



### Silent Meditation

“O Heavenly Children, God’s messengers are as limitless as the fish in the sea.  
They come in all colors, regions, languages and creeds.  
But their message is one and the same, don’t you see?  
[God] only wishes to unite all [God’s] children  
under one family tree.”  
~Suzy Kassem

“We all serve as a vessel to be messengers for one another.  
Are you sharing the messages you are inspired to speak?  
Someone is waiting to hear your words.”  
~Nanette Mathews

“We must allow the Word of God to confront us,  
to disturb our security, to undermine our complacency and  
to overthrow our patterns of thought and behavior.”  
~John Stott

**Our Faith is over 2000 Years Old. Our thinking is not,**

**HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT ~ PEACE**

**December 5, 2021, 10:55am**

**Prelude "Let All Mortal Flesh" arr. J. Purifoy**

**Chiming of the Hour**

**Welcome and Announcements Cheri Dennis**

**One: May the Peace of God be with you.**

**Many: And also with you.**

**Introit 121 "All Earth Is Waiting" TAULE  
(TODA LA TIERRA)**

**Thus says the prophet to those of Israel,**

**"A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel":**

**One whose name is "God with us," our savior shall be,**

**Through whom hope will blossom once more within our hearts.**

**\* Call to Worship Mary Claiborne**

**One: Righteous one! Equitable one!**

**Many: Refining one! Delightful one!**

**One: Blessed one! Redeeming one!**

**Many: One-of-flesh to save all flesh!**

**All: Emmanuel, One of Us - praise be your coming!**

**\* Hymn 117 "Lift Up Your Heads" TRURO**

**Lift up your heads, O mighty gates; behold the glorious Ruler waits!**

**The Sovereign One is drawing near; the Savior of the world is here.**

**Fling wide the portals of your heart; make it a temple, set apart**

**From earthly use for heaven's employ, adorned with prayer and love and joy.**

**Redeemer, come! I open wide my heart to you; here, Christ, abide!**

**Let me your inner presence feel; Your grace and love in me reveal.**

**So come, my Sovereign; enter in! Let new and nobler life begin;**

**Your Holy Spirit guide us on, until the glorious crown be won.**

*\* Please take a comfortable posture that supports  
your worshiping, reading, and singing.*

Prayer of Confession (*in unison*)

Cheri Dennis

O God, You have promised to make pathways straight so your people may walk in joyful safety. But in our arrogance, we create dangerous roads, secret ways based on privilege, which suit human standards, not yours. Forgive us.

You promise a way of justice and equity so that all may dwell in peace. But the valley between rich and poor has become an impassible chasm. We punish the poor. We make them sicker. We make them hungrier. Forgive us.

God, you rescued your children from the hands of their oppressors and called all of them to delight in your glory on the level path which leads home. But we oppress our siblings, claiming “crooked” means not straight, not white, not male, not cis. Forgive us for these corruptions of your good Word.

**Come again! Make our hearts alive with your truth!**

Words of Assurance

Cheri Dennis

Hear this gracious promise: I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God, who sees our flaws and loves us into doing better. We are forgiven. Amen.

Hymn

“Canticle of the Turning”

STAR OF THE COUNTY DOWN

My soul cries out with a joyful shout  
That the God of my heart is great,  
And my spirit sings of the wondrous things  
That you bring to the ones who wait.  
You fixed your sight on your servant’s plight,  
And my weakness you did not spurn,  
So from east to west shall my name be blest.  
Could the world be about to turn?

*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.*

Lighting of Advent Candle

Jeff & Kevin Edwards-Knight

As it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'" (Luke 3:4-6)

When conflict seems never-ending, relationships rocky,  
When we want to deny and pretend,  
The Holy invites us to make space for truth-telling  
That we may find Peace

*(Light candle of Peace)*

Where in the world do we find Peace these days?

Song

"Light One Candle"

TIF IN VELDELE

**Light two candles to watch for Messiah: let the light banish darkness.  
Christ shall feed the flock like a shepherd, gently lead them homeward.**

Children's Message

Laura Hankins

Hymn

"O Come, Advent"

VENI EMMANUEL

**O come and bring your peace upon the earth  
That even now still longs for its rebirth.  
We seek to live and move in your ways.  
Guide us to peace and justice all our days.  
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to us  
And all things shall be well.**

Pastoral Prayer

Cheri Dennis

Lord's Prayer *(in unison)*

**Our God, in whom is heaven, blessed be your name. Your kingdom come,  
Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily  
bread, and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And  
lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the  
kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

Prayer for Illumination "Jesus, Let Us Come to Know You"

M. Card

**Jesus, let us come to know you. Let us see you face to face.  
Touch us, hold us, use us, mold us, only let us live in you.**

Hebrew Scripture

Malachi 3:1-4

Mary Claiborne

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

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

**Many:** Open our ears, our hearts, our minds.

\* Zechariah's Song

Luke 1:68-79

Jeff Edwards-Knight

'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.'

**One:** For the word of God in scripture, for the word of God among us, for the word of God within us.

**Many:** Alleluia! Thanks be to God.

\* Scripture Lesson

Luke 3:1-6

Cheri Dennis

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, 'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be

made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

One: For the word of God in scripture, for the word of God among us, for the word of God within us.

Many: **Alleluia! Thanks be to God.**

Sermon “Refining Fire, Fuller Soap, and Road Construction” Cheri Dennis

\* Offering Dedication (*in unison*)

Cheri Dennis

Covenantal God, we live into your promise to make our rough ways smooth with each gift we grind, with each talent we sand, with each act we polish but we have not yet smoothed our ways to match your ways. May our grinding, sanding, & polishing mirrored in our offerings be smoothed to your perfect ways and used in building your kin-dom here on earth, as it is in heaven. Amen.

\* Doxology

“You Came Down”

Cameroon

You came down that we may have peace. (3x)

Hallelujah forevermore.

## SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation

“Christmas Communion Song”

S.N. Callaway

Preparation

One: Holy God, we give thanks for your creation, fragile, yet fruitful, enough for all.

Many: **We give thanks that you call us into community where love and justice may flourish, enough for all.**

One: We give thanks that you invite us on this Advent journey.

Many: **Awake, curious, longing to meet you, we set out for your table of grace.**

One: You light our path one step at a time, beckoning us onto a Way that offers us new eyes to explore the vision of the Promised One;

Many: **New senses to feel the heartbeat of the Vulnerable One, new courage to share the urgency of the Ruler of Peace.**

One: One more step, one more stretch, one more challenge takes us deeper into the mystery of your abundant life:

Many: **a world healed, renewed; all nature, all people at peace. Amen.**

## Words of Institution

Cheri Dennis

We remember the night when Jesus gathered at table with his friends in a time of struggle and fear, took bread, blessed it and gave it to them saying “Take and eat: for this is my body.”

And after supper, as Jesus looked forward to your desired day of joy and power; he took the cup of wine, again gave You thanks and praise and said “Take this, all of you, and drink. This is the cup of the new covenant, my life poured out for you. I will drink this with you again in the reign of God.

Share this bread and this cup in memory of me.”

Come now, Holy Spirit of God—As you were present at creation, be present now, and let these gifts of bread and cup become for us the bread of life and the cup

As you were sent by Jesus to accompany us on our journey of faith, be present now, and transform this community, sharing this bread and cup, into one body in Christ.

## Sharing of the Bread and Cup

Song during Communion

“At This Table”

I. Menzel/J. Myrin

*Lisa Cloninger, Kathi Smith*

## Prayer of Thanksgiving *(in unison)*

For the nourishment of spirit, mind, and body, for hope that we begin to see, and for comfort from the Prince of Peace, we share our gratitude, Gracious God. Encourage us in these shortened days. Through the long nights of this season, may your hope carry us until dawn arrives again. Amen.



## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

Please remember to wear your mask when indoors as mandated by Mecklenburg County officials. Thank you for your cooperation.

### HOLIDAY LOVE OFFERING FOR OUR STAFF AND CLERGY

During this joyful time of year, we ask those of you who are able to consider contributing to a Holiday Love Offering for our HCUCCL clergy and staff. The offering will be divided across all of our dedicated staff members. We have wonderful, dedicated leadership and support who work very hard to make Holy Covenant a place of welcome, warmth, and spiritual renewal. Please direct your gifts to either Martha Bomely or Kathi Smith, by December 12th which will allow time to organize and distribute gifts on December 19. Thank you for considering our church staff as you plan out your holiday giving plans. Offerings can be made electronically at [Venmo](#): @kathilouwho; [PayPal](#): @kathilouwho; [Cashapp](#): \$kathilouwho; [Zelle](#): 704-614-7674 **Or by cash or check made out Martha Bomely or Kathi Smith** (NOT the church) and either given to one of them at church, or mailed to **Martha Bomely, 10918 Loudoun Lane, Charlotte, NC 28262**

### IT'S ANGEL TREE TIME AGAIN!

We have adopted two refugee families headed by single moms this year who would love some gifts for their children. We have Angel Tree tags that show the link to our [Walmart gift registry](#) for these two families. The moms have asked for unwrapped gifts and we would like to have them ready for delivery on Sunday, December 19. Gift cards or cash is welcomed also! If you have any questions, please email Suzanne at [suzlam@yahoo.com](mailto:suzlam@yahoo.com) or Lisa at [lisacmsw@hotmail.com](mailto:lisacmsw@hotmail.com). Thank you in advance for your Holy Covenant generosity!

### SOJOURNERS CLASS SUNDAYS AT 9:45AM

Come join the Sojourners in our temporary stay in *Freeing Jesus: Rediscovering Jesus as Friend, Teacher, Savior, Lord, Way, and Presence*, a new book by Diana Butler Bass. Come wonder with us about what Jesus could possibly need to be freed from. For more information, contact Cheri Dennis (704-519-6016, [cherid@holycovenantucc.org](mailto:cherid@holycovenantucc.org))

### MID-WEEK BIBLE STUDY, TUESDAYS AT 12:15 PM

#### Reading Scripture as a Spiritual Practice

There are many approaches to bible study. One that works for me is the Lectio Divina method. I was first introduced to this practice by our retired minister, Pastor Nancy Allison. The four steps of Lectio Divina are reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. Begin by reading passage carefully, at least two times. As you read, think about what words and phrases jump out at you. Then reflect or meditate on the meaning of the text. How is God speaking to you in the words you just read? What might God want you to do? Then pray, asking God for guidance. Consider keeping a journal of your response. Lastly, contemplate. Be quiet and rest, listening for God's

response. [Lectio Divina PDF](#). Another way to explore scripture is as part of a small group. Everyone is invited to join us for our mid-week bible study. [Click here](#) to join the class. Questions? Contact Laura Hankins, [laura@hankins-clt.us](mailto:laura@hankins-clt.us).

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

Brian Hankins, Henry Hankins, Tom Magraw, Mary Claiborne, Martha Bomely, Ed Vickery,  
Jeff Edwards-Knight, Kevin Edwards-Knight, Jo Ann Jellison, Shakti Subramanian,  
Anne Hayes, Terrence Hayes

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**

Carl & Phyllis Johnson, and the Carter family, in the death of Carl's sister, Ann Carter; Kevin Decker, Linn Finger, Tom & Kathy Habel, Jim Hong, Helen Lambert, Karen Long, Irene Mikkelson, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Isabelle Reedy Powell, Jerry & Marion Rhyne, Cynthia Simpson, Mamie Stokes, Anita Taylor

**Friends & Family Members**

Family and friends in the death of Omari Alexander (Kevin & Joy Decker)  
Joyce & Roy, Amanda & Jeremy (Ed Vickery), Kathy (Basco) Craton (Diane Neese), Nikki Echeverri (Melissa Noll), Alicia Gibson (Jim Hong), David & Cecelia Griffin (JP Griffin), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Will Hong (Jim Hong), Pat Key (Patti Key), Alec Kirchhoefner (Melissa Noll), Geraldine Mobley (Jeff Edwards-Knight), Michael & Chris Mele-Wagner (Dominic Ciciollo), Robbie Middleton (Holly Middleton & Dawn Schmitz), John Page (Martha Bomely), Robert Plummer (Martha Bomely), Kathryn Vickery (Ed Vickery), Tim & Shannon Ward (Laura Hankins), Tamber Watson (Jeff Edwards-Knight), Wanda Williams (John Rapp), Steve Zrebeic & Calvin (Jeff Edwards-Knight)

**OUR MINISTRY TEAM**

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