



THE SERVICE OF ORDINATION FOR
CHERI UNDERWOOD DENNIS

SEPTEMBER 13, 2020

HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
3501 WEST WT HARRIS BLVD
CHARLOTTE NC 28269

the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night," even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you. For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed. How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! I try to count them-- they are more than the sand; I come to the end-- I am still with you. Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

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

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

Hymn

Here I Am, Lord

Daniel L. Schutte

I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry.

All who dwell in dark and sin My hand will save.

I who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.

Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?

Refrain:

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?

I have heard You calling in the night.

I will go, Lord, If You lead me.

I will hold Your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people's pain.

I have wept for love of them. They turn away.

I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love alone.

I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send? *(Refrain)*

I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame.

I will set a feast for them. My hand will save.

Finest bread I will provide 'til their hearts be satisfied.

I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send? *(Refrain)*

Sermonic Scripture

Jeremiah 1:4-10; 20.9

Rev. Fred Robinson

Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." Then I said, "Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy." But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a boy'; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord." Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me, "Now I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."

If I say, "I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name," then within me there is something like a burning fire shut in my bones; I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.

UCC Statement of Faith 885

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.

Gift in Music

The Summons
John Bell (Kelvingrove)

Kathi Smith, Lisa Cloninger

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown? Will you let my name be known,
Will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean and do such as this unseen,
And admit to what I mean in you and you in me?

Will you love the "you" you hide if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around,
Through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?

Lord your summons echoes true when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.
In Your company I'll go where Your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

THE SERVICE OF ORDINATION TO MINISTRY

Greeting

Rev. Dr. Colleen Samson

Rev. Samson: Grace to you and peace from God, who is and who was and who is to come, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness and the sovereign of the rulers on earth. The Western North Carolina Association of the Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ greets you in the name of Jesus Christ, the head of the church.

People: **To God, who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.**

Presentation

Tom Magraw

Tom Magraw: Holy Covenant United Church of Christ, after carefully considering the call to ordained ministry of Cheri Underwood Dennis, respectfully requests that the Western North Carolina Association ordain Cheri to the ministry of the church of Jesus Christ consistent with scripture and with the traditions of the church universal, and according to the faith and order of the United Church of Christ.

Rev. Samson: The Western North Carolina Association has reviewed the request of Holy Covenant United Church of Christ. We have prayerfully examined Cheri concerning her fitness for ministry in Christ's church. We are pleased, on

behalf of the United Church of Christ to authorize the ordination of Cheri Underwood Dennis into the Christian ministry.

Cheri Dennis, servant of God, we invite you to come forward as a sign of your consent to receive ordination into Christian ministry.

The United Church of Christ acknowledges as its sole head, Jesus Christ, Son of God, and Savior. It acknowledges as kindred in Christ all who share this confession. It looks to the word of God in scriptures, to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, to prosper its creative and redemptive work in the world. It claims as its own the faith of the historic church expressed in the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant reformers.

It affirms the responsibility of the church in each generation to make this faith its own in reality of worship, in honesty of thought and expression, and in purity of heart before God. In accordance with the teaching of our Lord and the practice prevailing among evangelical Christians, it recognizes two sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion.

The United Church of Christ recognizes that God calls the whole church and every member to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ by witnessing to the gospel in church and society. The United Church of Christ seeks to undergird the ministry of its members by nurturing faith, calling forth gifts, and equipping members for Christian service.

Ordination is the rite whereby the United Church of Christ through an association, in cooperation with the person and a local church of the United Church of Christ, recognizes and authorizes that member whom God has called to ordained ministry, and sets that person apart by prayer and the laying on of hands.

By this rite, ordained ministerial standing is conferred and authorization given to perform the duties and exercise the prerogatives of ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ.

Exhortation

Rev. Samson

Hear these words from the prophet Isaiah: "I heard the voice of the Holy One saying, 'Whom shall I send and who will go for us?' Then I said, 'Here I am! Send me.'"

How wonderful it is to see a messenger coming across the mountains, bringing good news the news of peace! The messenger announces victory and says to Zion, "Your God reigns." The Spirit of God is upon me, because the Holy One has anointed me to bring good news to the poor heal the brokenhearted proclaims liberty to the captives, and freedom to those who are bound.

Examination

Rev. Samson/Cheri Dennis

Rev. Samson: Cheri Underwood Dennis, before God and this congregation, we ask you: Are you persuaded that God has called you to be an ordained minister of Jesus Christ, and are you ready, with the help of God, to enter this ministry and to serve faithfully in it?

Cheri: I am.

Rev. Samson: Do you, with the church throughout the world, hear the word of God in the scriptures of the Hebrew and New Testaments, and do you accept the word of God as the rule of Christian faith and practice?

Cheri: I do.

Rev. Samson: Do you promise to be diligent in your private prayers and in reading the scriptures, as well as in the public duties of your office?

Cheri: I do, relying on God's grace.

Rev. Samson: Will you be zealous in maintaining both the truth of the gospel and the peace of the church, speaking the truth in love?

Cheri: I will, relying on God's grace.

Rev. Samson: Will you be faithful in preaching and teaching the gospel, in administering the sacraments and rites of the church, and in exercising pastoral care and leadership?

Cheri: I will, relying on God's grace.

Rev. Samson: Will you keep silent all confidences shared with you?

Cheri: I will, relying on God's grace.

Rev. Samson: Will you seek to regard all people with equal love and concern and undertake to minister impartially to the needs of all?

Cheri: I will, relying on God's grace.

Rev. Samson: Do you accept the faith and order of the United Church of Christ; and will you, as an ordained minister in this communion, ecumenically reach out toward all who are in Christ and show Christian love to people of other faiths and people of no faith?

Cheri: I do and I will, relying on God's grace.

Acclamation

Rev. Samson: People of God, you have heard the promises Cheri has made. What is your will?

Association Members:

By the grace of God, she is worthy. Let us ordain her. Come, Holy Spirit.

Rev. Samson: Will you support Cheri in the ministry of Christ?

Association Members:

We will.

Laying on of Hands

Rev. Samson

The laying on of hands is the symbolic act whereby the church in every age recognizes God's call to ministry in the lives of faithful women and men and asks the Holy Spirit to confer on them gifts for ordained ministry.

Let us pray. Eternal God, in wisdom you govern all things, and from the beginning you have chosen faithful people to serve you in ministry, calling some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers to equip all your people for the work of the ministry and for building up the body of Christ. Now bless and sanctify by your Holy Spirit your servant, Cheri Dennis, whom we, in your name and in obedience to your will, by prayer and with the laying on of hands, ordain to the ministry of the church, committing to her the authority to preach your word, administer the sacraments and exercise the responsibilities of pastor and teacher.

Bestow on Cheri the power of your Holy Spirit, confirming what we do. Let the same mind be in her that was also in Christ Jesus. Enable her to nourish your people in the faith of the gospel. Fill her speech with truth and her life with purity.

Increase the faith of Cheri in you, strengthen her in the day of trouble, prosper her words and works that your name may be glorified and your truth exalted; through Jesus Christ our Sovereign and Savior.

People: Amen! Thanks be to God!

Declaration

Rev. Samson

In the name of Jesus Christ, the head of the church, and by the authority of the Western North Carolina Association of the Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ, I declare you to be ordained into the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Presentation of Pectoral Cross & Stole

Keith Dennis

The cross is a gift from Rev. Timothy Fangmeier, a retired Lutheran pastor and longtime friend of Keith & Cheri. Pastor Tim writes, "30 years ago when Hugo visited Charlotte, your Dad and a few others took 'Hugo' wood and constructed small crosses for the whole congregation for Lent 1990. Your Dad made this special one for me to use in worship. I have worn it all these years and cherish it! I wanted you to have it now to mark this special time in your journey of faith. I know that it will mean even more to you. It marks how proud your Dad would be today. God loves you and so do I! Pastor Tim"

Presentation of Gift from Holy Covenant

Tom Magraw

Presentation of Certificate

Rev. Samson

You are granted ordained ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ; and in behalf of its people, we offer you the virtual hand of Christian love.

In the midst of new dimensions in the face of changing ways,
Who will lead the pilgrim peoples wandering in their separate ways?

Refrain: God of rainbow, fiery pillar, leading where the eagles soar,
We your people, ours the journey
Now and ever, now and ever, now and evermore.

Through the flood of starving people, warring factions and despair,
Who will lift the olive branches? Who will light the flame of care? *(Refrain)*

As we stand a world divided by our own self-seeking schemes,
Grant that we, your global village, Might envision wider dreams. *(Refrain)*

We are man and we are woman, all persuasions, old and young
Each a gift in your creation, Each a love song to be sung. *(Refrain)*

Should the threats of dire predictions cause us to withdraw in pain,
May your blazing phoenix spirit Resurrect the church again. *(Refrain)*

Benediction

Rev. Cheri Dennis

Postlude

Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love
arr. Mark Sedio (Chereponi)

Jon Weddell

REV. DR. COLLEEN SAMSON

Minister for Church Affairs, Western North Carolina Association

MR. TOM MAGRAW

Consistory President, Holy Covenant United Church of Christ

REV. FREDRICK D. ROBINSON

Interim Senior Pastor, Holy Covenant United Church of Christ

REV. CHERI U. DENNIS

Interim Associate Pastor, Holy Covenant United Church of Christ

MR. JON D. WEDDELL

Minister of Music, Holy Covenant United Church of Christ

Special thanks to:

Hankins Family (Brian, Laura, & Henry) for being the media gurus and participating in the service; Lisa Cloninger & Kathi Smith for sharing of their time and lovely voices; JoAnn Jellison & Dawn Simmons for the Holy Hands; and all the members & friends of Holy Covenant who have blessed me by allowing me to be one of their pastors.