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### Silent Meditation

“In the ritual of baptism, our ancestors acted out the bizarre truth of the Christian identity: We are people who stand totally exposed before evil and death and declare them powerless against love. There’s nothing normal about that.”

— Rachel Held Evans

“O let all who thirst  
Let them come to the water  
And let all who have nothing  
Let them come to the Lord”

— Matt Maher

“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

**HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
BAPTISM OF CHRIST / FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY**

January 8, 2023 10:55 am

Prelude "Seek Ye First" arr. J. Purifoy

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 "Holy Ground" Beatty/Davis

This is holy ground. We're standing on holy ground.

For our God is present and where God is is holy. (2x)

We are standing on holy ground,

And I know that there are angels all around.

Let us praise Jesus now.

We are standing in God's presence on holy ground.

\* Call to Worship (*inspired by Psalm 29*) Laura Hankins

One: Give glory to the Creator and bow in holy splendor!

Many: The voice of the Creator renews and rebirths.

One: Give glory to the Holy One and bow in holy splendor!

Many: The voice of the Holy One redeems and restores.

One: Give glory to the Living Water and bow in holy splendor!

Many: The voice of the Living Water refreshes and revives. Glory to God!

Invocation (*unison*) Laura Hankins

Voice, Body, and Spirit, you make your presence among us. We receive your love and affirmation. We cherish your guidance and direction. We follow your path and example. Remind us of our connection to you and your covenantal relationship with us. Wash us in the baptized life for renewal and revitalization. Amen.

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

\* Hymn

“Sing of God Made Manifest”

SALZBURG

Sing of God made manifest in a child robust and blest,  
To whose home in Bethlehem where a star had guided them,  
Magi came and gifts unbound, signs mysterious and profound:  
Myrrh and frankincense and gold grave and God and king foretold.

Sing of God made manifest when at Jordan John confessed,  
“I should be baptized by you, but your bidding I will do.”  
Then from heaven a double sign— dove-like Spirit, voice divine—  
Hailed the true Anointed One: “This is my beloved Son.”

Sing of God made manifest when Christ came as wedding guest  
And at Cana gave a sign, turning water into wine;  
Further still was love revealed as he taught, forgave, and healed,  
Bringing light and life to all who would listen to God’s call.

Sing of God made manifest on the cloud-capped mountain’s crest,  
Where the law and prophets waned so that Christ alone remained:  
Glimpse of glory, pledge of grace, given as Jesus set his face  
Towards the waiting cross and grave, sign of hope that God would save.

Prayer for Transformation and New Life (*unison*)

Cheri Dennis

Holy One, we confess our need for grace and mercy. We seek forgiveness for the ways in which we have drawn away from you and our neighbors. We express remorse for our participation in the systems of the world that are actively opposed to your kingdom. Transform us to be carriers and promoters of your good news of new life, liberation, and hope in the world. Amen.

Words of Grace

Cheri Dennis

The God of peace is faithful to offer forgiveness and new life in Christ. Receive the good news of new mercies with each new day and a future with hope.

Hymn 177

“God of Change and Glory”

KATHERINE

God of change and glory, God of time and space,  
When we fear the future, give to us your grace.  
In the midst of changing ways give us still the grace to praise.

*Refrain:* Many gifts, one Spirit, one love known in many ways.  
In our difference is blessing, from diversity we praise  
One Giver, one Word, one Spirit, one God  
Known in many ways, hallowing our days.  
For the Giver, for the gifts, praise, praise, praise!

God of many colors, God of many signs,  
You have made us different, blessing many kinds.  
As the old ways disappear, let your love cast out our fear. (R)

Freshness of the morning, newness of each night,  
You are still creating endless love and light.  
This we see, as shadows part, many gifts from one great heart. (R)

Stories for All People

Laura Hankins

Pastoral Prayer

Cheri Dennis

The Lord's Prayer

Manny Santiago

Our Parent, who is among us, blessed be your Creation. May your reign be a reality here on earth. May we become more interested in building your kingdom here and now than in waiting for it to come down from above. Let us share our bread with those who hunger. Let us learn to forgive as well as to receive forgiveness. Help us through the time of temptation, delivering us from all evil. For ours are the eternal blessings that you pour upon the earth. Amen.

Here is my servant, whom I uphold,  
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;  
I have put my spirit upon him;  
he will bring forth justice to the nations.  
He will not cry or lift up his voice,  
or make it heard in the street;  
a bruised reed he will not break,  
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;  
he will faithfully bring forth justice.  
He will not grow faint or be crushed  
until he has established justice in the earth;  
and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

Thus says God, the Lord,  
who created the heavens and stretched them out,  
who spread out the earth and what comes from it,  
who gives breath to the people upon it  
and spirit to those who walk in it:  
I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness,  
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;  
I have given you as a covenant to the people,  
a light to the nations,  
to open the eyes that are blind,  
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,  
from the prison those who sit in darkness.  
I am the Lord, that is my name;  
my glory I give to no other,  
nor my praise to idols.  
See, the former things have come to pass,  
and new things I now declare;  
before they spring forth,  
I tell you of them.

**One:** May we hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church;  
**Many:** Open our ears, our hearts, our minds.

I was there to hear your boring 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;  
I'll be there in case you wander off  
And find where demons dwell.

When you found the wonder of the Word,  
I was there to cheer you on;  
You were raised to praise the living God,  
To whom you now belong.  
Should 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 boring cry,  
I'll be there when you are old.  
I rejoiced the day you were baptized,  
To see your life unfold.

\* Gospel Lesson

Matthew 3:13-17

Cheri Dennis

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.' Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom 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: Thanks be to God.

Sermon

Cheri Dennis

Prayer of Dedication & Thanksgiving

Laura Hankins

**One:** Generosity serves as an essential element of the baptized life. In our offerings, we bring forth our resources to meet the needs of our community and the world. Let us now together dedicate the offerings we've received to the work of building God's community.

**All:** **Giver of Gifts, we thank you for providing in abundance and allowing us to participate as co-givers with you. We dedicate our offerings in your many names to the work of building your community on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.**

\* Doxology

OLD HUNDREDTH

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

Hymn 498

"Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love"

CHEREPONI

**Refrain: Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love,  
Show us how to serve the neighbors we have from you.**

**Knelt at the feet of his friends, silently washing their feet,  
Jesu, you acted as servant to them. (R)**

**Neighbors are rich and poor, varied in color and race,  
Neighbors are near and far away. (R)**

**These are the ones we should serve, these are the ones we should love;  
All these are neighbors to us and you. (R)**

**Loving puts us on our knees, showing our faith by our deeds,  
Serving the neighbors we have from you. (R)**

**Kneel at the feet of our friends, silently washing their feet,  
This is the way we should live with you. (R)**

\* Benediction

Cheri Dennis

\* Benediction Response

NEW DIMENSIONS

God of rainbow, fiery pillar, leading where the eagles soar,  
We your people, ours the journey now and ever,  
Now and ever, now and evermore.

Postlude

“Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow”

arr. J. Vogt

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**WE PROVIDE OUR EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME WITH HELP FROM:**

Keith Dennis, Brian Hankins, Henry Hankins,  
Deborah Winston, Laurence Winston



## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

### IN-PERSON ACTIVITIES UPDATE JANUARY 6, 2023

The CDC has upgraded our local COVID metrics to high positive testing rates. Holy Covenant UCC is continuing to host in-person activities with face masks now being strongly recommended. Sunday worship services will continue to be live-streamed. Free in-home COVID tests are available in the Gathering Room.

### USHERS, GREETERS, LITURGIST, AND COMMUNION SERVERS

Please sign up on SignUpGenius

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



### FOOD BAGS FOR MIGRANT BUS MINISTRY, JANUARY 22

NOTE DATE CHANGE - Join us following worship on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. We'll assemble food bags for distribution to the asylum seeking migrants passing through Charlotte at the bus station. SVP Suzanne Lamorey [slamorey@uncc.edu](mailto:slamorey@uncc.edu)

### UPDATES FROM YOUR PASTORAL SEARCH TEAM

Please see the church weekly electronic newsletter for a chronological document of our weekly accomplishments. Keep us in prayer as we continue this most important work!

### FROM THE RACIAL JUSTICE & EQUITY TEAM

Holy Covenant has a [DonorsChoose giving page](#)! This offers a way for members to directly donate to classroom projects at historically underserved local elementary schools. The HC DonorsChoose giving page gives us all a place to choose a classroom project, make a donation of any amount, and track our giving as a congregation. Last year we gave \$998 to the students and teachers in our neighborhood! The Holy Covenant DonorsChoose giving page will be available for donations year-round and you can even set up a monthly donation. See projects on the Holy Covenant [DonorsChoose giving page](#): and consider buying your books from Shelves, Charlotte's only Black-owned bookstore: <https://shelvesbookstore.com/>.



### SOJOURNERS CLASS

Join us (in-person or via Zoom) on Sunday mornings at 9:45 for our Sojourners Class. We will be discussing Philip Gulley's book *If Grace is True: Why God Will Save Every Person*. For more information, contact Pastor Cheri ([cherid@holycovenantucc.org](mailto:cherid@holycovenantucc.org), 704-519-6016)

## **PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER**

### **Members**

Andrew & Britany Bomely, Linda Carver, Gary & Linda Clark, Cindy Coble, Kevin Decker, Linn Finger, Tom & Kathy Habel, Carl Johnson, Helen Lambert, Sharon Landis, Irene Mikkelson, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Isabelle Reddy Powell, Jerry & Marion Rhyne, Cynthia & Tommy Simpson, Anita Taylor

### **Friends & Family Members**

Nikki Arrigo (Kathleen Wagner), Bill Bennett (Kathleen Wagner), Tom Chevrier & Rob Lux (Kathleen Wagner), Laura Christian (Beth Sharp), Sandra Dobson (Joy Decker), David & Cecelia Griffin (JP Griffin), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Ann Johnson (Joy Johnson), Geraldine Mobley (Jeff Edwards-Knight), Joe Parks (Beth Christian Sharp), Marie Raley (Jean Raley-Dennis), Barbara Rutelonis (Eric Miner), Matthew Sharp, Michelle Sharp (Beth & Ed Sharp), Christopher Sizemore (Tina Ettesen), Eulene Shepherd (Robert Shepherd), Joyce Tyler (Bill & Kim Tyler), Kathryn Vickery (Ed Vickery), Joyce Ward (Ed Vickery), Tamber Watson (Jeff Edwards-Knight), Chandra Winston (Deborah & Larry Winston), John Zastrow (Barb Schneller)

If you wish to add someone to the list, please send a note to  
[prayers@holycovenantucc.org](mailto:prayers@holycovenantucc.org).

**OUR FAITH IS OVER 2000 YEARS OLD. OUR THINKING IS NOT,**

### **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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