and N.T. Wright.

The postlude is "The Swan" by Camille Saint-Saens, **Susan Wegner**, cellist.

### **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. We will also hold virtual coffee time each Sunday at 11am on Facebook.

### **Calendar**

Sun. Mar. 29	9:00 a.m.	Worship Online
Mon. Mar. 30	1:00 p.m.	Book Group, <a href="#">Zoom Meeting</a>
Tue. Mar. 31	4:00 p.m.	Kid's Corner, <a href="#">Zoom Meeting</a>
Wed. Apr. 1	1:00 p.m.	Posted Devotional, <a href="#">View Devotional</a>
Thur. April 2	10:00 a.m.	Community Group, <a href="#">Zoom Meeting</a>
Thur. April 2	6:00 p.m.	Youth Group, <a href="#">Zoom Meeting</a>
Thur. April 2	8:00 p.m.	Community Group, <a href="#">Zoom Meeting</a>
Fri. April 3	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*

*4949 Caroline Street*

*Houston,*

*Texas*

*77004*

*www.covenanthouston.org*

*713-668-8830*

*office@covenanthouston.org*

*Pursuant to Section 30.06, Penal Code (trespass by license holder with a concealed handgun), a person licensed under Subchapter H, Chapter 411, Government Code (handgun licensing law), may not enter this property with a concealed handgun.*

*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.*