



Silent Meditation

*"Joy does not simply happen to us.
We have to choose joy and keep
choosing it every day."*

-Henri J. M. Nouwen

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

HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT ~ JOY

December 12, 2021, 10:55am

Prelude "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming" 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)

**Mountains and valleys will have to be made plain;
Open new highways, new highways for our God,
Who is now coming closer, so come all and see,
And open the doorways as wide as wide can be.**

* Call to Worship Terrence Hayes

One: This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Many: **On this day we shout with joy because of the faithful goodness of God!**

One: This is the day that we listen for the voice of God calling to us with joy.

Many: **On this day we wait for the advent of God's joy in our world and in our hearts!**

One: This is the day that we celebrate the gift of God's coming to us!

All: **This is day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it!**

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

* Hymn 104

“We Hail You God’s Anointed”

ELLACOMBE

We hail you God’s anointed, the long awaited One!
Hail in the time appointed, your reign on earth begun!
You come to break oppression, to set the captive free;
To take away transgression, and rule in equity.

You shall come down like showers upon the fruited earth;
And joy and hope, like flowers, spring in your path to birth.
Before you on the mountains shall peace, the herald go,
And righteousness, in fountains, from hill to valley flow.

The wise shall bow before you and gold and incense bring;
All nations shall adore you, and praise all peoples sing;
To you shall prayer unceasing and daily vows be said,
Your realm is still increasing, with you, O Christ, as head.

O’er every foe victorious, you on your throne shall rest;
From age to age more glorious, all blessing and all blessed:
The tide of time shall never your covenant remove;
Your name shall stand forever, your changeless name of Love.

Prayer of Confession (*in unison*)

Cheri Dennis

God, we come before you humbled and distraught. John, your prophet, said it clearly and plainly: "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." We are awash in excessive belongings-and we only part with that which no longer suits us. We feel too deserving of our luxuries, and only give our scraps to the poor. We cannot stop. Forgive us, compassionate one.

Words of Assurance

Cheri Dennis

Know this well, “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” God will save one and all from their oppressors, even from the oppressive greed and anxiety that lives inside of them and separates them from the community’s need. You are forgiven. God has done gloriously! Sing praises!

Hymn

“Canticle of the Turning”

STAR OF THE COUNTY DOWN

From the halls of power to the fortress tower,
Not a stone will be left on stone.
Let the king beware for your justice tears
Every tyrant from is throne.
The hungry poor shall weep no more,
For the food they can never earn;
There are tables spread; every mouth be fed,
For the world is 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

Anne Marie & Terrence Hayes

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

When confusion claims us, when we feel unable to do anything right;
The Holy invites us to be faithful, that we may find Joy

(Light candle of Joy)

Where in the world do we find Joy these days?

Song

“Light One Candle”

TIF IN VELDELE

**Light three candles to watch for Messiah: let the light banish darkness.
Lift your heads and lift high the gateway for the God of glory.**

Children’s Message

Laura Hankins

Hymn

“O Come, Advent”

VENI EMMANUEL

O come to us like joy of heaven's dawn,
From Mary's womb a faithful paragon
Brought forth into this world by love's power
Your Spirit through her labors in that hour
Rejoice, rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to us and all things shall be well.

Pastoral Prayer

Barbara Thomas

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.

Old Testament Reading

Zephaniah 3:14-20

Beth Sharp

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away the judgements against you, he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival. I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the Lord.

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

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

Anthem

“like a child”

arr. D. Cherwien

New Testament Reading Philippians 4:4-7 Barbara Thomas
Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

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 “Expect Joy!” Barbara Thomas
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCXp9nP8Lc8>

* Offering Dedication (*in unison*) Barbara Thomas
Gather us back together, O God, we who have separated ourselves from our neighbors, from our higher selves and from your expansive Love. Reunite us with our calling to create a community which welcomes all. May our offerings of time, talent and resources enable a community that cares for the infirm, heals the shame of the outcast, and creates a welcome for all. Amen.

* Doxology “You Came Down” Cameroon
You came down that we may have joy. (3x)
Hallelujah forevermore.

* Hymn 148 “What Child Is This?” GREENSLEEVES
What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary’s lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this the angels sing, is Christ, God’s holy offering;
Haste, haste your praise to bring the babe, the child of Mary!

Why lies the Child in manger bare where ox and ass are feeding?
Give heed, draw near; for sinners here the silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce him through, the cross be borne for me, for you;
Hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the child of Mary!

Bring gifts of incense, gold, and myrrh; come, join in jubilation;
The Holy Child, though meek and mild, has come with God’s salvation.
Raise, raise the song on high, the mother sings her lullaby;
Joy, joy, for Christ is born, the babe, the child of Mary!

* Benediction		Barbara Thomas
* Benediction Response		KEEP YOUR LAMPS
	Keep your lamps trimmed and burning; (3x)	
	For the time is drawing nigh.	
Postlude	“Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming”	arr. J. Carter

*Songs in this service are used by Permission.
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**WE COULDN'T PROVIDE OUR WARM WELCOME
WITHOUT THE HELP OF:**
Brian Hankins, Henry Hankins, Shakti Subramanian,
Anne Hayes, Terrence Hayes, Beth Sharp

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.

WELCOME BACK REV. BARBARA THOMAS

Formerly Associate Pastor at HCUCC, Barbara has devoted much of her ministry to walking with the underserved. She is currently Program Director of Charlotte Rescue Missions' Dove's Nest, which provides addiction treatment for women & their children who have experienced homelessness. Prior positions include 8 years as Director of Services at Urban Ministry Center (now A Roof Above) & several years as SE Regional Director of Church World Service, supporting efforts to provide solutions for poverty & hunger. Barbara previously pastored a Presbyterian church in upstate New York. She also remains active as a psychotherapist & coach at the Counseling Center of Charlotte, offering training & visioning services for local non-profits. Rev. Thomas has an M.Div. from Duke and a Master's in Organizational Development from Queens. Barbara has been in Charlotte for 14 years; she is a member of & sings in the choir at New Emmanuel UCC.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

We will hold two in-person worship services on Christmas Eve; 5:30 pm & 7:30 pm. Both services will include Holy Communion; the choir will sing at the 7:30 service. The poll responses were evenly divided between the two services, so no RSVP is required. Both services will also be live-streamed. We are following the Mecklenburg County mask regulation that requires all persons over the age of five (whether vaccinated or not) to wear a face mask indoors. We look forward to seeing you on Christmas Eve!

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 HCUCC 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, TODAY 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 to Martha Bomely (NOT the church) and either given to one of them at church.

IT'S ANGEL TREE TIME AGAIN!

Many thanks to all who have responded! We are still collecting gifts for the 6 kids of the two refugee families headed by single moms that we are sponsoring this year. Here's the link to the registry for these two families [Walmart gift registry](#). Please bring your unwrapped gifts to church this week, so we can plan delivery for Sunday, December 19. If you have any questions, please email Suzanne at suzlam@yahoo.com or Lisa at lisacmsw@hotmail.com. Thank you in advance for your Holy Covenant generosity!

UPDATE FROM THE RACIAL JUSTICE & EQUITY TEAM

Holy Covenant's [DonorsChoose giving page](#) offers members a way to directly donate to classroom projects at David Cox Road Elementary school, a Title I school in the HC neighborhood that we already serve through the backpack ministry. So far we've raised \$600 and fully funded five projects! You can make a donation of any amount, read thank-you letters from the teachers, and track our giving as a congregation. We also suggest buying your books from [Shelves](#), Charlotte's only Black-owned bookstore: <https://shelvesbookstore.com/>. For questions or comments email Holly Middleton at hsmiddleton@gmail.com.

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)

MID-WEEK BIBLE STUDY ON HAITUS, RETURNS JAN 4

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, 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

Don Carver in the death of his wife, Debbie; 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), 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)

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