



*A Service of Worship for  
Fifth Sunday of Lent  
17 March 2024*

We believe –  
this is a healing community.  
This is not so because wounds are cured  
and pain is alleviated  
but because wounds and pains  
become occasions for new vision.

Our mutual understanding –  
becomes a mutual deepening of hope,  
and sharing weaknesses  
becomes a reminder to one and all  
of the strength in community.

Community arises where sharing takes place  
as a recognition of God's promise  
and our honest response.

A church is a place where we try  
to think, speak, and act in God's way,  
not in the way of a fear-filled world.

Henri Nouwen



Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

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

Ringling in the hour

Silence is kept

\*Prelude

Ethel Smyth  
(1858-1944)

“Prelude on a Traditional Irish Air”

Call to Worship

*\*Please hold silence and remain seated during the prelude*

+Opening Hymn

“Let Us Build A House”

1 Let us build a house where love can dwell and  
2 Let us build a house where proph - ets speak, and  
3 Let us build a house where love is found in  
4 Let us build a house where hands will reach be -  
5 Let us build a house where all are named, their

all can safe - ly live, a place where saints and  
words are strong and true, where all God's chil - dren  
wa - ter, wine, and wheat; a ban - quet hall on  
yond the wood and stone to heal and strength-en,  
songs and vi - sions heard and loved and trea - sured,

chil - dren tell how hearts learn to for -  
dare to seek to dream God's reign a -  
ho - ly ground where peace and jus - tice  
serve and teach, and live the Word they've  
taught and claimed as words with - in the

give. Built of hopes and dreams and vi - sions, rock of  
new. Here the cross shall stand as wit - ness and as  
meet. Here the love of God, through Je - sus, is re -  
known. Here the out - cast and the strang - er bear the  
Word. Built of tears and cries and laugh - ter, prayers of

faith and vault of grace; here the love of Christ shall  
sym - bol of God's grace; here as one we claim the  
veiled in time and space; as we share in Christ the  
im - age of God's face; let us bring an end to  
faith and songs of grace; let this house pro - claim from

end di - vi - sions:  
faith of Je - sus:  
feast that frees us: all are wel - come; all are wel - come;  
fear and dan - ger:  
floor to raf - ter:

all are wel - come in this place.

Glory to God 301  
TEXT: Marty Haugen, 1994; © 1994 GIA Publications, Inc.  
MUSIC (TWO OAKS 9.6.8.6.8.7.10 with refrain): Marty Haugen, 1994; © 1994 GIA Publications, Inc.

+Please stand in body or spirit

+Responsive Opening Sentences

Leader: Why have we come together?

**People: Not to escape life, but to see life as it really is.  
Not to avoid reality, but to confront reality and affirm Ultimate Reality.**

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

**People: 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.**

Leader: Therefore, we will not fear when the earth trembles. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Invitation

Scripture Lesson

Acts 11:1-12; History of Covenant

These are our sacred stories.

**Thanks be to God.**

Time for Children

+Response:

**THE SERVANT SONG**

1, 6. Will you let me be your ser - vant, Let me be as  
1, 6. Christ to you; Pray that I may have the grace to  
1, 6. Let you be my ser - vant, too.

Text: 87 87; Richard Gillard, b. 1953.

Music: SERVANT SONG; Richard Gillard; harm. by Betty Pulkingham, b. 1928.

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Call to Confession

Silent Confession

Unison Confession

**Violent images seem altogether  
more solid and substantial,  
more decisive and telling, somehow,  
than kindness, goodness, and lived peace.**

**It is easy to bow down  
before these images  
and give in to the despair they preach.**

**But if I've learned anything,  
it is that goodness prevails  
not in the absence of reasons to despair  
but in spite of them...**

**People who bring light into the world  
wrench it out of darkness  
and contend openly with darkness...**

**The spiritual geniuses of the ages  
and of the everyday  
don't let despair have the last word.  
Nor do they close their eyes to its pictures,  
or deny the enormity of its facts.  
They say, "Yes, and..."  
And they wake up the next day,  
and the day after that,  
to act and live accordingly.**

Words of Assurance

“No Man Is an Island”

*No man is an island,  
Entire of itself;  
Every man is a piece of the continent,  
A part of the main.  
If a clod be washed away by the sea,  
Europe is the less,  
As well as if a promontory were:  
As well as if a manor of thy friend's  
Or of thine own were.  
Any man's death diminishes me,  
Because I am involved in mankind.  
Therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;  
It tolls for thee.*

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

+Hymn #440

McKee

“In Christ There Is No East or West”

**In Christ there is no east or west, in Him no south or north;  
But one great fellowship of love throughout the whole wide earth.**

**In Christ shall true hearts everywhere their high communion find;  
His service is the golden cord closebinding humankind.**

**Join hands, disciples of the faith, whate'er your race may be.  
All children of the living God are surely kin to me.**

**In Christ now meet both east and west, in Him meet south and north;  
All Christly souls are one in Him throughout the whole wide earth.**

Prayer

Offering  
Offertory

Caterina Assandra  
(1590-1618)

“Ave Verum Corpus”

+Prayer of Dedication

**God of Love,  
May I not forget I have a heart - to love a broken world.  
May I not forget I have a voice - to speak out for the poor.  
May I not forget I have hands - to reach out to other people.  
May I not forget I have feet - to go where I am needed.  
Let me never forget  
You will be with me  
Always.**

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,  
send the gift of your Spirit,  
to fill this place  
and ourselves  
and the world.**

**Touch us  
with truth  
that burns like fire,  
with beauty  
that moves us like the wind;**

**and set us free, God,  
free to try new ways of living;  
free to forgive ourselves and others;  
free to love and laugh and sing;  
free to lay aside our burden of security;  
free to join the battle for justice and peace;  
free to see and listen and wonder again  
at the gracious mystery of things and persons;**

+Please stand in body or spirit



free to be,  
to give,  
to receive,  
to rejoice as a child of your Spirit.

+Closing Hymn

### THE SERVANT SONG

1, 6. Will you let me be your ser - vant, Let me be as  
2. We are pil - grims on a jour - ney, We are trav - 'lers  
3. I will hold the Christ - light for you In the night - time  
4. I will weep when you are weep - ing; When you laugh I'll  
5. When we sing to God in heav - en We shall find such

1, 6. Christ to you; Pray that I may have the grace to  
2. on the road; We are here to help each oth - er  
3. of your fear; I will hold my hand out to you,  
4. laugh with you. I will share your joy and sor - row  
5. har - mo - ny, Born of all we've known to - geth - er

1, 6. Let you be my ser - vant, too.  
2. Walk the mile and bear the load.  
3. Speak the peace you long to hear.  
4. 'Til we've seen this jour - ney through.  
5. Of Christ's love and ag - o - ny.

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+Please stand in body or spirit

Benediction

\*Postlude

Roberta Bitgood  
(1908-2007)

“Fantasy on an Ancient Hymn”

*\*Please hold silence and remain seated during the postlude*  
*+Please stand in body or spirit*

## **Worship Notes**

The worship leaders are the **McKinny Family**.

The Call to Worship is adapted from *Gates of Prayer: The New Union Prayer Book* from the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

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

The Unison Confession is from "Speaking of Faith" by Krista Tippett.

**Deacon Nita Lindley** gives the prayer.

The Prayer of Dedication is an adapted prayer of Max Khanna.

The Affirmation of Faith is from *Guerrillas of Grace* by Ted Loder.

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### **Education 9:30 - 10:20 a.m.**

Adult Education - This Sunday, Tonya McKinny will be sharing her Camino experience and the valuable lessons it imparted. Tonya, a member of Covenant Church, divides her time between Houston and traveling with her family. She wears many hats as a director, teacher, entrepreneur, short-term real estate investor, and mother of Emma and Louis. Last summer she embarked on the Camino with Laura Mayo and two companions.

- *Rose Lange*

### **Children & Youth Education -**

Children's Lesson

Title: Pulling Back the Curtain

Lesson: Infinite Possibilities in Each Moment

Youth Lesson

Scripture: Psalm 51:1-12

- *Trena' Jamison*



## Donations needed for our annual **Easter Egg Hunt!**

The Children & Youth Committee & the Outreach Committee are requesting your help to create an exciting event for the children of Covenant and to help us reach out to other young families in Houston. It is helpful for us to host a couple of large, welcoming events each year to extend a hand to families in our community who might be interested in visiting Covenant. These events also allow us to strengthen connections with a community that means so much to us. However, our committees are small, and we really need your help to pull off a fun event!

For this particular event, our greatest need is plastic egg donations and candy donations. (Ours have gotten old after years of reuse.) Please leave donations in the Narthex by Sunday, March 24th.

### **Children and Youth Announcements**

#### **Events**

- **March 29:** Youth Lock-In
- **March 30:** Annual Easter Egg Hunt
- **April 21:** Children & Youth Sunday
- **June 9-13, 2024:** McMurry University Youth Camp Passport **(please see newsletter for sign-up link)**.
- **July 27-30, 2024:** Heart of Texas Camp Brownwood, TX Children Camp Passport, **(please see newsletter for sign-up link)**.

## Calendar

Sun. Mar 17	9:30am	Adult Education, Adult Education classroom on the 2nd floor of the Huff Fellowship Hall Building
	9:30am	Children & Youth Education, Room B, 2nd floor of the Huff Fellowship Hall Building
	10:20am	Hospitality, Huff Fellowship Hall Building
	10:40am	Covenant Singers Rehearsal, Sanctuary
	11:00am	Worship in-person, Sanctuary and via live-stream, YouTube
	12:00pm	Climate Action/Social Justice Meeting, Adult Education classroom on the 2nd floor of the Huff Fellowship Hall Building
	12:30pm	Handbell Rehearsal, Sanctuary/Children's Area
	5:00pm	UH Concert Chorale, Sanctuary
Tue. Mar 19	1:00pm	Lunchtime Lectionary Lab, Zoom
Thurs. Mar 21	10:00am	Community Group, Zoom
	7:15pm	Covenant Singers Rehearsal, Sanctuary

## **Helpful Information**

**Childcare:** Childcare is provided in the children's area beginning at 9:30 a.m. Children aged 2 and under are invited to the nursery. Children aged 3 to 9 are invited to the children's area after the Time for Children.

**Visitor's Card:** If you're a visitor with us, please submit a Visitor's 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 open Monday through Friday from 10am to 2pm.

**Covenant Recycles:** If you do not wish to keep your order of worship, please recycle it by placing it on the stand located in the narthex.

*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

Fran Avera, Minister of Music, Emerita

Brian Buck, Facilities Coordinator

Monique Cruz, Office and Financial Administrator

Trena' Jamison, Director of Children and Youth

David Lee, Director of Music

Laura Mayo, Senior Minister

Jason Steiner, Organist

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*Covenant Church recognizes the laws of the State of Texas and the rights of its citizens. Consistent with this acknowledgment and with respect for the values of our Church, we also acknowledge that our congregants and visitors seek a safe and comfortable space for worship and celebration. **In that spirit, we request that all firearms be left in a secure place outside of the Church.** We thank God for providing us with the opportunity to worship together and to continue to respect each other as human beings.*