



## Silent Meditation

"I have heard that the afterlife is a place of perpetual light. That's a problem. Heaven needs night. Darkness is not evil, but a realm of mystery and imagination. The day is constant, but the night is creative. The stars dance. The moon dreams. The comets write poetry of fire. Without the night there is no dawn or twilight, no moments of sacred ambiguity, no subtle changes of perception, no promises kept or just made, a holy pledge of healing or of hope. No, please, we need the night in heaven. We need that glorious darkness, that obscure beauty, drifting on wedding gown clouds of white across an obsidian sky."

- Bishop Stephen Charleston

"Jesus showed us by how he lived and died and lived again on the other side of death that nothing is too big, too much, too hard for God, that human dignity and flourishing are God's dream for us no matter under what oppressive systems we find ourselves. The Jesus who allied himself with the poor and disenfranchised by becoming poor and disenfranchised will not abandon us to a world that does not love us, fears us and seeks to harm us. Rather Jesus stands with us as we remake the world that is our heritage, our sacred trust, as we rediscover its poetry and the poetry inside of each of us."

- Dr. Wil Gafney

# HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

## SECOND SUNDAY IN CHRISTMAS

January 3, 2021, 10:55 AM

Prelude "Nativity Medley" 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 "Canticle of the Turning" STAR OF THE COUNTY DOWN

**My heart shall sing of the day you bring.**

**Let the fires of your justice burn.**

**Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near,**

**And the world is about to turn.**

\* Call to Worship Cheri Dennis

One: Light has broken into the darkness of the world.

Many: **Can you see it? Can you feel it?**

One: Open the eyes of your heart and light the light within.

Many: **There is a star beckoning us to follow.**

One: Let's go and see where it leads us today in worship.

All: **Let's see where it leads us tomorrow as we go about our day, our week and the rest of our lives.**

Hymn 129 "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice" IN DULCI JUBILO

**Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;**

**Now give heed to what we say: Jesus Christ is born today.**

**Ox and ass before him bow, asleep within the manger now.**

**Christ is born today, Christ is born today!**

**Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;**

**Now you know of endless bliss: Jesus Christ was born for this!**

**God has opened heaven's door, and you are blessed forevermore.**

**Christ was born for this, Christ was born for this!**

**Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;  
Now you need not fear the grave: Jesus Christ was born to save!  
Calls you one and calls you all to gain the everlasting hall.  
Christ was born to save, Christ was born to save!**

Children's Message

Cheri Dennis

Pastoral Prayer

Fred Robinson

Sung Response

"You Came Down"

Cameroon

**You came down that we may have love (3x); hallelujah forevermore.  
You came down that we may have light (3x); hallelujah forevermore.  
You came down that we may have peace (3x); hallelujah forevermore.  
You came down that we may have joy (3x); hallelujah forevermore.**

Hebrew Reading

Psalm 147: 12-20

Cheri Dennis

Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem!

Praise your God, O Zion!

For he strengthens the bars of your gates;

he blesses your children within you.

He grants peace within your borders;

he fills you with the finest of wheat.

He sends out his command to the earth;

his word runs swiftly.

He gives snow like wool;

he scatters frost like ashes.

He hurls down hail like crumbs—

who can stand before his cold?

He sends out his word, and melts them;

he makes his wind blow, and the waters flow.

He declares his word to Jacob,

his statutes and ordinances to Israel.

He has not dealt thus with any other nation;

they do not know his ordinances.

Praise the Lord!

**One: Rejoice, a Savior is born!**

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

Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming from tender stem has sprung!  
 Of Jesse's lineage coming as saints of old have sung.  
 It came a floweret bright, amid the cold of winter,  
 When half spent was the night.

Isaiah had foretold it, the Rose I have in mind,  
 With Mary we behold it, the Virgin Mother kind.  
 To show God's love aright, she bore to us a Savoir,  
 When half spent was the night.

Scripture Lesson

John 1:1-9; 10-18

Fred Robinson

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

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. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me."') From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

One: Rejoice, a Savior is born!

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

Sermon

“The God of New Beginnings”

Fred Robinson

Hymn

“A Communion Hymn for Christmas”

GREENRIDGE

Gathered round your table on this holy morn,  
Viewing Bethlehem's stable, we rejoice and mourn;  
Joy to see you lying in your manger bed,  
Weep to see you dying in our sinful stead.

Bethlehem's incarnation, Calvary's bitter cross,  
Wrought for us salvation by your pain and loss;  
Now we fall before you in this holy place,  
Prostrate we adore you for your gift of grace.

With profoundest wonder we your body take—  
Laid in manger yonder, broken for our sake;  
Hushed in adoration we approach the cup—  
Bethlehem's pure oblation freely offered up.

Christmas Babe so tender, Lamb who bore our blame,  
How shall sinners render praises due your name?  
Do your own good pleasure in the lives we bring;  
“Glory, glory, glory,” let the heavens sing!

# HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to Communion

Fred Robinson

Community of saints, beloved of God, as we come to this table on the first Sunday of the New Year and the second Sunday after Christmas, we are reminded that this is the table of Jesus Christ, a banquet prepared for everyone. All who seek to be nourished and sustained in the journey of faith, all who seek wholeness and compassionate paths to peace and justice, are welcome here.

So let us come to the table, expectant, eager, and open to sharing in the rich blessings of heaven born from unexpected places, and people, and experiences.

In this meal, shared from home to home, may we remember the life, death, and resurrection of the One who still takes on flesh among us today.

Prayer of Consecration

Loving God, we thank you for this meal, a meal that nourishes us, body and soul. We thank you for sending Christ into the world not to condemn the world but that through him the world might be set free. May this communion meal sustain us on our journey and enable us to freely live into the persons you called us to be. Where any social norm or imbalance of power limits our ability to thrive, may we be a witness for Christ and pursue justice for all your people. Amen.

Words of Institution

Sharing of the Bread and Cup

Prayer after Communion

We give thanks to you our God for your promise to sustain us in this New Year; for bringing us closer to you; for knowing that you came down to us in the Incarnation; and for knowing that you are forever with us on our journey. Amen

Hymn

“We Three Kings”

KINGS OF CHRIST

**We three kings of Orient are; bearing gifts we traverse afar,  
Field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.**

*O star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright,  
Westward leading, still proceeding, Guide us to your perfect light.*

**Frankincense to offer have I; incense owns a Deity nigh;  
Prayer and praising we are raising, worshiping God on high. (R)**

**Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume breathes a life of gathering gloom;  
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying, sealed in the stone cold tomb. (R)**

**Glorious now behold Christ arise; Messiah, God, and Sacrifice;  
Alleluia, Alleluia, Sounds through the earth and skies. (R)**

Benediction

Fred Robinson

Benediction Response (153)

GO TELL IT

**Go, tell it on the mountain over the hills and everywhere!  
Go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!**

Postlude

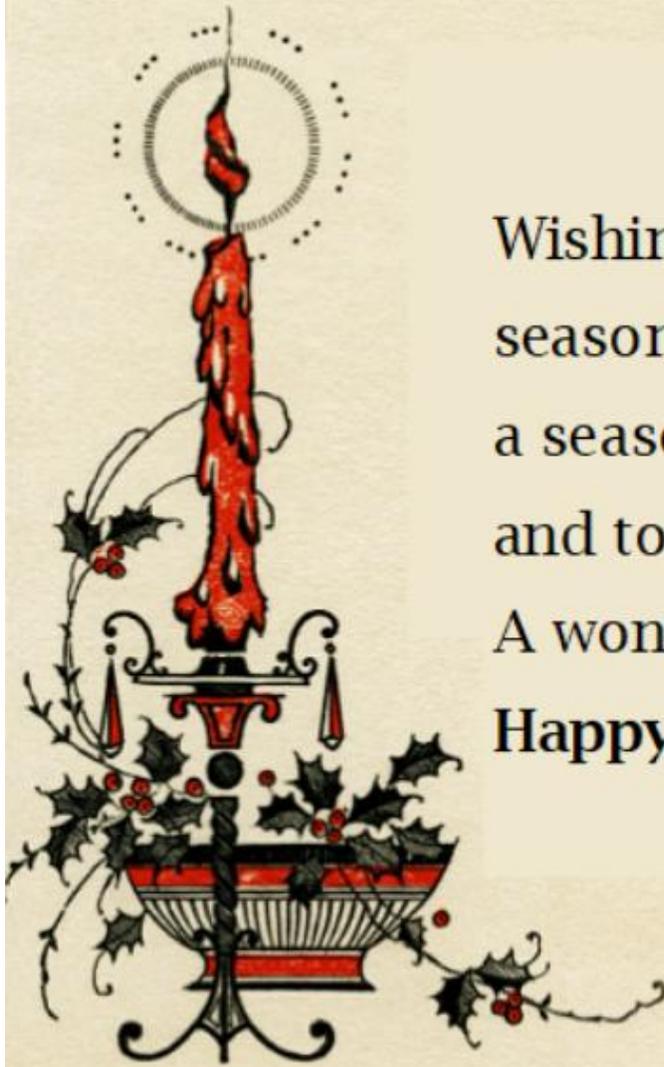
“Good Christian Friends, Rejoice”

arr. D. Wyrzten

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

**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



Wishing you a  
season of gladness,  
a season of cheer,  
and to top it all off—  
A wonderful year!  
**Happy New Year!**

## 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 HCUCU 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.

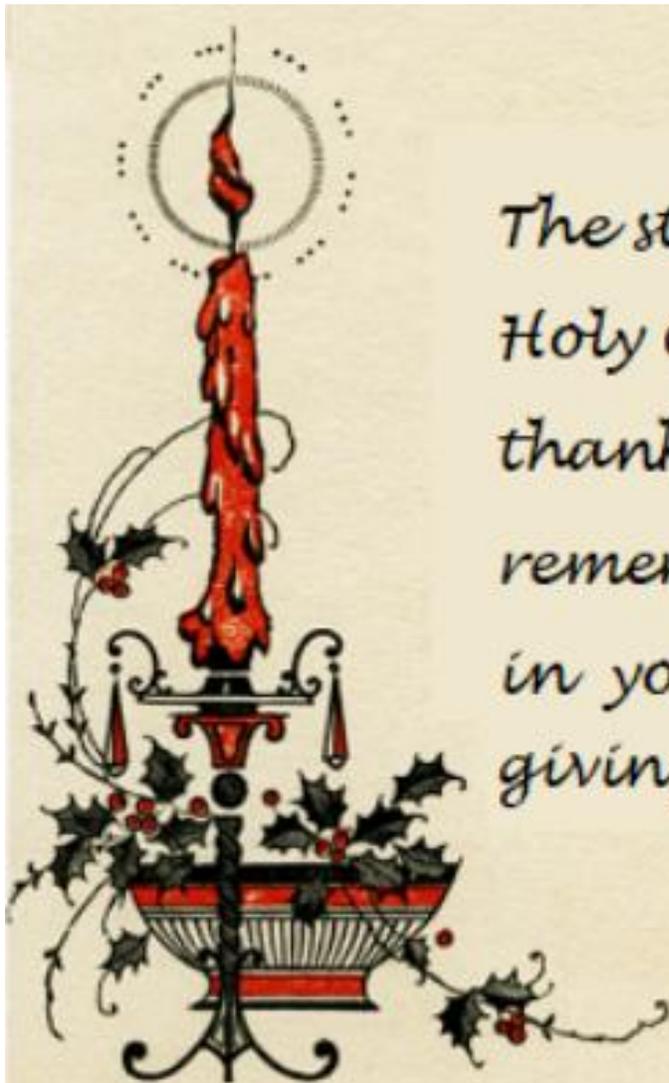
Sincerely,

Fred Robinson, Interim Senior Pastor

[Fredrick@HolyCovenantUCC.org](mailto:Fredrick@HolyCovenantUCC.org)

Tom Magraw, Consistory President

[TomM@HolyCovenantUCC.org](mailto:TomM@HolyCovenantUCC.org)



*The staff of  
Holy Covenant  
thanks you for  
remembering us  
in your Christmas  
giving.*

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](mailto:meshtaylor@twc.com) for more information. We have supplied over 780 masks to our local community to date!

### **CONFIRM NOT CONFORM: A DISCUSSION GROUP FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

We meet at 7:00 PM every other Tuesday. It's not too late to join! "Confirm not Conform UCC" is the guide for the discussions geared toward letting kids (6th - 10th grades) make up their own minds and allowing them to see beliefs as changing throughout life.

Contact Jo Ann Jellison at [joannjellison@yahoo.com](mailto:joannjellison@yahoo.com) or Dawn Robinson at [drrobinson0415@gmail.com](mailto:drrobinson0415@gmail.com) for more information and access to the Zoom link.

## MID-WEEK BIBLE STUDY VIA ZOOM, 12:15 PM

On January 6, we will resume Wednesday Bible Study and pick up where we left off in Acts 13. Join the discussion as we delve into the beginnings of Paul's missionary journey.

Join the Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89642315861>

Meeting ID: 896 4231 5861



## SOJOURNERS CLASS - NOT YOUR TYPICAL BIBLE STUDY 9:45 AM

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](mailto: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



"Comfort food"  
style choices

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For gifts of stock or additional funding opportunities, please contact the church office  
[office@holycovenantucc.org](mailto:office@holycovenantucc.org) or 704-599-9810

Holy Covenant United Church of Christ is a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code. Contributions may be tax deductible.

If you wish to add someone to the list, please send a note to [prayers@holycovenantucc.org](mailto: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, Ed Vickery

#### **Friends & Family Members**

Linda Angstrom (Beth Sharp), Dana Bennett-Burch (Kathleen Wagner), Sharon Cevrier (Kathleen Wagner), David & Cecelia Griffin (JP Griffin), Cindy Hedrick (Barb Schneller), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Will Hong (Jim Hong), George Jongeling (Darline Warren), Grady & 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), 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](mailto:frecrik@holycovenantucc.org)

Pastor Cheri Dennis 704-519-6016, [cherid@holycovenantucc.org](mailto:cherid@holycovenantucc.org)

### **OUR MINISTRY TEAM**

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**Rev. Cheri Dennis, Interim Associate Pastor**

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**Mr. Jon Weddell, M. Div., Minister of Music**

[jon@holycovenantucc.org](mailto:jon@holycovenantucc.org)

**Mrs. Dawn Simmons, Executive Assistant**

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