



Silent Meditation

"Love is the epiphany of God in our poverty."

- Thomas Merton (1915-1968)

"For by gold the power of a king is signified, by frankincense the honor of God, by myrrh the burial of the body; and accordingly, they offer Him gold as King, frankincense as God, myrrh as Man."

— St John Chrysostom (c. 347-407)

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

**HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
EPIPHANY**

January 2, 2022 10:55 am

Prelude "We Three Kings" arr. T. Birchwood

Chiming of the Hour

Welcome and Announcements Cheri Dennis

One: May the Peace of the Christ Child be with you.

Many: And also with you.

Introit "The Magi Who to Bethlehem Did Go" LOS MAGOS

Call to Worship

One: Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

Many: We have seen the star in the sky and have come to worship the Christ Child.

One: Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Many: The star is resting over Bethlehem, and we come rejoicing, overwhelmed with joy.

All: Let us bring the gift of our hearts and the gift of our lives to worship our God of light and everlasting love.

Hymn 164 "Arise, Your Light Is Come" FESTAL SONG

Arise, your light is come! The Spirit's call obey;
Show forth the glory of your God which shines on you today!

Arise, your light is come! Fling wide the prison door;
Proclaim the captive's liberty, good tidings to the poor.

Arise, your light is come! All you in sorrow born,
Bind up the broken-hearted ones and comfort those who mourn.

Arise, your light is come! The mountains burst in song!
Rise up like eagles on the wing; God's power will make us strong.

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

Invocation

O God of Light and Love, who shines in our hearts as brightly as the Bethlehem star, we come together to give you praise. You have come to us in the form of a newborn babe, and our hearts are filled with awe and with joy. We rejoice in your love for us, and we are grateful.

Prayer of Confession (*in unison*)

Yet there are times when we are drawn away from your light. We may feel inadequate, unworthy, or less than perfect. We forget that we are your children, your beloved creations, and that you reach out for us even when we turn away from you. Forgive us, O God.

Words of Assurance

One: The night is gone and the day has come. Christ, the Light of the World, born in the person of Jesus, reminds us that God's light and love are for all of us – no matter who we are and no matter what we have done. We are loved and forgiven.

Many: Thanks be to God.

Hymn

“What Star Is This, with Beams So Bright” PUER NOBIS NASCITUR

What star is this, with beams so bright, more lovely than the noonday light?

'Tis sent to announce a newborn King, glad tidings of our God to bring.

'Tis now fulfilled what God decreed, “From Jacob shall a star proceed”;
And lo! The eastern sages stand to read in heaven the Lord's command.

While outward signs the star displays, an inward light the Lord conveys
And urges them, with tender might to seek the giver of the light.

O Jesus, while the star of grace impels us on to seek your face,
Let not our slothful hearts refuse the guidance of your light to use.

Children's Message

Laura Hankins

Pastoral Prayer

Cheri Dennis

Hebrew Scripture

Isaiah 60: 1-6

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

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

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

Hymn 159

“As with Gladness Those of Old”

DIX

**As with gladness those of old did the guiding star behold;
As with joy they hailed its light, leading onward, beaming bright;
So, true Morning Star, may we evermore your splendor see.**

**As with joyful steps they sped to that lowly manger bed,
There to bend the knee before One whom heaven and earth adore;
So may we with willing feet ever seek your mercy seat.**

* Gospel Lesson

Matthew 2: 1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

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

"What? Another King!"

Cheri Dennis

Offering Dedication (*in unison*)

O God, we come to you seeking to be as wise as the Magi, who gave of their most precious treasures – symbols of the giving of themselves to the Christ Child. May these gifts be a source of light in places where your light and love are needed most. Amen.

Doxology 159

"As with Gladness Those of Old"

DIX

As they offered gifts most rare at that manger plain and bare,
So may we with holy joy, pure and free from sin's alloy,
All our costliest treasures bring, Christ, to you from whom they spring.

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation

One: Here at this table and in this sanctuary, let the Divine Spark enter our lives.

Many: **Let the Holy Light aid us in seeing the Christ in our midst.**

One: The Brightness of Jesus the Christ will illuminate our way.

Many: **The Radiance of the Christ will warm our hearts.**

One: God is shining upon you!

Many: **And God's light streams upon you!**

One: Open your hearts.

Many: **We open them to the brilliance of God.**

One: Let us give thanks for the light and love of God.

Many: **We praise our Creator with joy and thanksgiving.**

Prayer

Cheri Dennis

We enter this stunning space eager to experience the presence of the Christ. Notice the Christ in the cries of the children. Spot the Christ your neighbor's singing. Recognize the Christ in the laughter from the back of the sanctuary. The Christ is gleaming here, summoning us to share love and light as we greet our neighbors, share peace, pass the bread and cup, and love kindness across this earth.

On the night before Jesus died, when some were plotting to extinguish the Holy Light, warmth was shared between friends. Jesus took bread. In his blessing, he passed the Divine Glow to his followers. As he broke the bread, he reminded them to eat in remembrance of him.

Later that same evening, Jesus took the cup. He blessed it and invited his friends to taste from the cup of grace. "Do this, as often as you drink of this, for the remembrance of me."

Holy Spirit, may your Divine Glow bless this bread and cup. Warm our hearts made cold by a chilled world. May this meal inspire us to carry your warmth into our world. Amen.

Distribution of the Elements

Prayer of Thanksgiving (*in unison*)

God of Light and Love, we cherish this table in this season when the nights are long and cold. Through this meal, the Christ, and our neighbors, our hearts have warmed. May the comfort in our souls sustain us through winter and nudge us to create welcoming spaces for our neighbors. With gratitude, we leave here energized to kindle your love in this world. Amen.

Closing Hymn 157

“Brightest and Best”

MORNING STAR

Brightest and best of the stars of the morning,
Dawn on our midnight and lend us your aid.
Star of the East the horizon adorning,
Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

Cold on the cradle the dewdrops are shining,
God’s holy Child with the beasts of the stall;
Angels adore while this baby lies sleeping,
Maker and Monarch and Savior of all.

Shall we not offer our costly devotion,
Fragrance of Edom and offerings divine,
Gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean,
Myrrh from the forest or gold from the mine?

Vainly we offer each ample oblation,
Vainly with gifts would we favor secure;
Richer by far is the heart’s adoration,
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.

Benediction

Cheri Dennis

Benediction Response 159

DIX

Holy Jesus, every day, keep us in the narrow way;
And when mortal things are past, bring our ransomed souls at last.
Where they need no star to guide; where no clouds your glory hide.

Postlude

“March of the Magi”

arr. E. Broughton

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*Portions of this service adapted from *The Gift of Light: Service Prayers for Epiphany, January 6, 2022* written by Debbie Gline Allen, Commissioned Minister of Christian Formation, who serves as Minister of Faith Formation for the Southern New England Conference, and as the Director of its Faith Formation Leadership Program. The communion liturgy was written by Rev. Michelle L. Torigian*

Candid photographs and/or video recording share our work and witness and invite others into the fellowship of our congregation. Some pictures/video may be published in church print publications, on our website or on our official social media sites. If you do not wish to have your image published, please contact the church office by phone or email.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

Due to the increasing COVID positivity rate in our area, the leadership (Consistory, Worship & Music Team, and COVID Response Team) of Holy Covenant has decided that in-person worship will be canceled beginning Jan. 2, 2022, and going forward for a few weeks. We will continue to have 6-8 people in the sanctuary to provide live-streamed worship. Sojourners and the Mid-Week Bible Study classes will be virtual. Consistory and the COVID Response Team will meet next week to discuss protocol going forward.

We will monitor this closely and re-open for in-person worship as soon as it is safely possible. This is not what we hoped the new year would bring. We wish you a Happy and Blessed New Year!

SANDWICH BUILD, JANUARY 3, 10 AM - We Will Build It (Socially Distanced!)

Join us Monday, January 3rd at 10AM, for a safely distanced lunch making party for the clients of Roof Above. Separated stations will be set up. Masks and gloves will be required. We'll assemble 200 lunches to be delivered by noon! Questions? Contact Suzanne Lamorey, suzlam@yahoo.com or 704-654-7267.

SOJOURNERS CLASS SUNDAYS AT 9:45AM - Virtually NEXT Sunday, January 9

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 - Virtually

Let's gather virtually, Tuesday, January 4th.

Zoom Meeting ID: 813 0509 4538 Passcode: 728201

For more information, contact Laura Hankins 704-724-1105, laura@hankins-clt.us)

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

Brian Hankins, Henry Hankins, Laura Hankins,
Lisa Cloninger, Kathi Smith, Keith Dennis

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, Terry Raley-Dennis, Isabelle Reedy Powell, Jerry & Marion Rhyne, Cynthia Simpson, Mamie Stokes, Anita Taylor

Friends & Family Members

Marie Raley and family in the death of her brother, Tom Lowman (Jean Raley-Dennis), Aurora, Rachel & Ryan Christian (Beth Sharp), 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), Bob Lyon (Melissa Noll), Pat Key (Patti Key), Alec Kirchhoefner (Melissa Noll), Bob Lyon (Melissa Noll), Geraldine Mobley (Jeff Edwards-Knight), Michael & Chris Mele-Wagner (Dominic Ciciollo), Robbie Middleton (Holly Middleton & Dawn Schmitz), John Page (Martha Bomely), Janey Pernice (Dawn Simmons), Robert Plummer (Martha Bomely), Kyle Simmons (Dawn Simmons), Kathryn Vickery (Ed Vickery), Tim & Shannon Ward (Laura Hankins), Tamber Watson (Jeff Edwards-Knight), Wanda Williams (John Rapp), John Zastrow (Barb Schneller) Steve Zrebeic & Calvin (Jeff Edwards-Knight)

**The church office will be closed on Monday, January 3, 2022,
in observance of the New Year.**

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

Rev. Cheri Dennis, Interim Pastor

cherid@holycovenantucc.org, 704-519-6016

Jon Weddell, M.Div, MSW, Minister of Music

jon@holycovenantucc.org, 609-558-1637

Dawn Simmons, BSBF, Executive Assistant

office@holycovenantucc.org, 704-599-9810

Mailing address: PO Box 481285, Charlotte NC 28269

3501 West W.T. Harris Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28269-8510

www.holycovenantucc.org 704-599-9810