



Fred Rogers icon created by Kelly Latimore

*A Service of Worship for
First Sunday of Eastertide
7 April 2024*

Knowing that we can be loved
exactly as we are
gives us all the best opportunity
for growing into the healthiest of people.

- Fred Rogers

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ring in the hour

Silence is kept

*Prelude

Nicolas de Grigny
(1672-1703)

“Plein jeu” from ‘The Word Descending From Above’

Call to Worship

+Opening Hymn #426

Canonbury

“Lord, Speak to Me, That I May Speak”

Lord, speak to me, that I may speak

In living echos of thy tone;

As thou hast sought, so let me seek

Thine erring children lost and lone.

O lead me, Lord, that I may lead

The wandering and the wavering feet;

O feed me, Lord, that I may feed

Thy hungering ones with manna sweet.

O teach me, Lord, that I may teach

The precious things thou dost impart;

And wing my words, that they may reach

The hidden depths of many a heart.

O fill me with thy fullness,

Lord, until my very heart o'er flow

In kindling thought and glowing word,

Thy love to tell, thy praise to show.

O use me, Lord, use even me,

Just as thou wilt, and when, and where;

Until thy blessed face I see,

Thy rest, thy joy, thy glory share.

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

+Please stand in body or spirit

+Opening Sentences

The resurrection stories of the New Testament need neither be taken as fact or reinterpreted to appear scientifically acceptable.

**They can be left as they are:
myths of meaningfulness.**

They are the poetry of reverence.

**They are the stories of the reaffirmation
of life that even death cannot end.**

**They are the songs of the experience of a people,
who having experienced grief and loss
and disillusionment, felt a restoration of their hope.**

Presenting a Bible to Grayson Stepp:

Minister: Every week we read from the sacred stories together and each of us understands them a bit differently. Listening together we can hear many things.

People: Thus we are joined as a community of interpreters, giving and receiving in our search for what is sacred.

Director of Children and Youth: One of our customs is to offer our children the sacred stories in the hopes that they will read them carefully and offer us their insights.

People: For we affirm that every person has access to the divine and all of us gathered are illumined by an inner light.

Minister: There is one among us, Grayson Stepp, who is in his tenth year of life. In our Covenant tradition, we honor this age by welcoming him into the community of interpreters. Together we have much to learn from each other. Grayson, we would like to give you the stories that are sacred to us.

Director of Children and Youth: Will you read them and think about them always remembering that they are meant to teach us love for God, our neighbors, and our world?

Grayson: I will read these sacred stories and learn from them what they mean.

People: Then together we will join with you, Grayson, and with others in the great and ongoing conversation among interpreters. We will share our understanding, our experiences, our questions, and our hopes as we read from the sacred stories and open ourselves to the dialogue that follows. We welcome and affirm you as a companion in this process.

Invitation

Scripture Lesson

Psalm 118 and John 21:4-19

These are our sacred stories.

Thanks be to God.

Time for Children

+Response:

Hymn to Joy

*Mortals, join the happy chorus which the morning stars began;
Love divine is reigning o'er us, joining all in heaven's plan.
Ever singing, march we onward, victors in the midst of strife,
Joyful music leads us homeward, in the triumph song of life.*

Call to Confession

Silent Confession

Unison Confession

**We may not comprehend
why there is so much suffering in this world,
why some people behave so badly toward others,
but we can count on hatred never ceasing by more hatred,
but only by love.**

**We can't predict how our actions will turn out,
but whatever we do will have impact and consequences.**

**There is no knowing what the future holds,
or what lies on the horizon,
but no matter what happens,
the lives we live each day are a part of a greater whole.**

Words of Assurance

“Now the Green Blade Rises”

*Now the green blade rises from the buried grain,
Wheat that in dark earth many days has lain;
Love lives again, that with the dead has been;
Love is come again like wheat arising green.*

*In the grave they laid hIm, love by hatred slain,
Thinking that He would never wake again,
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen;
Love is come again like wheat arising green.*

*Forth He came at Easter, like the risen grain,
He that for three days in the grave had lain;
Raised from the dead, my living Lord is seen;
Love is come again like wheat arising green.*

*When our hearts are wintry, grieving or in pain,
Your touch can call us back to life again,
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been;
Love is come again like wheat arising green.*

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

+Hymn #313

Down Ampney

“Come Down, O Love Divine”

**Come, down, O Love divine, seek out this soul of mine
And visit it with Your own ardor glowing;
O Comforter, draw near, within my heart appear,
And kindle it, Your holy flame bestowing.**

**O let it freely burn, till earthly passions turn
To dust and ashes in its heat consuming;
And let Your glorious light shine ever on my sight,
And clothe me round, the while my path illuming.**

**And so the yearning strong with which the soul will long
Shall far outpass the power of human telling;
For none can guess God’s grace, till Love creates a place
Wherein the Holy Spirit makes a dwelling.**

Prayer

Offering
Offertory

Brenda Portman
(b. 1980)

“Peace like a River”

+Prayer of Dedication

**Hidden God,
wherever you are
in your own kind of space,
we watch and wait for you
to startle us to wakeful newness
in the Easter season.
Come and make your own transforming way
in the desert of our confusion
and wilderness of me and mine,
so we may walk with Jesus the hard way
of justice, mercy, and peace
among the people of earth.**

+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 have decided to stick with love,
for I know that love is ultimately
the only answer to humankind's problems.
And I'm going to talk about it everywhere I go.
I know it isn't popular to talk about it in some circles today.
And I'm not talking about emotional bosh when I talk about love;
I'm talking about a strong, demanding love.
For I have seen too much hate.**

**And I say to myself that hate is too great a burden to bear.
I have decided to love.
If you are seeking the highest good,
I think you can find it through love.
And the beautiful thing is that we aren't moving wrong when we do it,
because John was right, God is love.**

⁺Closing Hymn #335

O Waly Waly

“Though I May Speak”

**Though I may speak with bravest fire,
And have the gift to all inspire,
And have not love, my words are vain;
As sounding brass, and hopeless gain.**

**Though I may give all I possess,
And striving so my love profess,
But not be giv'n by love within,
The profit soon turns strangely thin.**

**Come, Spirit, come, our hearts control,
Our spirits long to be made whole.
Let inward love guide every deed;
By this we worship and are freed.**

Benediction

^{*}Postlude

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

“Christ lay in death's strong bonds [...] but now he has arisen! Alleluia!” BWV 625

⁺Please stand in body or spirit

^{}Please hold silence and remain seated during the postlude*

Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Amy Cuellar**.

The Call to Worship is by Maren C. Tirabassi.

The Opening Sentences are by Max Coots.

Jodi Bash gives the invitation for the Missions Committee.

The Unison Confession is from *Faith: Trusting Your Own Deepest Experience* by Sharon Salzberg.

The Prayer of Dedication is adapted from “We Watch and Wait for You” in *My Heart in My Mouth* by Ted Loder.

The Affirmation of Faith is by Martin Luther King, Jr.

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

Adult Education - As Earth Day approaches, we will use a different angle to take a look at the woman who is considered the pioneer of the modern environmental movement, Rachel Carson. Rather than looking at the usual story about pesticides, **Bruce Yaeger** will explain how specific religious influences and spiritual impulses became integrated with literary skills and scientific knowledge in the life of Rachel Carson. He will examine what lay behind her dedication to life. His presentation is titled **Rachel Carson and Glimpses of God**. Bruce Yaeger, a teacher for over 35 years, is the author of two books, including *Wrestling Brothers; Rethinking Religion-Science Relationships*.

- Bruce Yaeger

Children & Youth Education -

Children's Lesson

Title: New Life

Lesson: Change/Growth

Youth Lesson

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

- Trena' Jamison

Children and Youth Announcements

Events

- **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. Apr 7	9:30am	Adult Education, Adult Education classroom on the 2nd floor of the Huff Fellowship Hall Building
	9:3am	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	Sunday Worship in-person, Sanctuary and via live-stream, YouTube
	12:00pm	Youth & Mentor, Huff Fellowship Hall
Tue. Apr 9	1:00pm	Lunchtime Lectionary Lab, Zoom
Thurs. Apr 11	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.

Newsletter: To subscribe to the newsletter, send a request to 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.*