



Silent Meditation

"Come one and all, come running! Come see eternal life in swaddling clothes!

Take him in your arms; he cannot run away;

He has come to redeem those who have lost all hope."

- Jacopone da Todi

"It is often said at Christmas that Jesus is born into every family and every heart.

But these "births" must not make us forget the primordial, massive fact that Jesus was born of Mary among a people that at the time were dominated by the greatest empire of the age. If we forget that fact, the birth of Jesus becomes an abstraction, a symbol, a cipher. Apart from its historical coordinates the event loses its meaning. To the eyes of Christians the incarnation is the irruption of God into human history: an incarnation into littleness and service in the midst of overbearing power exercised by the mighty of this world; an irruption that smells of the stable."

- Gustavo Gutierrez

HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

FIRST SUNDAY IN CHRISTMAS

December 27, 2020, 10:55 AM

Prelude "In the Bleak Midwinter" CRANHAM
Claire Houlihan, Meg Houlihan, vocals; Adam Watkins, piano

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 "Il Est Né, le Divin Enfant"
David McGuirt, Avery McGuirt

* Call to Worship Cheri Dennis

One: Praise the Lord from the highest heaven.

Many: The sun and moon, and all the stars in the sky sing praises to our God.

One: Praise the Lord from the deepest valley.

Many: The mountains and hills, and all the trees in the forest, worship the Lord on high.

One: Praise the Lord from the heart filled with song.

Many: The old and young, and all the saints of God, sing with songs of joy.

All: Come! Let us worship the ruler of heaven and earth.

Christmas 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.

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.*

CHRISTMAS (WHITE CANDLE)

The Robinson Family

Lighting the Advent & Christ Candles

- 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!**

You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord,
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

One: Rejoice, a Savior is born!

Many: A Savior is born, indeed. Joy to the world!

Special Music

“Mary, Did You Know”
Felicia Robinson

M. Lowry

Gospel Lesson

Matthew 2: 13-23

Fred Robinson

Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.’ Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, ‘Out of Egypt I have called my son.’

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: ‘A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.’

When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child’s life are dead.’ Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, ‘He will be called a Nazorean.’

One: Rejoice, a Savior is born!

Many: A Savior is born, indeed. Joy to the world!

Sermon

“Unto You A Savior, Now What”

Fred Robinson

Angels, from the realms of glory, wing your flight o'er all the earth;
As you sang creation's story, now proclaim Messiah's birth:

*Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, give thanks and sing.*

Shepherds, in the fields abiding, watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing, yonder shines the infant light: (R)

Sages, leave your contemplations, brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great Desire of Nations, guided by Christ's natal star: (R)

Saints, before the alter bending, watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly, your prayers attending, Christ beside you shall appear. (R)

Benediction

Fred Robinson

Benediction Response (144)

MENDELSSOHN

Hail the Bearer of God's peace! Hail the Sun of righteousness!
Light and life our Savior brings, risen with radiant, healing wings.
Mildly laying glory by, born that we no more may die,
Born to raise us all from earth, born to give us second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the Christ-child bring!"

Postlude

“He Is Born”

arr. S Woods

Kristin Andes, Hannah Magraw, harps

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

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, Dorrie Hankins
Laura Hankins, Meg Houlihan, Kathleen Smith

YEAR-END GIVING

Holy Covenant's fiscal year ends on Thursday, December 31 so any contributions for 2020 or prepayments for 2021 must be received at the church by noon on the last day of this year, or **postmarked on or before 12/31/2020 if being mailed; please use the secure address of**

**Holy Covenant UCC
PO Box 481285
Charlotte NC 28269**

Questions about year-end contributions, stock gifts or electronic giving may be directed to Dawn Simmons at office@holycovenantucc.org. We are very grateful for the generosity of all at Holy Covenant!

Holiday office hours:

Closed Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

The church office will be opened December 31 until noon, and will be closed on New Year's Day.



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.



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. 29 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

We will resume our studies on January 6.

Join us for Wednesday Noonday Bible Study. We'll be studying the Book of Acts. 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, Anita Taylor

Friends & Family Members

Linda Angstrom (Beth Sharp), David & Cecelia Griffin (JP Griffin), Cindy Hedrick (Barb Schneller), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Will Hong (Jim Hong), Margaret Houlihan (Meg Houlihan), George Jongeling (Darline Warren), 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), John & Marisa Sizemore (Tina Ettesen), Kathryn Vickery (Ed Vickery), Wanda Williams (John Rapp)

REACH THE PASTORS

Pastor Fred Robinson, 770-344-8002, frecrik@holycovenantucc.org

Pastor Cheri Dennis 704-519-6016, cherid@holycovenantucc.org

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

Rev. Fred Robinson, Interim Pastor

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