

Holy Covenant

United Church of Christ

Advent Journeys



Silent Meditation

“Camas Lilies”

Consider the lilies of the field,
the blue banks of camas opening
into acres of sky along the road.
Would the longing to lie down
and be washed by that beauty
abate if you knew their usefulness,
how the natives ground bulbs
for flour, how the settler’s hogs
uprooted them, grunting in gleeful
oblivion as the flowers fell?

And you—what of your rushed and useful life? Imagine setting it all down—papers, plans, appointments, everything, leaving only a note: “Gone to the fields to be lovely. Be back when I’m through with blooming.”

Even now, unneeded and uneaten,
the camas lilies gaze out above the grass
from their tender blue eyes.
Even in sleep your life will shine.
Make no mistake.
Of course,
your work will always matter.
Yet Solomon in all his glory
was not arrayed like one of these.

~ Lynn Ungar

HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS

December 29, 2019, 10:55 AM

Please silence cell phones

Prelude 10:55 AM

Kathleen Smith

Welcome and Announcements ✕

Nancy Ellett Allison

One: May the peace of the Christ Child be with you.

Many: And also with you.

*(Please pass the information pads so that all worshippers
might have the opportunity to sign them)*

Introit & Chiming of the Bell

Kathleen Smith

* Call to Worship

Elle Lusina

One: The days are beginning to grow longer,

Many: **The Light of the world is Jesus.**

One: Hopes for the New Year are blooming,

Many: **The Light of the world is Jesus.**

One: Arise; shine, for your Light has come!

Many: **We are called out of our darkness into the Light.**

One: The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it!

All: **We join together in worship to be light to the world!**

* All rise in body or spirit φ Sing Response

✕ Seating by Ushers

* Hymn

“Morning Has Broken”

BUNNESAN

Morning has broken like the first morning
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird
Praise for the singing, Praise for the morning
Praise for them springing fresh from the world.

Sweet the rain's new fall, sunlit from heaven
Like the first dewfall on the first grass
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden
Sprung in completeness where his feet pass.

Mine is the sunlight, Mine is the morning
Born of the one light Eden saw play
Praise with elation, praise every morning
God's recreation of the new day.

“A New Hallelujah”

by Michael W. Smith

Can you hear, there's a new song
Breaking out from the children of freedom
Every race and every nation
Sing it out, sing a new Hallelujah.

Let us sing love to the nations
Bringing hope of the grace that has freed us
Make it known and make it famous
Sing it out, sing a new Hallelujah.

Chorus: *Arise, let the church arise, Let Love reach to the other side.
Alive, come alive, let the song arise.*

Everyone sings a new song
Reaching out with a new Hallelujah
Every son and every daughter
Everyone sing a new Hallelujah. (Chorus)

Lighting the Advent & Christ Candles

The Sullivan Family

Aline, Jason, Liam and Lachlan

One: We lit our advent candles of hope, peace, love, and joy to remind us of our vision for the world.

Many: We light them again committing to cherish hope, to work to establish peace, to joyfully celebrate the fullness of life and to extend love in the world.

One: We lit the Christ candle on Christmas Eve to remind us that Christ came, and comes to us again and again, so that all people might know peace and have an abundant life.

Many: Gladly we proclaim: Christ is the light of the world!

All: A light no darkness can extinguish. May the light of Christ be kindled in us and lead us to the shining truth of God with us, God for us, God in us. Amen.

(Lighting of all candles)

Advent Carol

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

GESU BAMBINO

O come, o come, Emmanuel, and end this gloom of night.

Bring hope to the world, bring peace to the earth,

And fill us with love’s pure light.

Bring hope and joy and peace,

And fill us with love’s pure light.

Children’s Offering & Message

Nancy Ellett Allison

(Following the Children’s Message, children below first grade may go to extended care or return to sit with their parents.)

* Sing Along

“Christmas Joy Medley”

Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!”
Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”

Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains;
Gloria, in excelsis Deo...

Come to Bethlehem and see, Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee, Christ, the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo...

Joy to the world! The Lord is come:
Let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing,
And heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Fred Robinson

**We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit,
God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God,
and to your deeds we testify:**

**You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image,
and set before each one the ways of life and death.**

You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

**You judge people and nations by your righteous will
declared through prophets and apostles.**

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit,
creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ,
binding in covenant faithful people of all ages,
tongues, and races.

You call us into your church
to accept the cost and joy of discipleship,
to be your servants in the service of others,
to proclaim the gospel to all the world
and resist the powers of evil,
to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table,
to join him in his passion and victory.

You promise to all who trust you
forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace,
courage in the struggle for justice and peace,
your presence in trial and rejoicing,
and eternal life in your realm which has no end.
Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you. Amen.

Anthem "Jesus, the Light of the World" arr. G.D. Elderkin
Lisa Cloninger, Melissa McQueen-Simmons, Felicia Robinson and
Kathleen Smith vocals; Music Co-op

Hebrew Scripture Lessons Psalm 146 Kristin Andes

Praise the Living God! Praise God, O my soul! I will praise the Holy One as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

Do not put your trust in leaders, in mortals, in whom there is no help. When their breath departs, they return to the earth; on that very day their plans perish.

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Living One their God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever; who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry.

The Holy One sets the prisoners free; God opens the eyes of the blind.
The Holy One lifts up those who are bowed down; God loves the righteous.
The Holy One watches over the strangers; God upholds the orphan and
the widow, but the way of the wicked God brings to ruin.

The Living God will reign forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations.

Deuteronomy 2:7

Surely the Living One your God has blessed you in all your undertakings; God knows your going through this great wilderness. These forty years the Holy One your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing.

One: May we hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

Many: Thanks be to God. Open our ears, our hearts, our minds.

Sermon "Gifted Hands" Dian Jackson-Davis

“Gifted Hands”

Dian Jackson-Davis

Offertory Invitation Fred Robinson

Offertory Invitation Fred Robinson

Offertory Kathleen Smith

* Doxology

OLD HUNDREDTH

φ Our God is making all things new, a promise that we know is true.
Through eyes of faith we long to see a love-transformed community.
A place where truth and justice reign and healing triumphs over pain,
Where all have dignity and worth and peace is passed throughout the
earth. Amen.

* Offertory Dedication

Fred Robinson

* Hymn 417 "This Is a Day of New Beginnings" BEGINNINGS

This is a day of new beginnings,
Time to remember and move on,
Time to believe what love is bringing
Laying to rest the pain that's gone

For the life and death of Jesus
God's mighty Spirit, not as then
Can make for us a world of difference
As faith and hope are born again

Then let us with the Spirit's daring
Step from the past and leave behind
Our disappointment, guilt and grieving,
Seeking new paths, and sure to find

Christ is alive and goes before us
To show and share what love can do.
This is a day of new beginnings
Our God is making all things new

LITURGY OF FAREWELL

Cheryl Milam and Tom Magraw, Immediate Past President and President of Holy Covenant; Rev. Dian Jackson-Davis, Past President of the Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ

- One: Our church family is constantly changing. People come and go. Babies are born. Children grow up. People commit themselves to one another. Loved ones and friends among us come to the end of their lives. Individuals move into our community and church life. Others leave us, moving away to new places, new experiences, and new opportunities. It is important and right that we recognize these times of passage, of endings and beginnings. On October 10, 2004, Holy Covenant United Church of Christ called Nancy Ellett Allison to serve as Pastor. Today we share the time of farewell with our Pastor as she retires.
- Many: We are sad to see her go, but we recognize that just as she has been your gift to us, so now she goes as a gift to the wider community.
- One: We pray for each other now as our once parallel roads of pilgrimage diverge.
- Many: We thank you for all we have done and learned and shared together.
- One: We pray for Nancy as she enters retirement and explores and clarifies new ventures onward from here.
- Many: May she grow in your grace and in the knowledge of your love, so that she may be a blessing to many. We pray for Holy Covenant, that you will keep us faithful to the vision we have shared, and that you will show us what we should do, how we should be, now that Nancy is no longer with us.
- One: As we part, we reaffirm that it has been your Spirit who brought us together, your Spirit who has enlivened our fellowship;
- Many: your Spirit who goes with Nancy and your Spirit who stays with us.
- All: Thanks be to God! Amen.

Minister: I thank Holy Covenant United Church of Christ, its members and friends, for the love, kindness, and support shown me these last fifteen years.

I ask forgiveness for the mistakes I have made.

I am grateful for the ways my leadership has been accepted.

As I leave, I carry with me all that I have learned here.

All: **We receive your thankfulness, offer forgiveness, and accept that you are now retiring to serve and minister in new ways.**

We express our gratitude for your time among us.

We ask your forgiveness for our mistakes.

Your influence on our faith and faithfulness will not leave us at your departure.

Minister: I forgive you and accept your gratitude, trusting that our time together and our parting are pleasing to God.

Vows of RELEASE

Leader: Do you, the members and friends of Holy Covenant United Church of Christ release Nancy Ellett Allison from the duties of pastor?

All: **We do, with the help of God.**

Leader: Do you offer your encouragement for her ministry as it unfolds in new ways?

All: **We do, with the help of God.**

Leader: Do you, Nancy Ellett Allison release this local church from turning to you and depending on you?

Minister: I do, with the help of God.

Leader: Do you offer your encouragement for the continued ministry here and on the relationship with another who will come to serve?

Minister: I do, with the help of God.

WITNESS OF THE CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION

One: On behalf of the Southern Conference and the United Church of Christ, I am witness to the words spoken: words of thankfulness, forgiveness, and release. The member churches of our Association and Conference hold each of you in prayer. We pledge our support in the transitions signified in this service.

Officers: Thanks be to God.

Leader: Let us pray.

All: God, whose everlasting love for all is trustworthy, help each of us trust the future which rests in your care. The time we were together in your name saw our laughter and tears, our hopes and disappointments. Guide us as we hold these cherished memories and move in new directions, until that time to come when we are completely one with you and with each other, in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

* Hymn 391 "In the Midst of New Dimensions" DIMENSIONS

1. In the midst of new di-men-sions
 In the face of chang-ing ways,
 Who will lead the pil-grim peo-ples
 Wan-dering in their sep-arat-e ways?

Refrain: God of rain-bow, fier-y pil-lar
 Lead-ing where the ea-gles soar,
 We your peo-ple, ours the jourNEY
 Now and ev-er, now and ev-er, now and ev-er-more.

2. Through the flood of starv-ing peo-ple,
 War-ring fac-tions and de-spair,
 Who will lift the ol-ive branch-es?
 Who will light the flame of care? (*refrain*)
3. As we stand a world di-vid-ed
 By our own self-seek-ing schemes,
 Grant that we, your glob-al vil-lage,
 Might en-vi-sion wid-er dreams. (*refrain*)
4. We are man and we are wom-an,
 All per-sua-sions, old and young
 Each a gift in your cre-a-tion,
 Each a love song to be sung. (*refrain*)
5. Should the threats of dire pre-dic-tions
 Cause us to with-draw in pain,
 May your blaz-ing phoe-nix spir-it
 Res-ur-rect the church a-gain. (*refrain*)

* Benediction

Nancy Ellett Allison

* Choral Benediction

DIMENSIONS

¶ God of rainbow, fiery pillar,
Leading where the eagle's soar,
We your people, ours the journey
Now and ever, now and ever, now and evermore.

Postlude

Kathleen Smith

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

PLEASE SIGN OUR ATTENDANCE REGISTER

WELCOME to all who worship today at Holy Covenant! Guests and members- please sign an attendance register and then pass it back to its starting point, taking note of who is worshipping near you and greet them.

RETIREMENT CELEBRATION FOR PASTOR NANCY THIS EVENING

There will be an open house at Holy Covenant UCC tonight from 4-7pm in celebration of Pastor Nancy's 15 years in service at this church and well wishing to her as her Journey Continues! All are welcome! A Solar Panel Fund has been established so gifts can be made in honour of Pastor Nancy through the church and will be tax deductible - payable to Holy Covenant UCC.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Members

Frank & Charlotte Carbone, Kevin Decker, Linn Finger, Julie Klever, Helen Lambert, Karen Long, Irene Mikkelson, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Isabelle Reedy Powell, Jerry & Marion Rhyne, Deb & Yvette Ross, Mamie Stokes

Rev. Nancy Ellett Allison, Ph.D., Pastor

Rev. Fred Robinson, Associate Pastor

Ms. Kathleen Smith, Accompanist

Mrs. Dawn Simmons, Executive Assistant

3501 West W.T. Harris Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28269-8510

www.holycovenantucc.org office@holycovenantucc.org 704-599-9810