



Jesus

The Joy of the World

Silent Meditation

Witness: verb – to *testify* to, to furnish proof of, to bear witness to one's religious convictions; noun – one that gives evidence, one who has personal knowledge of something, *testimony*.

-Merriam Webster Dictionary

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

-UCC Statement of Faith

He came as a *witness* to *testify* to the light...but he came to *testify* to the light.

-John 1: 7-8

HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

December 13, 2020, 10:55 AM

Gathering Music “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming” arr. J. Purifoy

Welcome and Announcements Fred Robinson
and Offertory Invitation

One: May the Spirit of the Living Christ be with you all!

Many: And also with you.

Introit B. McGee

Emmanuel, Emmanuel, your name is called Emmanuel.

God with us, revealed in us, your name is called Emmanuel.

* Call to Worship Fred Robinson

One: Rejoice! The spirit of God is sending us:

Many: To bring good news to the oppressed, to comfort the
brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to proclaim
the year of favor among God’s people.

One: Rejoice! The work of the Spirit is calling us:

Many: To rebuild ancient relationships ruined by injustice, to repair the
cities as places of hope, to restore land devastated across
generations, to proclaim the year of favor among God’s people.

One: Rejoice! The Glory of the Spirit is leading us:

Many: To cast off any faint spirit and put on the mantle of praise, to
take root as the plantings of the HOLY ONE, to display God’s
glory.

All: Come, let us worship in Joy!

Joyful, joyful, we adore you, God of glory, God of love;
Hearts unfold like flowers before you, opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness, drive the storms of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day.

All your works with joy surround you, earth and heaven reflect your rays,
Stars and angels sing around you, center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing sea,
Chanting bird and flowing fountain, teach us what our praise should be.

You are giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blessed,
Wellspring of the joy of living, ocean depth of happy rest!
Loving Spirit, Father, Mother, all who love belong to you;
Teach us how to love each other, by that love our joy renew.

Mortals, join the mighty chorus which the morning stars began;
Boundless love is reigning o'er us, reconciling race and clan.
Ever singing, move we forward, faithful in the midst of strife,
Joyful music leads us onward in the triumph song of life.

Throughout the centuries, people have used candles to light dark places. As a congregation and family, we light the Advent candles to prepare us for the celebration of the coming of Jesus, the light that illuminates our dark world. Each Sunday in Advent has a different focus: hope, peace, joy, and love. The purple candles are for the first, second and fourth Sundays; the pink candle is for the third Sunday. As the candles are lit on progressive Sundays, the light becomes brighter - first one candle, then two, then three, then four - until on Christmas Eve, when the white candle is lit, celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, bringing light into the dark world.

*Join us in our virtual worship services as we journey through Advent to Christmas. May you remember that God **did send** Jesus into the world, that God **is sending** Jesus into the world, and that God **will send** Jesus into the world to bring light to the darkness.*

ADVENT 3: DECEMBER 13 ~ JOY (PINK CANDLE)

The Sullivan Family

One: We want everything to look nice: the decorations of the season, our homes with their lights and tinsel, wreaths and ribbons. We want to lighten the darkness around us, bring beauty to the ugliness that wears us down. We decorate, because it is tradition. Because it lifts our hearts. Because it makes us feel like children again. We deck our halls because we long for joy.

Many: The prophet Isaiah smiled when he said, “God will give a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, a mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.” No matter how far we feel from the spirit of the season, God promises to decorate us with love and with joy.

One: We light these candles as a sign of our joy in the beautiful things of this season - not just the things that glitter and flash, but the deeper things, the beauty of the heart and the soul, the beauty of love shared in service and hospitality. We light this candle because joy is coming.

Many: Jesus, the Light of the World!

*Sung Response: We'll walk in the light, beautiful light.
Come where the dewdrops of mercy shine bright.
Oh, shine all around us by day and by night.
Jesus, the light of the world.*

Pastoral Prayer

Fred Robinson

Children's Message

Cheri Dennis

Hebrew Scripture Lesson Psalm 126

Fred Robinson

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.
Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;
then it was said among the nations,
'The Lord has done great things for them.'
The Lord has done great things for us,
and we rejoiced.

Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
like the watercourses in the Negeb.
May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.
Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.

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

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

You are called to tell the story, passing words of life along.
Then to blend your voice with others as you sing the sacred song.
Christ be known in all our singing, filling all with songs of love.

You are called to teach the rhythm of the dance that never ends,
Then to move within the circle, hand in hand with strangers, friends.
Christ be known in all our dancing touching all with hands of love.

You are called to set the table, blessing bread as Jesus blessed,
Then to come with thirst and hunger, needing care like all the rest.
Christ be known in all our sharing, feeding all with signs of love.

May the One whose love is broader than the measure of all space
Give us words to sing the story, move among us in this place.
Christ be known in all our living, filling all with gifts of love.

Gospel Lesson

John 1: 6-8, 19-28

Cheri Dennis

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ...

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, ‘Who are you?’ He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, ‘I am not the Messiah.’ And they asked him, ‘What then? Are you Elijah?’ He said, ‘I am not.’ ‘Are you the prophet?’ He answered, ‘No.’ Then they said to him, ‘Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?’ He said, ‘I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, “Make straight the way of the Lord” ’, as the prophet Isaiah said.

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, ‘Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?’ John answered them, ‘I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.’ This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

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 “Can I Get a Witness?” Cheri Dennis

Sermon “Can I Get a Witness?” Cheri Dennis

Sermon “Can I Get a Witness?” Cheri Dennis

Hymn “My Soul is a Witness for My Lord”

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Hymn “My Soul is a Witness for My Lord”

Benediction Cheri Dennis

Benediction Cheri Dennis

Benediction Response	“Born in the Night”	MARY’S CHILD
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Benediction Response	“Born in the Night”	MARY’S CHILD
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Clear shining light, Mary's Child, your face lights up our way.

Clear shining light, Mary's Child, your face lights up our way.

Postlude "Coventry Carol" arr. J. Purifoy

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(Songs in this service are used by Permission. CCLI License #11439355; CSPL164710)

SANCTUARY OPEN FOR MEDITATION AND SILENCE

As of today, it has been 41 Sundays that we have worshiped only virtually at Holy Covenant. Many of you have expressed how much you miss being at the church, especially to see church family members but also just to BE AT the church. To offer some solace for that situation, Holy Covenant's sanctuary will be open on four selected days and times in December. You are invited follow the link below to sign up to visit for silence and meditation, either alone or with a member of your family with whom you have been quarantining.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C44ACAD23A2FE3-sanctuary>

*Zoom Link for Wednesday, December 16, 7 PM
Blue Christmas*

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82030833534>
Meeting ID: 820 3083 3534

Holy Covenant Advent/Christmas 2020

Wednesday, December 16, 7PM: Blue Christmas

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82030833534>

Meeting ID: 820 3083 3534

Live Streamed Services:

Sunday, December 20, 11AM: Advent 4—Love

Thursday, December 24, 7PM: Christmas Eve

Sunday, December 27, 11AM: Christmas 1

<https://holycovenantucc.org/virtual-hc/>

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

THIS IS GOD'S HOUSE WHERE ALL ARE WELCOME

UPDATE TO THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

December 4, 2020

Dear Holy Covenant Family,

As we continue to monitor the Coronavirus pandemic, it is time to provide you with another update. Because of an uptick in cases everywhere, including in the Charlotte metro area, the HCUCC COVID-19 Response Team has agreed that we will not likely have in-person worship until spring, at the earliest. Along with the rest of the nation, we are excited about the two or three Coronavirus vaccines that hold promise. However, because the general population will have to wait for months before being able to get immunized against the virus, the CDC expects cases to continue rising through the winter.

In the meantime, the COVID-19 Response Team continues to consider ways in which we can safely be together as a congregation. For instance, we recently allowed members to drive through the parking lot to pick up Advent candle kits. Unfortunately, some earlier ideas, such as a Vespers Service and a parking lot picnic, had to be cancelled because of a rapid rise in the number of cases. Of course, we will revisit this issue and see how things are faring in the spring.

We encourage you to continue to be a part of our online worship services. In addition to our Sojourners classes, Wednesday Bible Study, Covenant Group meetings, and occasional WISE events, we will be holding evening Advent Meditation services on Wednesdays at 7 pm until December 16. Our Christmas Eve service will also be offered via ZOOM.

During this time of extended crisis, let us pray for our global family and those across our nation whose lives and livelihoods continue to be impacted by this virus. Again, let's do everything we can to stay in community and reach out to each other in love through phone calls, video chats, emails, text messages and other creative ways. For this, God will be pleased.

Sincerely,

Fred Robinson, Interim Senior Pastor
Fredrick@HolyCovenantUCC.org

Tom Magraw, Consistory President
TomM@HolyCovenantUCC.org

WE COULDN'T PROVIDE OUR WARM WELCOME WITHOUT THE HELP OF:

Lisa Cloninger, Brian Hankins, Henry Hankins,
Laura Hankins, Meg Houlihan, Kathleen Smith

*Please note new office hours in November and December:
Tuesday through Friday, 8am-4pm*



This is typically a stressful time of year and has been made worse by COVID and social distancing. Here are a couple of quick self-calming and coping strategies that can help.

We have all heard to "take a deep breath". This involves slowing and deepening one's breathing. Stop, inhale slowly for the count of 4, hold your breath briefly and then exhale for 4 seconds. Repeat several times. This increases oxygen in your system which is a natural relaxant (and it's free with no side effects!).

Another self-calming strategy is a very brief (2-3 minute) mindfulness exercise. If possible, go outdoors and find a comfortable place to stand or sit. Then focus first on what you can see. Notice the trees, leaves on the ground, bushes, houses. Then focus on what you can hear - the wind in the trees, bird calls, traffic, etc. Third, notice smells. Every season has its own smell and winter can include the smell of earth and a sharp tang in the air. Finally, notice your body: how it feels to stand or sit, the cold on your skin, how your clothing feels, your feet inside your shoes. It is hoped that you will feel less tension after this exercise focused on the present moment - and not on worries and 'what if's'. Repeat often!

There is also mindful walking which involves focusing on your senses while walking. Mindful walking has been shown to enhance the experience and benefits of walking.

ANGEL TREE GIVING

We are grateful to all who have responded! We continue to gather gifts for 30 senior residents of Pelican Health, a skilled nursing facility in Charlotte.

House slippers, throw blankets, scarves and lotions are requested. There are many ways we can accomplish this!



- Make a purchase through Amazon's Wish List- for around \$20 per senior and they will ship directly to the church.
- https://smile.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/dl/invite/0XTLaQV?ref=cm_sw_em_r_wl_dp_1i41kEryTMbQs
- If you enjoy shopping in person, bring your unwrapped gifts to us at the church!
- Donate online at <https://holycovenantucc.org/give-2/> and chose Angel Tree Giving from the Designated Gifts button.

Thank you for sharing Christmas love with others!

HELPING OUR COMMUNITY

The Racial Justice and Equity team at Holy Covenant would like to thank those who helped provide 130 lunch bags to A Roof Above on Dec 10 for our homeless neighbors. We also thank those who have volunteered to provide 260 cookies (22 dozen) for A Roof Above on Dec 16. Please deliver your cookies to Holy Covenant by noon on December 16.



MASK PROJECT CONTINUES THROUGH SPRING

The Racial Justice and Equity team wishes to commit to making/ supplying masks through April for organizations that are in need. Those interested can help with either purchased masks, or making homemade masks. Our goal is 100 masks per month. Those wishing to sew - patterns are available. Contact Selma Taylor, meshtaylor@twc.com for more information. We have supplied over 650 masks to our local community to date!

CONFIRM NOT CONFORM: A DISCUSSION GROUP FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Dec. 15 is our next Zoom meeting for 6th through 10th graders. We meet at 7:00 PM on every other Tuesday. It's not too late to join! "Confirm not Conform UCC" is the guide for the discussions geared toward letting kids make up their own minds and allowing them to see beliefs as changing throughout life. Contact Jo Ann Jellison at joannjellison@yahoo.com or Dawn Robinson at drrobinson0415@gmail.com for more information and access to the Zoom link. (We're having a good time! Guaranteed to put a smile on your face.)

MID-WEEK BIBLE STUDY VIA ZOOM

Join us for Wednesday Noonday Bible Study as we pick up at Acts 13 which tells the story of Barnabus and Saul. But before we do, we will briefly explore the question of theodicy: why does suffering exist in the world? Particularly, the question of Acts 12, why did God save Peter but not James? We look forward to seeing you there.

[Click here to join the Zoom meeting.](#)

SOJOURNERS CLASS - NOT YOUR TYPICAL BIBLE STUDY

The Sojourners Class is reading and discussing the Rev. Dr. William Barber's book The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement is Overcoming the Politics of Division and Fear. Everyone is welcome to join us. If you aren't able to purchase the book (available on Amazon, Kindle, Audible and other places) before Sunday, please contact Cheri Dennis (704-519-6016, cherid@holycovenantucc.org) and she can email a copy to you.

[Click here to join the Zoom meeting.](#) Or use Meeting ID: 876 7340 9762 Passcode: 523903



If you wish to add someone to the list, please send a note to
prayers@holycovenantucc.org.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Members

Kevin Decker, Linn Finger, Tom & Kathy Habel, Helen Lambert, Sharon Landis, Karen Long, Irene Mikkelson, Rick & Cheryl Milam, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Isabelle Reedy Powell, Jerry & Marion Rhyne, Yvette Stewart-Ross, Mamie Stokes, Jason & Aline Sullivan, Anita Taylor, Ed Vickery

Friends & Family Members

Lori Copeland (Martha Bomely), David & Cecelia Griffin (JP Griffin), Cindy Hedrick (Barb Schneller), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Will Hong (Jim Hong), George Jongeling (Darline Warren), Gene & Pat Judd (Will Judd), Bob Lyon (Melissa Noll), Linda Matkins (Robert Shepherd), Michael Morse (Beth & Ed Sharp), Jennifer Funderburk Owens (Diane Neese), Thibault Ossenbühl (Melissa Noll), Nick Pernice (Dawn Simmons), Vernon & Andrea Powell (Robert Shepherd), Darrell & Jackie Reichert, Jeff (Diane Neese), Lauren Reisenberger (Ida Mangione), Renee & Aiden Rohn (Debbie Davis), John & Marisa Sizemore (Tina Ettesen), Kathryn Vickery (Ed Vickery), Wanda Williams (John Rapp)

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

Rev. Fred Robinson, Interim Pastor
fredrick@holycovenantucc.org

Rev. Cheri Dennis, Interim Associate Pastor
cherid@holycovenantucc.org

Mr. Jon Weddell, M. Div., Minister of Music
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Mrs. Dawn Simmons, Executive Assistant
office@holycovenantucc.org

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