



*A Service of Worship for
Fourth Sunday of Eastertide
Honoring Earth Day
25 April 2021*

If we will have the wisdom to survive,
to stand like slow-growing trees
on a ruined place, renewing, enriching it,
if we will make our seasons welcome here,
asking not too much of earth or heaven,
then a long time after we are dead
the lives our lives prepare will live here,
their houses strongly placed
upon the valley sides, fields and gardens
rich in the windows. The river will run
clear, as we will never know it,
and over it, birdsong like a canopy.

On the levels of the hills will be
green meadows, stock bells in noon shade.
On the steeps where greed and ignorance cut down
the old forest, an old forest will stand,
its rich leaf-fall drifting on its roots.
The veins of forgotten springs will have opened.
Families will be singing in the fields.
In their voices they will hear a music
risen out of the ground. They will take
nothing from the ground they will not return,
whatever the grief at parting. Memory,
native to this valley, will spread over it
like a grove, and memory will grow
into legend, legend into song, song
into sacrament. The abundance of this place,
the songs of its people and its birds,
will be health and wisdom and indwelling
light. This is no paradisal dream.
Its hardship is its possibility.

Wendell Berry

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ringling in the hour

Silence is kept

Prelude

William Boyce

“Voluntary in C”

Call to Worship

†Opening Prayer

**Hear me, four quarters of the world—a relative I am!
Give me the strength to walk the soft earth,
a relative to all that is!
Give me the eyes to see and the strength to understand
that I may be like you.
Great Spirit, Great Spirit, Grandfather,
all over the earth the faces of living things are alike.
With tenderness have these come up out of the ground.
Look upon these faces of children without number
and with many children in their arms
that they may face the winds
and walk the good road to the day of quiet.**

Scripture Lesson

Psalm 23 and Job 39:1-30

These are our sacred stories.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn

"The King of Love My Shepherd Is"

St. Columba

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

**In the beginning was God
In the beginning
 The source of all that is
In the beginning
 God yearning
 God moaning
 God laboring
 God giving birth
 God rejoicing**

**And God loved what she made
And God said,
 "It is good."
And God, knowing that all that is good is shared
Held the earth tenderly in her arms
God yearned for relationship
God longed to share the good earth
And humanity was born in the yearning of God
We were born to share the earth**

Words of Assurance

Music

John Rutter

“The Lord Is My Shepherd”

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

Prayer

Invitation

+Prayer of Dedication

**Be a gardener.
Dig a ditch
toil and sweat,
and turn the earth upside down
and seek the deepness
and water the plants in time.
Continue this labor
and make sweet floods to run**

**and noble and abundant fruits
to spring.
Take this food and drink
and carry it to God
as your true worship.**

*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 dream a world where [people]
No other will scorn,
Where love will bless the earth
And peace its paths adorn.
I dream a world where all
Will know sweet freedom's way,
Where greed no longer saps the soul
Nor avarice blights our day.
A world I dream where black or white,
Whatever race you be,
Will share the bounties of the earth
And every [hu]man is free,
Where wretchedness will hang its head,
And joy, like a pearl,
Attends the needs of all [hu]mankind**

Benediction

Postlude

Max Reger

“Praise To the Lord, the Almighty”

Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Laura Mayo**.

Our guest proclaimer is Tom Cole.

The prelude and postlude are played by Andrew Bowen, organ.

The Call to Worship is by Pattiann Rogers.

The Opening Prayer is by Black Elk.

The Unison Confession is from *A Passion for Justice: Images of Power, Sexuality and Liberation* by Carter Heyward.

"The Lord Is My Shepherd" is sung by The Covenant Singers, from November 5, 2017, directed by **Fran Avera**, Liz Hebert, oboe.

The Prayer of Dedication is by Julian of Norwich, as reprinted in *Imaging the Word, Vol. 2*.

The Affirmation of Faith is "I Dream A World" by Langston Hughes.

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

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

Stuck in the false dichotomy of left vs right, D vs R, and us vs them, Americans should take valuable lessons from the history of refugee resettlement to understand the inevitable outcome of political posturing: bipartisan neglect at best and outright violence at worst. Over the course of decades, Texas has been fertile soil for inventing new political games that led to the steady deterioration of a previously functioning public institution. I will trace how in my lifetime the system of refugee resettlement went from giving me and my family a chance to demonizing communities fleeing their homes.

Zoom links and materials are available on the Online Gatherings page on our website: [Covenant Gatherings](#)

Announcements

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

Calendar

Sun. Apr. 25	9:00 a.m.	Worship Online
	10:00 a.m.	Adult Education, Zoom Meeting
	11:00 a.m.	Coffee Time, Zoom Meeting
Mon. Apr. 26	1:00 p.m.	Book Group, Zoom Meeting

Wed. Apr. 28	7:00 p.m.	Covenant Singers, Zoom Meeting
Thur. Apr. 29	10:00 a.m.	Community Group, Zoom Meeting
Thur. Apr. 29	8:00 p.m.	Community Group, Zoom Meeting
Fri. Apr. 30	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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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.