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Meditation

“To love abundantly is to live abundantly,
and to love forever is to live forever.”

~ Henry Drummond

“Lose yourself in generous service
and every day can be a most unusual day,
a triumphant day, an abundantly rewarding day.”

~ William Arthur Ward

“In a world where you can be anything, be yourself.”

~ Etta Turner

“The privilege of a lifetime is to become who you truly are.”

~ C.G. Jung

**HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

September 4, 2022 10:55 am

Prelude "You Satisfy the Hungry Heart" arr. A. M. David

Chiming of the Hour

Welcome and Announcements Gregg Walker

One: May the peace of God be with you.

Many: And also with you.

Introit "Let Us Adore" J. Chajes

Lower Voices:

Let us adore
the ever-living God
and render praise
unto God,
who spread out the heavens
and established the earth
and whose glory
is revealed in the heavens above
and whose greatness

Upper Voices:

Let us adore
the ever-living God
and render praise
unto God,
who spread out the heavens
and established the earth
and whose glory
in the heavens above
and whose greatness

All: Is manifest throughout all the earth.
You are our God. There is none else.

* Call to Worship Jeffery Edwards-Knight

One: Look around. What wonders we behold!

Many: We see others, gathered here to worship and praise God.

One: Each person here is a unique, beloved creation of God.

Many: Each person here is given special gifts and talents by God.

One: Come, let us worship God who has blessed us so mightily.

All: Let us praise God with our whole hearts, souls, minds, and spirits.

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

* Invocation (*unison*)

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

One: Let us pray.

Many: Loving Creator, maker of everything good, we are in your hands.
Be with us now as we gather ourselves to seek your wisdom and
strive to become the people you would have us be.

* Hymn

"We Gather Here in Jesus' Name"

COME SHARE THE LORD

We gather here in Jesus' name.

Christ's love is burning in our hearts like living flame.

For through Christ's sacrifice, the whole wide world unites.

Come, take the bread; come, drink the wine; come, share the Lord.

No one is a stranger here; everyone belongs.

Finding our forgiveness here, we in turn forgive all wrongs.

Christ joins us here and breaks the bread.

Our God who pours the cup is risen from the dead.

The one we love the most is now our gracious host.

Come, take the bread; come, drink the wine; come, share the Lord.

We are now a family of which our God is Head.

Though unseen, Christ meets us here in the breaking of the bread.

We'll gather soon, in glory rise.

We'll see the wonder of our God and of our Christ.

Now we anticipate the feast for which we wait.

Come, take the bread; come, drink the wine; come, share the Lord.

Prayer of Confession (*unison*)

Unlike clay, we actively resist the diverse ways you shape us into what the world needs. We frequently struggle to trust in your vision for who we could become. We anxiously avoid facing the heat that protects and sustains us. We humbly confess to these and all our shortcomings.

Hymn 502

"Dear God, Embracing Humankind"

REST

Dear God, embracing humankind, forgive our foolish ways;

Re-clothe us in our rightful mind, in purer lives your service find,

In deeper reverence, praise.

Breathe through the pulses of desire your coolness and your balm;

Let sense be numb, let flesh retire;

Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,

O still, small voice of calm.

Words of Assurance

Gregg Walker

God graciously chooses us despite our self-destructive ways. God repeatedly mends our broken places and unceasingly delivers us from harm toward wholeness. All thanks be to God!

Song

GOODNESS IS STRONGER

**Goodness is stronger than evil; love is stronger than hate;
Light is stronger than darkness; life is stronger than death.**

Victory is ours; victory is ours through God who loves us. (2x)

Children's Message

Laura Hankins

Pastoral Prayer

Gregg Walker

Special Music

"God Weeps"

S. E. Murray/M. A. Miller

Eric Miner, Ed Vickery, vocalists

*God weeps at love withheld, at strength misused,
At children's innocence abused,
And till we change the way we love, God weeps.*

*God bleeds at anger's fist, at trust betrayed,
At women battered and afraid,
And till we change the way we win, God bleeds.*

*God cries at hungry mouths, at running sores,
At creatures dying without cause,
And till we change the way we care, God cries.*

*God waits for stones to melt, for peace to seed,
For hearts to hold each other's need,
And till we understand the Christ, God waits.*

The Prayer of Jesus (*unison*)

Gregg Walker

Loving God, through the Spirit's revelation, may Your true nature be honored everywhere. May Your reign of love come. May desire of Your heart for the world be done, in us, by us and through us in the power of the Spirit. Give us the bread we need for each day. Forgive us. Enable us to forgive others. Keep us from all anxiety and fear. For You reign in the power that comes from love which is Your glory forever and ever. Amen.

Prayer for Illumination (*sung*)

OPEN OUR EYES

Open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus,
to reach out and touch you and say that we love you.
Open our ears, Lord, and help us to listen.
Open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus.

Hebrew Scripture

Psalm 139:1-6,13-18

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.
For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.
My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.
How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
I try to count them—they are more than the sand;
I come to the end—I am still with you.

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

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

Hebrew Scripture

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Gregg Walker

See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the Lord your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

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

“Choose Life - Your Authentic, Abundant Life”

Gregg Walker

Invitation to Generosity

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

The cost of discipleship is bold and radical. It requires a countercultural giving of possessions and self. We risk the safety of the ordinary and choose to build with God when we share our tithes, offerings, and our very selves. Let us now dedicate the gifts we’ve received to the work of building God’s kingdom.

Prayer of Dedication and Thanksgiving (*unison*)

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

Holy Giver of all Gifts, we thank you for the opportunity to share our gifts and participate in the various ministries you’ve placed before this faith community. Bless the gifts this church has received and each one of us as we go back out to continue your work in the world. Amen.

* Doxology

I HEAR ANGELS

“Holy, holy, God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come”

All creation is bringing glory to the Lamb who sits upon the throne.

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

* Preparation

Gregg Walker

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: We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify: Join with me now in the UCC Statement of Faith

You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death.

You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

You promise to all who trust you forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you. Amen.

Words of Institution

As Jesus was at the table with his friends, he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

Pour out your Spirit on these gifts and make this bread and this cup sustenance for our 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 the Risen Christ, come what may.

Distribution of Elements

Prayer after Communion (*unison*)

Gregg Walker

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

“You Satisfy the Hungry Heart”

FINEST WHEAT

*You satisfy the hungry heart with gift of finest wheat;
Come give to us, O saving Lord, the bread of life to eat.*

As when the shepherd calls his sheep, they know and heed his voice;
So when you call your family, Lord, we follow and rejoice. (R)

With joyful lips, we sing to you our praise and gratitude
That you should count us worthy, Lord, to share this heavenly food. (R)

Is not the cup we bless and share the blood of Christ outpoured?
Do not one cup, one loaf, declare our oneness in the Lord? (R)

The mystery of your presence, Lord, no mortal tongue can tell:
Whom all the world cannot contain comes in our hearts to dwell. (R)

You give yourself to us, O Lord; then selfless let us be,
To serve each other in your name in truth and charity. (R)

* Benediction

Gregg Walker

* Benediction Response

SIZOHAMBA NAYE

We will walk with God, my brothers; we will walk with God.
We will walk with God, my sisters; we will walk with God.
We will go rejoicing till the kin-dom has come.
We will go rejoicing till the kin-dom has come.

Postlude

“Come, Share the Lord”

B. J. Leech

*Songs in this service are used by Permission.
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Like Clay: Service Prayers for the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost were written by The Rev. Phiwa Langeni, the Ambassador for Innovation & Engagement for the UCC's CARDD and the Founder of Salus Center in Lansing, MI.

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.

WE PROVIDE OUR EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME WITH HELP FROM:

Martha Bomely, Keith Dennis, Brian Hankins,
Henry Hankins, JoAnn Jellison, Suzanne Lamorey, Shakti Subramanian

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

IN PERSON ACTIVITIES UPDATE

The Consistory continues to closely monitor COVID trends. Out of an abundance of caution, masks will continue to be required during Sunday worship services and all indoor church activities until further notice. We encourage attendees who are immunocompromised or fall into any other higher risk groups to use their discretion as to whether to attend in-person church activities. We will continue to spread out seating in the sanctuary during worship and will have cleaning supplies and hand sanitizer available at several points in the building. Live-streaming will continue for weekly worship services as always. Please contact Consistory President Lisa Cloninger if you have any questions or concerns, lisa@holycovenantucc.org, or 704-516-0322.

WELCOME BACK REV. GREGG WALKER

Rev. Gregg Walker is ordained in the UCC and is a member of Holy Covenant. He and Pastor Cheri are fellow alumni of Union Presbyterian Seminary. Gregg works as a chaplain at Novant Health Matthews Medical Center. Gregg is married to Ann and they have 3 sons, all of whom got married in 2021.

HYGIENE KIT BUILD AFTER WORSHIP TODAY

We need you to help fill hygiene bags for the migrants at the bus station **after worship**. Many hands make light work, and fun fellowship too!

CHANGEMAKER TRAINING: CONSENT AND BODY SAFETY

Join Brave Step and author and advocate Jayneen Sanders, Sept 6 at 7pm to gain knowledge and skills that will empower you on the topic of consent and body safety. Register for free now at <https://bravestep.org/> to get the Zoom link.



SUNDAY, SEPT. 11, 2022 AT 2:00PM IN OUR SANCTUARY.

Mark your calendars now for a viewing of this locally produced documentary about living without a home. For three years, a group of people experiencing homelessness met weekly to create this film documentary about living on the street in Charlotte. Holy Covenant is pleased to host a viewing of this film on Sept 11 at 2PM. Watch the trailer of this documentary at:

<http://www.playworksonline.org/p/streetsmarts.html#>

Following the documentary, there will be a 30-minute TalkBack with local folks who had a hand in creating this film. A light lunch will be provided for those who wish to “hang around and fellowship” between worship & the showing.

CHOIR RETURNS SOON! Be ready. More info next week.

IT'S TIME TO FILL THE WICKER BASKET* & SHOPPING CART**

Children & college folk are back in school so it's time to share our resources, fill their stomachs, and clothe their bodies. Holy Covenant supports the *Jamil Niner Student Pantry at UNCC and the **Backpack Ministry at University City United

Methodist Church supporting David Cox Elementary School. Check our electronic newsletter for lists of items needed.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

If you wish to add someone to the list, please send a note to
prayers@holycovenantucc.org.

Members

Keith & Cheri Dennis in the death of Keith's mother, Helen Dennis
Cindy Coble, Kevin Decker, Linn Finger, Tom & Kathy Habel, Jim Hong, Helen Lambert, Sharon Landis, Irene Mikkelson, Cheryl Milam, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Isabelle Reddy Powell, Jerry & Marion Rhyne, Bill & Jan Seaman, Cynthia & Tommy Simpson, Anita Taylor

Friends & Family Members

Laura Christian (Beth Sharp), Alicia Gibson (Jim Hong), David & Cecelia Griffin (JP Griffin), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Marta Kosinska & Jon Spencer (Lloyd & Gussie Spencer), Jane Kelly, Darin & Kristen Jellison (JoAnn Jellison) Geraldine Mobley (Jeff Edwards-Knight), Joe Parks (Beth Christian Sharp), Jerry & Marie Raley (Jean Raley-Dennis), Barbara Rutelonis (Eric Miner), Kathryn Vickery (Ed Vickery), Joyce Ward (Ed Vickery), Tamber Watson (Jeff Edwards-Knight), John Zastrow (Barb Schneller), Paul Zinkann (Pam Zinkann), Steve Zrebeic & Calvin (Jeff Edwards-Knight)

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

Rev. Cheri Dennis, Interim Pastor

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

Dawn Simmons, BSBF, Executive Assistant

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