



*A Service of Worship for
26 September 2021*

The purpose of a storyteller is not to tell you how to think,
but to give you questions to think upon.

- Brandon Sanderson

Narrative imagining — story — is the fundamental instrument of thought.

Rational capacities depend upon it.

It is our chief means of looking into the future, or predicting, of planning, and of explaining.

- Mark Turner

There is no greater power on this earth than story.

- Libba Bray

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ring in the hour
Silence is kept

Prelude

W.A. Mozart

“Andante cantabile” K.330

Call to Worship

*+Opening Hymn #420

Cwm Rhondda

“God of Grace and God of Glory”

+Opening Sentences

**In a fractured age, when cynicism is god,
here is a possible heresy:
we live by stories, we also live in them.**

**One way or another we are living the stories
planted in us early or along the way,
or we are also living the stories we planted
– knowingly or unknowingly – in ourselves.**

**We live stories that either give our lives
meaning or negate it with meaninglessness.**

**If we change the stories we live by,
quite possibly we change our lives.**

Scripture Lesson

Esther 4:1-17; 7:1-10; 9:20-22

These are our sacred stories.

Thanks be to God.

Time for Children

*+Response:

Jesus Loves Me

***Jesus loves me still today, Walking with me on my way,
Wanting as a friend to give Peace and love to all who live.
Yes, Jesus loves me, Yes, Jesus loves me,
Yes, Jesus loves me, The Bible tells me so.***

*Ushers will seat latecomers

+Please stand in body or spirit

Call to Confession

Silent Confession

Unison Confession

**For times when we have assumed
that we, and we alone, had the right answers,
certain of our certainty,
certain of their error,
talking, not listening, speaking, not hearing,
forgive us.**

**For times when we have been too timid
to speak a word of truth we felt,
afraid of not being heard,
afraid of being heard,
listening, not speaking, hearing but silent,
forgive us.**

**If ever we forget
that You are present among us,
in our words,
in their words,
in the words we read,
in the stories we tell,
and ours is but the task of discovery,
forgive us and make us free. Amen.**

Words of Assurance

Music

“Grant Us Mercy, O Lord”

Antonio Lotti, arr. Donald C. Ross

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

Hymn

“Perhaps You Have Been Chosen”

Aurelia

**“Perhaps you have been chosen for such a time as this!”
So Mordecai told Esther to serve as she'd been blessed.
Their people were in danger and needed someone brave —
A queen who knew her calling to risk and act and save.**

**She stood up for her people and dared approach the king
Although he might have killed her for doing such a thing.
Inviting him to dinner — a feast to satisfy —
She asked of him a favor: “Don't let my people die!”**

**The king gave what she wanted and let her people live,
And all because Queen Esther used what she had to give.
She faced her fear with courage, she changed the things she could,
She chose to make a difference — to use her life for good.**

**O God, we look around us and see a world in need.
There's violence and injustice, there's prejudice and greed.
Remind us of our calling to bravely use our gifts.
Perhaps we have been chosen for such a time as this**

Prayer

Invitation

Offering

Offertory

Arcangelo Corelli

“Benediction”

+Prayer of Dedication

**Give us grace, O God, to dare to do the deed
which we well know cries to be done.
Let us not hesitate because of ease,
or the words of men's mouths, or our own lives.**

**Mighty causes are calling us—
the freeing of women, the training of children,
the putting down of hate and murder and poverty—
all these and more. But they call with voices
that mean work and sacrifices and death.**

**Mercifully grant us, O God, the spirit of Esther,
that we say: I will go unto the King and if I perish, I perish.**

+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

**There need to be stories;
love has to be told, danced,
sung and whistled...
Love has to be evoked
over and over again.**

+Closing Hymn #286

“Give to the Winds Thy Fears”

St. Bride

Benediction

Postlude

Traditional Hebrew melody/Cindy Berry
“The God of Abraham Praise”

Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Laura Mitchell**.

The prelude, offertory, and postlude are played by **Karen Kline**, piano.

The Call to Worship is adapted from *Telling Secrets* by Frederick Buechner.

The Opening Sentences are by Ben Okri.

The Unison Confession is by **Jim Avera**.

The text of “Perhaps You Have Been Chosen” is by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette.

The Prayer of Dedication is by W.E.B. Dubois.

The Affirmation of Faith is from “Where Love Is, There Is God,” in *The Mystery of Death* by Dorothee Soelle.

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

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

Climate Action Workshop

In this interactive workshop, we will explore some of the most effective ways individuals can address climate change, including at the personal, community, and policy levels. Participants will create their own [climate action Venn diagrams](#). Please have paper and a pen or pencil handy.

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

Announcements

Sunday schedule for this Sunday:

Adult Education (Zoom) 9am
Worship in-person (Covenant) 11am
Worship live-stream 11am

Calendar

Sun. Sept 26	9:00 a.m.	Adult Education, Zoom Meeting
	11:00 a.m.	Worship in-person, Covenant
	11:00 a.m.	Worship live-stream
Thur. Sept 30	10:00 a.m.	Community Group, Zoom Meeting
Thur. Sept 30	7:15 p.m.	Covenant Singers Rehearsal, Covenant
Thur. Sept 30	8:00 p.m.	Community Group, Zoom Meeting
Fri. Oct 1	1:00 p.m.	Lunchtime Lectionary Lab, Zoom Meeting

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 Communication

Fran Avera, Minister of Music, Emerita

David Lee, Director of Music

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.