



*A Service of Worship for
The First Sunday of Lent
21 February 2021*

We look with uncertainty
Beyond the old choices for
Clear-cut answers
To a softer, more permeable aliveness
Which is every moment
At the brink of death;
For something new is being born in us
If we but let it.
We stand at a new doorway,
Awaiting that which comes.
Daring to be human creatures.
Vulnerable to the beauty of existence.
Learning to love.

Anne Hillman

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ringling in the hour
Silence is kept

Prelude
Charter

arr. Vernon

"Fairest Lord Jesus"

Call to Worship

+Opening Sentences

Why have we come together?

Not to escape life, but to see life as it really is.

Not to avoid reality, but to confront reality and affirm Ultimate Reality.

We gather to hear the Word that, come what may, we can live.

And to embrace life in all its ambiguity -

sorrow and joy, healing and hurt, suffering and love.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Therefore, we will not fear when the earth trembles.

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Scripture Lesson

Psalm 25:1-10, Mark 1:9-15

These are our sacred stories.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn

Slane

“Lord of All Hopefulness”

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

**For while we have our eyes on the future,
history has its eyes on us.
This is the era of just redemption
we feared at its inception.
We did not feel prepared to be the heirs
of such a terrifying hour
but within it we found the power
to author a new chapter.
To offer hope and laughter to ourselves.
So while once we asked,
how could we possibly prevail over catastrophe?
Now we assert,
How could catastrophe possibly prevail over us?
We will not march back to what was,
but move to what shall be.**

**We will not be turned around
or interrupted by intimidation,
because we know our inaction and inertia
will be the inheritance of the next generation.
Our blunders become their burdens.
But one thing is certain,
If we merge mercy with might,
and might with right,
then love becomes our legacy,
and change our children's birthright.**

**When day comes we step out of the shade,
afame and unafraid,
the new dawn blooms as we free it.
For there is always light,
if only we're brave enough to see it.
If only we're brave enough to be it.**

Words of Assurance

Music

Walter Pelz

“Show Me Thy Ways”

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

Prayer

Invitation

+Prayer of Dedication

O God of Freedom, we are free to love because you are love.

Free us from being hard to love, hard to forgive, hard to enjoy.

Free us from sitting in the darkness of our despair rather than standing in the light of your confidence.

Free us from grasping for the past so that we miss the present.

Free us from grasping for the new before we learn to appreciate the old.

Free us from the way we distort our faith and from the inconsistencies that mark our lives.

Free us from the fear of change that we may fight for the changes that are needed.

Free us from the dread of death that we may live eternal life now.

O God of Freedom, free us to hope as we live in the hope expressed in Jesus. Amen.

*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

God of history and of my heart,

So much has happened to me during these whirlwind days:

I've known birth and death;

I've been brave and scared;

I've hurt, I've helped;

I've destroyed, I've created;

I've been with people, I've been lonely;

I've been loyal, I've betrayed;

I've decided, I've waffled;

I've laughed, I've cried.

Help me to believe in beginnings

and in my beginning again,

no matter how often I've failed before.

Benediction

Postlude

arr. Healey Willan

“Be Thou My Vision”

Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Amy Corron**.

The Lent banner pictured on the cover was created by **Nancy Henry**.

The prelude is played by **Karen Kline**, piano.

The Call to Worship is by **Bill Howze**.

The Opening Sentences are from a Covenant Order of Worship, October 12, 1980.

The Unison Confession is from “The Hill We Climb” by Amanda Gorman.

"Show Me Thy Ways" is sung by The Covenant Singers, from September 15, 2019; **David Lee**, director; **Heather Laureles**, clarinet; Patrick Parker, piano.

The Prayer of Dedication is by **Janice Ramsey**.

The postlude is played by Andrew Bowen, organ.

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

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

This Sunday, Dr. Portia Hopkins, Postdoctoral Research Associate in Data Curation for African American Studies at Rice, will join us to discuss the history of St. John Missionary Baptist Church in Missouri City. Founded in 1869 by formerly enslaved people, St John's has overcome challenges such as racial oppression, arson, and vandalism through the dedication of its small congregation. In 2017, it received a Texas state historical marker, assisted by Dr. Hopkins, who is an expert in community-driven historic preservation.

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

Announcements

A Coming Together to Talk About Being Apart - Today

Our own Thelma Jean Goodrich and Tom Cole will be facilitating a time of support and encouragement on Sunday, February 21 from 3:00-4:30 PM.

We will gather on Zoom and make use of the Zoom breakout rooms.

The hope for this time is to provide space and support for sharing about the impact of our isolation brought on by the pandemic. We will ask ourselves about common reactions and their cause and we will discuss how we can manage these reactions. We will use psychological research, spiritual guidance, telling stories, shaping experience through writing to guide our experience.

Dr. Thelma Jean Goodrich, PhD, in addition to being a member of our church and a wonderful addition to the choir is a therapist who, in addition to working with clients, services on the faculty of the Institute for Spirituality and Health at the Texas Medical Center and Houston Galveston Family Therapy Institute Advisory Council. She also works with the McGovern Center for Health, Humanities, and the Human Spirit, UT-Houston Medical School. Thelma Jean has been worship leader.

Dr. Thomas Cole, PhD, in addition to being a regular attender of Covenant, has just been ordained as a Jewish Spiritual Director. He is the director of the McGovern Center for Humanities and Ethics and the author of many books. He has been a proclaimer at Covenant and has led Adult Education on multiple topics.

The Zoom information is on our online gatherings page:
<https://www.covenanthouston.org/covenant-gatherings.html>. You will need a password to open this webpage. Please let the office know if you need help with the password.

Sunday schedule for this Sunday:

- 9:00 - Adult Education with Zoom
- 10:00 - Worship via videos on the worship website
- 11:00 - Gather together for coffee time with Zoom
- 3:00 - “A Coming Together to Talk About Being Apart” - Facilitated Discussion via Zoom

Calendar

Sun. Feb. 21	9:00 a.m.	Worship Online
	10:00 a.m.	Adult Education, Zoom Meeting
	11:00 a.m.	Coffee Time, Zoom Meeting
Mon. Feb. 22	1:00 p.m.	Book Group, Zoom Meeting
Wed. Feb. 24	7:00 p.m.	Covenant Singers, Zoom Meeting
Thur. Feb. 25	10:00 a.m.	Community Group, Zoom Meeting
Thur. Feb. 25	8:00 p.m.	Community Group, Zoom Meeting
Fri. Feb. 26	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

Andrew Bowen, Interim Organist

Monique Cruz, Office and Financial Administrator

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