



Saint Vitalis Baptismal Font (5th/early 6th Century), Sbeitla Archeological Site, Tunisia

### *Silent Meditation*

“So I followed that preacher man down to the river  
And now I’m changed  
And now I’m stronger  
There must’ve been something in the water”  
~Carrie Underwood

“In baptism, we die. In baptism, we are invited to renounce and resist the evils of the world, to love our neighbors as ourselves, to respect the dignity of every human being. In baptism, we give our bodies and all that we do to God’s struggle for justice and peace for all people.”  
~Kelly Ryan

“But the truth is that the holiness of the baptized community consists in the habits of generosity, grace in speaking, and tenderhearted forgiveness. Imagine such an agenda for the church: generosity, grace, forgiveness. These are the marks of baptism, these are the marks of Jesus, these are the shapes of our new life in Christ.”  
~Walter Brueggemann

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

**HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST**

**January 9, 2022 10:55 am**

**Prelude “Shall We Gather at the River” by Lee Evans**

**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 Summons” KELVINGGROVE**

**Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?**

**Will you go where you don't know an never be the same?**

**Will you let my love be shown, will you let my name be known,**

**Will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?**

**Call to Worship**

**One: Sisters and brothers, today we recall: Jesus came to the waters of baptism.**

**Many: In baptism, our Creator claims us and frees us from the power of hatred and death.**

**One: In baptism we are joined to Christ and we are joined together in unity, recalling**

**Many: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”**

**One: It is the mark of acceptance into the church and the beginning of our growth into full Christian faith and discipleship.**

**Many: Therefore on this day, the whole church, the Body of Christ, remembers and celebrates.**

**All: Let us worship God!**

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

Hymn

“God is Calling through the Whisper”

W ŻŁOBIE LEŻY

God is calling through the whisper of the Spirit’s deepest sighs,  
Through the thrill of sudden beauties that can catch us by surprise.  
Flash of lightning crash of thunder; hush of stillness rush of wonder:  
God is calling - can you hear? God is calling - can you hear?

God is calling through the voices of our neighbors’ urgent prayers,  
Through their longing for redemption and for rescue from despair.  
Place of hurt or face of needing; strident cry or silent pleading:  
God is calling - can you hear? God is calling - can you hear?

God is calling through the music of sublime and human arts,  
Through the hymns of earth and angels, and the carols of our hearts.  
Lift of joy and gift of singing; days and nights our praises bringing:  
God is calling - can we hear? God is calling - can we hear?

Prayer of Confession (*in unison*) (*based on Isaiah 43: 1-2*)

Gracious God, we confess that too often we live as though we are fearful, not faithful. When we encounter the waters of chaos and confusion, we don’t easily pass through them, but we obsess about the height of the water instead of the sight of the other side. You promised to walk through the rivers with us. Help us believe. Forgive our unbelief.

Words of Assurance

One: Thus says the God who created you and formed us in God’s image: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.” This is the good news. You are forgiven.

Many: I belong to God.

Hymn 293

“Sweet, Sweet Spirit”

SWEET, SWEET SPIRIT

There’s a sweet, sweet spirit in this place,  
and I know that it’s the Spirit of the Lord;  
There are sweet expressions on each face,  
and I know they feel the presence of the Lord.

Refrain: Sweet Holy Spirit, sweet heavenly Dove,  
Stay right here with us, filling us with your love;  
And for these blessings we lift our hearts in praise  
Without a doubt we’ll know that we have been  
Revived when we shall leave this place.

There are blessings you cannot receive  
till you know the Spirit’s fullness and believe;  
You’re the one to profit when you say,  
“I am going to stay with Jesus all the way.” (R)

Children’s Message

Laura Hankins

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 “Be Now My Vision”

Be now my vision, O God of my heart;  
nothing surpasses the love you impart.  
You my best thought by day or by night,  
waking or sleeping, your presence my light.

## Hebrew Scripture

Isaiah 43:1-7

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life. Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; I will say to the north, "Give them up," and to the south, "Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth—everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

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

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

## Psalm 29

Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name; worship the Lord in holy splendor. The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord, over mighty waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars; the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon. He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox. The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forest bare; and in his temple all say, "Glory!" The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king forever. May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace!

## Gospel Lesson

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

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." Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

**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

"Hearing the Voice from Heaven"

Cheri Dennis

## REMEMBERING OUR BAPTISMAL PROMISES

**One:** Do you promise, by the grace of God, to be a disciple, to follow in the way of Jesus Christ, to resist oppression, to show love and justice, and to witness to the work and word of Jesus Christ, as best you are able?

Do you promise, according to the grace given to you, to grow in your faith and to be a faithful member of the church, celebrating Christ's presence and furthering God's mission in all the world?

Prayer of Recommitment

**All:** By your Spirit, Almighty God, Grant us love for others, joy in serving you, peace in disagreement, patience in suffering, kindness toward all people, goodness in evil times, faithfulness in temptation, gentleness in the face of opposition, self-control in all things. By your Spirit, strengthen us for ministry in your name. Amen.

Offering Dedication (*in unison*)

When we give our tithes and offerings, we are witnesses to the transforming love of God in Christ. Accept these gifts, we humbly pray, O God. Let them give you honor and glory as we serve the needs of your people. And let the called and redeemed of God say, "Amen".

\* Doxology

OLD HUNDREDTH

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God all creatures here below,  
Praise God above all heavenly hosts,  
Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost. Amen.

\* Hymn 351            "I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry"            by J. Ylvisaker

I was there to hear your borning cry,  
I'll be there when you are old.  
I rejoiced the day you were baptized,  
to see your life unfold.  
I was there when you were but a child,  
with a faith to suit you well;  
In a blaze of light you wandered off  
to find where demons dwell."

"When you heard the wonder of the Word  
I was there to cheer you on;  
You were raised to praise the living Lord,  
to whom you now belong.  
If you find someone to share your time  
and you join your hearts as one,  
I'll be there to make your verses rhyme  
from dusk 'till rising sun.

In the middle ages of your life,  
not too old, no longer young,  
I'll be there to guide you through the night,  
complete what I've begun.  
When the evening gently closes in,  
and you shut your weary eyes,  
I'll be there as I have always been  
with just one more surprise.

I was there to hear your borning cry,  
I'll be there when you are old.  
I rejoiced the day you were baptized,  
to see your life unfold.

Benediction

Cheri Dennis

Benediction Response

“The Summons”

KELVINGROVE

Lord, your summons echoes true when you but call my name!

Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.

In your company I'll go where your love and footsteps show.

Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

Postlude

“Take Me to the Water”

Af. American Spiritual

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

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*“I am God's Beloved!” Service Prayers for the First Sunday after Epiphany, was written by the Rev. Dr. David Bahr. The questions, affirmations and recommitment of the Remembrance of Baptism have been adapted from material in **Book of Worship**, © 1986 Office of Church Life and Leadership.*

*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

Members of Holy Covenant's Consistory, Worship & Music Team, and Covid Response Team met Jan. 4th to discuss options regarding in-person worship, meetings, and classes in light of COVID. With a current COVID positivity rate of 30% in Mecklenburg County, it was decided to suspend in-person worship, classes, and meetings through January. We will continue to monitor the positivity rate, looking for a rate of under 10% and on a downward trend. Rest assured that we all want to have in-person worship as soon as possible but we also need to look out for the health and welfare of all who worship with us. Thank you & God's blessings on the New Year. **Live-stream worship Sunday mornings at 10:55 AM** <https://holycovenantucc.org/virtual-hc/>

**THE ANNUAL GIVING STATEMENTS** have been mailed through the US Postal Service for your use in 2021 tax preparations. If you have any questions regarding your statement, please don't hesitate to contact Dawn in our church office, 704-599-9810 or [office@holycovenantucc.org](mailto:office@holycovenantucc.org). You truly make a difference in support of our ministries that are helping to transform our community and beyond.

**GRATITUDE FROM THE ANGEL TREE FAMILIES** all of the angels who helped to provide the children of our refugee families with an abundance of gifts as well as gift cards for the mamas. When we dropped off the presents at their apartment, there were so many smiles! Afterwards, I received these (translated) texts: "How beautiful! Thank you very much. To your families a thousand blessings. You have divine hearts. God bless you today and forever."

**THANK YOU FROM DAVID COX TEACHERS** for supporting the Holy Covenant DonorsChoose Giving Page! As of this writing Holy Covenant members have contributed \$846.00 and funded six David Cox Elementary classroom projects! These projects include classroom libraries, a story time carpet, and tools to develop students' social-emotional wellbeing. To read thank-you notes from funded David Cox teachers, click on the "[Funded Projects](#)" tab [here](#). And view this [video from DonorsChoose teachers](#) explaining what donor support meant to them in 2021.

### **SOJOURNERS CLASS SUNDAYS AT 9:45AM - Virtually Sundays in January**

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 12:15PM** - Virtually

Zoom Meeting ID: 813 0509 4538 Passcode: 728201

For more information, contact Laura Hankins 704-724-1105, [laura@hankins-clt.us](mailto: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](mailto:prayers@holycovenantucc.org).

**PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER**

**Members**

Anita Taylor and family in the death of her brother, Richard; 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

**Friends & Family Members**

Marie Raley and family in the death of her brother, Tom Lowman (Jean Raley-Dennis), Aurora, Rachel & Ryan Christian (Beth Sharp), David & Cecelia Griffin (JP Griffin), Pat Key (Patti Key), Alec Kirchhoefner (Melissa Noll), Bob Lyon (Melissa Noll), Geraldine Mobley (Jeff Edwards-Knight), Robbie Middleton (Holly Middleton & Dawn Schmitz), Janey Pernice (Dawn Simmons), Barbara Rutelonis (Eric Miner), Kyle Simmons (Dawn Simmons), Kathryn Vickery (Ed Vickery), Tamber Watson (Jeff Edwards-Knight), Wanda Williams (John Rapp), John Zastrow (Barb Schneller) Steve Zrebeic & Calvin (Jeff Edwards-Knight)

**OUR MINISTRY TEAM**

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**Jon Weddell, M.Div, MSW, Minister of Music** [jon@holycovenantucc.org](mailto:jon@holycovenantucc.org), 609-558-1637

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