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Cristobal Baeza on Unsplash*



Meditation

“No one ever says it’ll be easy. All you can do is close your eyes and feel the wind sweep through your hair and savor the salty, sweet treats life tosses in your direction. Don’t become bitter, and never ever hold on too tight, because you’ll not only blister your hands, you’ll choke the precious love you hold within them.”

– Alexia Purdy

“May your trails be crooked, winding, lonesome, dangerous, leading to the most amazing view.”

– Edward Abbey

**“The pessimist complains about the wind;
the optimist expects it to change;
the realist adjusts the sails.”**

– William Arthur Ward

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

September 11, 2022 10:55 am

Prelude "In This Very Room" R. Harris

Chiming of the Hour

Welcome and Announcements Cheri Dennis

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 Meg Houlihan

One: Come, Beloved of God, the blistering wind of life is not the end.

Many: **May the eye of the storm still us into wholeness and hope.**

One: May the wind of God, turn us around toward trust in Holy promises.

Many: **May our promises to God be pressed anew into our hearts and minds.**

One: May everything of excess be released and refined for Love's good work.

Many: **May God's vision of a world made new arise from God's wind in and through us.**

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

* Invocation (*unison*)

Meg Houlihan

O Holy Wind of God, sweep through our lives. Pause us into your presence, slowing our breathless pace. Refine in us a renewed willingness to bear gracious goodness into the chaos of the world. Let our memories on this day, call forth an alternative to the easy response of violence for violence. Form instead a steady commitment to return love in the face of fear, hope in the midst of despair, and mercy for every brokenness of the world's design. By this, form anew the heart and mind of Christ in us, here, now, today.

* Hymn 4

“Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You”

HYMN OF JOY

Joyful, joyful, we adore you, God of glory, God of love;
Hearts unfold like flowers before you, opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness, drive the storms of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day.

All your works with joy surround you, earth and heaven reflect your rays,
Stars and angels sing around you, center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing sea,
Chanting bird and flowing fountain, teach us what our praise should be.

You are giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blessed,
Wellspring of the joy of living, ocean depth of happy rest!
Loving Spirit, Father, Mother, all who love belong to you;
Teach us how to love each other, by that love our joy renew.

Mortals, join the mighty chorus which the morning stars began;
Boundless love is reigning o'er us, reconciling race and clan.
Ever singing, move we forward, faithful in the midst of strife,
Joyful music leads us onward in the triumph song of life.

Prayer for Transformation and New Life (*Based on Psalm 51*) (*unison*)

O God, have mercy on me because transgressions and wrong turns have too often been my daily detour. Wash me inside and out with the shower of Your love because my life carries a residue of regret I cannot shake loose on my own. I know myself too well, rehearsing littleness of spirit with a frequency surprising even to me. Now take every burden that crushes and form in me a new creation. Take every iniquity and instill your sweet song of forgiveness. Let your wisdom rise in my mind and your mercy in my heart that I may offer the same grace to others whom you also love. By this grace you give, mend not only me but the world. And may Your loving truth form a new creation in us all.

Hymn 502

“Dear God, Embracing Humankind”

REST

In simple trust like theirs who heard, beside the Syrian sea,
The gracious calling of your word, let us, like them, by spirit stirred,
Rise up and followers be.

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 Grace

Cheri Dennis

Hear this good news: God’s memory of our misdeeds and misdirection is short. But God’s loving grace is long and stretches over our whole lives. In Christ Jesus, God has let loose a stream of love that perpetually flows as a patient, persistent, power. By this, God has forgiven us and invites you and me to join in the journey of justice and joy. May this blessed forgiveness multiply itself in our life with others. 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

Cheri Dennis

Song

“God Weeps”

S. E. Murray/M.A. Miller

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 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*)

Cheri Dennis

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.

Reading from Psalms

Psalm 51:1-10

Meg Houlihan

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgement.
Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
One: May we hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church;
Many: Open our ears, our hearts, our minds.

* Gospel Lesson

Luke 15:1-10

Cheri Dennis

Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.' So he told them this parable: 'Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost." Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance. 'Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost." Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.'

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

"Joy"

Cheri Dennis

Invitation to Generosity

Meg Houlihan

Our lives are gifts not of our making. But by our consent to Love's deep desire we are indeed remade. God is generous in this way, searching out every lost sheep or coin or beloved child until the fullness of joy rises in celebration. So we are invited to share in the sacred savoring that comes with self-giving that begins and ends in God. May our yes of giving grow Love's delight in us.

Prayer of Dedication and Thanksgiving (*unison*)

Meg Houlihan

**O Love, stretch wide my heart, open my mind, saturate my soul
and form me anew in the gift of this day.**

Let thanksgivings rise for miracles you place in my path at every turn.

**Call forth awe at the miracle of life stirring all around
and within this body not of my making,**

but given by You to steward Your love for a season short or long.

**"Yes...thank you...Love," let this be my prayer, even as words fail
to capture You in me and in all creation**

seen and unseen and beyond what eye can see

But which soul can sense in silences beyond words.

Yes, Love, stretch wide my heart for this. And thank-you. 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.
- * Hymn 478 SPIRITUAL
 “I’ve Got Peace Like a River”
 I’ve got peace like a river (3x) in my soul. *(Repeat)*
 I’ve got joy like a fountain (3x) in my soul. *(Repeat)*
 I’ve got love like an ocean (3x) in my soul. *(Repeat)*
- * Benediction Cheri Dennis
- * 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 W.G. Tomer
 “God Be with You”

*Songs in this service are used by Permission.
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A Blistering Wind: Service Prayers for the 14th Sunday after Pentecost - Proper 19 were written by Rev. Dr. David Long-Higgins, Conference Minister of the Heartland Conference, United Church of Christ.

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, Deb Winston, Laurence Winston

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.



TODAY AT 2:00PM IN OUR SANCTUARY.

Plan to stay for the 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 today at 2pm. 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. This will also be **live-streamed** on the church's website. Those wishing to submit questions to the panelists can do so when TalkBack is opened via email laura@hankins-clt.us or 704-724-1105.

SETTLED PASTOR SEARCH UPDATE-LISTENING SESSIONS PLANNED

SEPT 14, 15 & 17

Please check your email for Thursday's update and announcement of the planned Listening Sessions. Every member is invited and encouraged to participate. <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f094aa9ab2fa2fd0-holy>

CHOIR REHEARSALS RETURN SEPTEMBER 18

All are welcome to our first rehearsal September 18th following worship.

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.

2022 UNION COUNTY PRIDE IN THE PARK SEPT 18, 11AM-6PM

Members of Holy Covenant are invited to show Christian support for the LGBTQIA+ community and supportive churches in Union County at the very first Pride in the Park Celebration. Interested in showing your pride? Contact the church office, office@holycovenantucc.org or 704-599-9810. Supplies are ready. For more information, contact Karen Harbin, 704-728-8806 or karen.e.goforth.harbin@gmail.com.

USHERS, GREETERS, LITURGISTS & COMMUNION SERVERS

Please sign up on the SignUpGenius link:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C44ACAD23A2FE3-ushers>

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), Troy & Julia Smith (Robert Shepherd), 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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