



Silent Meditation

“The prophet engages in futuring fantasy. The prophet does not ask if the vision can be implemented, for questions of implementation are of no consequence until the vision can be imagined. The imagination must come before the implementation.”

“To participate in the Eucharist is to live inside God’s imagination. It is to be caught up into what is really real, the body of Christ.”

“As every vibrant subcommunity knows, the defining prerequisite for such a subcommunity is a conviction that it can and will be different because of the purposes of God that will not relent.”

Walter Brueggemann

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

HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

March 6, 2022 10:55 am

Prelude "How Can I Keep from Singing" Ensemble
(Robert Lowry, arr. Kathleen Blackwell-Plank)

Chiming of the Hour

Welcome and Announcements Cheri Dennis
One: May the Peace of God be with you.
Many: **And also with you.**

Introit "Breathe on Me, Breath of God" Ensemble
(Robert Jackson, arr. Kathleen Blackwell-Plank)

* Call to Worship

One: Life is a journey, an everyday workshop for learning love, a continual opportunity to learn the way of peace.

Many: **We travel together, "seeking to do justice, to act mercifully, to walk humbly with God."**

One: We cherish this community, which offers us a context for our personal transformation and support for our political and social involvement in the transformation of the world.

Many: **We are brought together in the Spirit of God, to listen to each other's stories, to share each other's pain, to celebrate each other's joys, to acknowledge our complicity in the state of the world, to grow in grace, to receive forgiveness and to offer it to one another, to practice reconciliation and to demonstrate the authentic community of God.**

All: Let us worship together. Let us sing; let our hearts dance; let our spirits weep; let our hearts laugh, let our minds clear, let our bodies be renewed; let our lives flow; let the journey continue.

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

Hymn 24

“The God of Abraham Praise”

LEONI

The God of Abraham praise, all praises to God’s name
Who was and is and is to be, for-e’er the same!
The one eternal God, before what now appears;
The First, the Last: beyond all thought through timeless years!

God’s spirit freely flows, high surging where it will;
God spoke of old in prophet’s word; that word speaks still.
Established is God’s law, and changeless it shall stand,
Deep written on the human heart, in every land.

God has eternal life implanted in the soul;
God’s love shall be our strength and stay, while ages roll.
All praise the living God! Extol that hallowed name,
Who was, and is, and ever shall be still the same!

The God of Sarah praise, all praises to God’s name,
Who was and is and is to be, fore’er the same!
The one eternal God, before what now appears;
The First, the Last: beyond all thought through timeless years!

Prayer of Confession

God, who formed the world and all that is in it and called it *good*, we ask your forgiveness for our actions, both known and unknown, that destroy your creation. We ask your forgiveness for accepting homelessness instead of asking why people are homeless. For accepting poverty instead of asking why all people cannot be guaranteed a livable minimum wage. For accepting racism instead of learning how to become anti-racist. For accepting that people die from lack of adequate accessible healthcare instead of demanding healthcare for all from those with the power to make this happen. For accepting war instead of standing up to those individuals and corporations who gain financially from war. We ask your forgiveness of our easy acceptance of the ways things are instead of standing up for change so that you may once again look at your creation and call it good. O God, forgive us.

Song

“God, Be Merciful to Me”

REDHEAD 76

God be merciful to me; on your grace I rest my plea.
My transgressions I confess; grief and guilt my soul oppress.
Wash me, make me pure within; cleanse, O cleanse me from my sin.

Words of Assurance

Cheri Dennis

God hears our prayer of confession. By God's abundant grace and mercy, we are forgiven. May we now trust that God is with us as we work for justice and peace in this world. Amen.

Response

"Nothing Can Trouble"

TAIZE

Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten.

Those who seek God shall never go wanting.

Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten. God alone fills us.

Children's Message

Laura Hankins

Special Music

"Wondrous Love"

Ensemble

(Christopher James, arr. Kathleen Blackwell-Plank)

Pastoral Prayer

Cheri Dennis

Prayer for Illumination

"Return to God"

M. HAUGEN

Return to God with all your heart, the source of grace and mercy.

Come seek the tender faithfulness of God.

Old Testament Reading

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

When you have come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, 'Today I declare to the LORD your God that I have come into the land that the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us.' When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the Lord your God, you shall make this response before the Lord your God: 'A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that

you, O Lord, have given me.’ You shall set it down before the Lord your God and bow down before the Lord your God. Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house.

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

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

Song

“On Eagle’s Wings”
(based on Psalm 91)

M. Joncas

You who dwell in the shelter of the Lord,
who abide in God’s shadow for life,
Say to the Lord: “My refuge,
My Rock in whom I trust!”

Refrain:

And God will raise you up on eagle’s wings, bear you on the breath of dawn,
Make you to shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of God’s hand.

The snare of the fowler will never capture you,
And famine will bring you no fear;
Under God’s wings your refuge,
God’s faithfulness your shield. *(R)*

You need not fear the terror of the night,
Nor the arrow that flies by day;
Though thousands fall about you,
Near you it shall not come. *(R)*

For to the angels God’s given a command
To guard you in all of your ways;
Upon their hands they will bear you up,
Lest you dash your foot against a stone. *(R)*

Gospel Reading

Luke 4:1-13

Cheri Dennis

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.’ Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, “One does not live by bread alone.”’

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, 'To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.' Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."' Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you", and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."' Jesus answered him, 'It is said, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."' When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

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

Many: Thanks be to God.

Sermon

"Temptation, Trust, Transformation"

Cheri Dennis

Offering Dedication (*in unison*)

Holy Stream of Gifts, we share our gratitude for all of our fruits - from our possessions to knowledge and from our time to abilities. May our "best" be something that we do not hoard but that we freely give away. As we embrace this season of fasting and reflection, may we recognize the best of our talents, treasures, and time and share with God and neighbor. Amen.

* Doxology

"Give Thanks"

**Give thanks with a grateful heart; give thanks to the Holy One;
Give thanks because God's given Jesus Christ, God's Son. (2x)**

And now let the weak say, "I am strong,"

Let the poor say, "I am rich because of what the Lord has done for us." (2x)

Give Thanks.

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

One: The Holy One be with you.

Many: And also with you.

One: Open your hearts to the One who is Love.

Many: We open our hearts to you, O God.

One: Let us give thanks to God, who gives us courage.

Many: To the One who calls us to lives of service, we give thanks and praise.

One: From our beginning, you shaped us to live in service to one another and all the earth. You set us in the garden to co-create life with you. You surrounded us with creatures and creations that depend on our care. Our destinies have always been wrapped up in one another - our individual well-being bound to the well-being of all. Therefore, we join our voices with your people on earth and all the company of the heavens, singing praise to you:

Many: φ **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest, Hosanna in the highest!**

One: Gracious One, we struggle with spirits of fear and greed that tempt us away from your original plan for us. We excuse ourselves from responsibilities to our neighbors. We struggle to believe we have anything to offer to the whole. And at times we knowingly do harm to others for the sake of our own gain.

You know our struggles, O God. And so, you sent us Jesus. In him we learn how to show up for one another. Jesus lived in service to collective well-being. He sought out those in need of community. He befriended the ones who were isolated. He challenged the structures that destroy.

Through his life, you taught us that the same capacities live in us. We too can choose the way of service to collective life. You have given each of us gifts to play our part. The same spirit of courage that kept Jesus proclaiming love even in the face of death lives in us.

On the night of his arrest, Jesus shared a meal with his companions. He took bread, blessed it, broke it, gave it to his disciples and said: "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

After the meal, he took the cup, blessed it, and shared it saying: "This cup that is poured out is the new covenant."

In remembrance of all you have done to save us, we proclaim the mystery of our faith:

Many: **Christ was birthed among us. Christ was killed among us. Christ rises again among us.**

One: Pour out your Spirit on these gifts and make this bread and this cup sustenance for our Lenten journey. By your grace, may we

experience anew the call you place on our lives to serve one another. In feasting at your table, may our hearts be filled with courage once again to follow Christ, come what may. In collective longing for a taste of your Kingdom on earth, we join together in echoing the prayer of Jesus:

Many: Our Creator, who art in heaven, hallowed 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. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Distribution of Elements

Prayer After Communion (*in unison*)

God, your bread and your cup renew our spirits. No matter the times we have failed to show up to your call, or to our own needs, or to the cries of our neighbors, you receive us again. May your unending grace be our foundation as we journey with Christ towards justice. Amen.

Hymn 211 “Lord Jesus, Who Through Forty Days” ST. FLAVIAN
**Lord Jesus, who through forty days for us did fast and pray,
Teach us with you to mourn our sins, and close by you to stay.**

**As you with Satan did contend, and did the victory win,
O give us strength to persevere, in you to conquer sin.**

**And through these days of penitence, and through this Passiontide,
Yes, evermore, in life and death, O Christ, with us abide.**

**Abide with us, till when this life of suffering shall past,
An Easter of unending joy we may attain at last.**

* Benediction

Cheri Dennis

* Benediction Response 497 “Guide My Feet”
**Guide my feet while I run this race, (3x)
For I don’t want to run this race in vain.**

Postlude

“Adagio, Op. 11”
(Samuel Barber, arr. Jerry Lanning)
Kathleen Blackwell-Plank, violin, Karl Plank, piano

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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.



Holy Covenant begins our observance of Lent on Wednesday, March 2, with the Ash Wednesday service. In addition to our regular Sunday morning services, there will be some Lenten disciplines and opportunities; more information will be forthcoming. As in previous years, daily meditations from the UCC's Stillspeaking Writer's Group will be posted on the Holy Covenant UCC Community Facebook group & also the church's website. Additionally, we will make available print copies of the daily meditation guide for those who prefer or need that.

Lent is often associated with giving up something, such as a food or a habit. It seems that we have all given up, although not voluntarily, too many things in the past two years. If giving up chocolate or alcohol works for you as a way to move toward mindfulness, then do that. But some find it helpful to add a practice, such as a daily walk or writing time, to create a positive space for reflection. So if that works for you, do that. A Facebook page called Doubting Believer advocates, especially now, the concept of a gentle Lent. The purpose of Lent is to prepare us for the joy of Easter, to give us a glimpse of the love Christ has for us and put us in a space to receive the gift of new life to which we awaken on Easter and every morning.

Lent: Wednesday, March 2—Saturday, April 16

Palm Sunday: April 10

Maundy Thursday: April 14

Easter (Resurrection) Sunday: April 17

How will you renew your spirit this Lenten season?

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

We thank harpists from the Charlotte Chapter of the American Harp Society for sharing their gifts: Kathleen Blackwell-Plank, Anne Olson, and Kristin Andes; and violinist Karl Plank.

TUESDAY ACTIVITIES AT HCUCC!

CRAFTER'S CIRCLE TUESDAYS 1:30 - 3:30

Join us in the gathering room on Tuesdays at 1:30. Bring a craft, share a craft, or learn a craft in a judgement free zone. Masks are required.

LENTEN LABYRINTH WALK AND MEDITATION TUESDAYS FROM 12:00 TO 12:30

We'll meet in the Memorial Garden at noon for quiet mediation and labyrinth time. In the event of rain, we'll gather in the sanctuary.

SOJOURNERS CLASS SUNDAYS AT 9:45AM

Everyone is welcome to join us both in-person or via Zoom at 9:45 Sunday mornings by clicking [here](#): or go to www.zoom.us. Meeting ID: 876 7340 9762 and Passcode: 523903. For more information, contact Cheri Dennis (704-519-6016, cherid@holycovenantucc.org)

MID-WEEK BIBLE STUDY, MOVES TO EVENINGS, TUESDAYS, 7-8 PM

Starting next Tuesday, March 8th from 7-8pm. We'll be wrapping up our study of the book of Romans and discussing the documentary The Last Apostle,

<https://tubitv.com/movies/568088/the-last-apostle> Please read Romans chapters 13-16. After Romans we'll be studying the book of Galatians. All are welcome! [Click here to join](#) Meeting ID: 838 2132 7252 Passcode: 942373

Questions? Contact Laura Hankins, laura@hankins-clt.us.

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, Jon & Linda Heaslet, Jim Hong, Helen Lambert, Karen Long, Irene Mikkelson, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Isabelle Reedy Powell, Jerry & Marion Rhyne, Anita Taylor, Kathleen Wagner

Friends & Family Members

Faye Blakely (Diane Neese), Aurora, Rachel & Ryan Christian (Beth Sharp), Nikki Echeverri (Melissa Noll), Alicia Gibson (Jim Hong), David & Cecelia Griffin (JP Griffin), Donetta Halley (Ed Vickery), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Pat Key (Patti Key), Alec Kirchhoefner (Melissa Noll), Bob Lyon (Melissa Noll), Geraldine Mobley (Jeff Edwards-Knight), Janey Pernice (Dawn Simmons), Mary Ellen Rice (Kathleen Wagner), 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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