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Silent Meditation

“Since when do you have to agree with people
to defend them from injustice?”

– Lillian Hellman

“Memories of our lives, of our works and our deeds
will continue in others.”

– Rosa Parks

“Throughout history, it has been the inaction of those who could have
acted; the indifference of those who should have known better;
the silence of the voice of justice when it mattered most;
that has made it possible for evil to triumph.”

– Haile Selassie

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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**HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY**

January 29, 2023 10:55 am

Prelude "Church United" A. V. Fedak

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 15*) Lloyd Spencer

One: Holy One, who may abide in your sanctuary? Who may dwell in your sacred creation?

Many: **Those who do justice. Those who confront inequities and uplift the oppressed.**

One: Holy One, who may abide in your sanctuary? Who may dwell in your sacred creation?

Many: **Those who love kindness. Those who love neighbor, friend and foe.**

One: Holy One, who may abide in your sanctuary? Who may dwell in your sacred creation?

Many: **Those who walk humbly with you. Those who follow your lead and answer your call.**

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

Invocation (*unison*)

Lloyd Spencer

Just and Loving God, we enter into your sacred spaces, in sanctuaries and in homes, in public gatherings and private places. You bridge time and space to forge us as a beloved community. You, O Sovereign, make plain the way of life for us. Encourage us to join your journey, to love your children and creation, and to contribute to your kingdom on earth. Amen.

* Hymn 72

“Here, O God, Your Servants Gather”

TOKYO

Here, O God, your servants gather, hand we link in hand;
Looking toward our Savior’s cross, joined in love we stand.
As we seek the realm of God, we unite to pray:
Jesus, Savior, guide our steps, for you are the Way.

Many are the tongues we speak, scattered are the lands,
Yet our hearts are one in God, one in love’s demands.
In despair our hope appears, calling age and youth:
Jesus, Teacher, dwell with us, for you are the Truth.

Nature’s secrets open wide, changes never cease;
Where, O where, can weary souls find the source of peace?
Unto all those sore distressed, torn by endless strife:
Jesus, Healer, bring your balm, for you are the Life.

Grant, O God, an age renewed, show us how love thrives,
Help us as we work and pray, send us for our lives
Truth and courage, faith and power needed in our strife:
Jesus, Leader, be our Way, be our Truth, our Life.

Prayer for Transformation and New Life (*unison*)

Cheri Dennis

Holy Wisdom, you have expressed your hope for us and vision for life abundantly. Many times we settle for a temporary truce over real peace. We avoid confrontation and accountability that builds up and creates a more just world. We refuse to relentlessly pursue your will when discomforted by the cost of discipleship. Forgive us, O God, we pray.

Words of Grace

Cheri Dennis

Receive the good news that each day presents a new opportunity to follow the way of Jesus—to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. The grace of the Holy One meets us. God embraces and supports us in the turning and will be faithful to strengthen us on the path of righteousness. Amen.

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 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.

Psalm (*sung*)

"Lord, Who May Dwell within Your House?"

RIDGEMOOR

(Psalm 15)

Lord, who may dwell within your house or on your holy hill?

Those who do good and speak the truth, whose lives are blameless still;

Who have no guile upon their tongues nor harm their neighbor's life,

But honor those who fear the Lord and turn away from strife;

Who do no wrong, but keep their word and seek no bribe or gain.

All those who do such things shall live and safe from harm remain.

Hear what the Lord says:

Rise, plead your case before the mountains,
and let the hills hear your voice.

Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the Lord,
and you enduring foundations of the earth;
for the Lord has a controversy with his people,
and he will contend with Israel.

'O my people, what have I done to you?

In what have I wearied you? Answer me!

For I brought you up from the land of Egypt,
and redeemed you from the house of slavery;
and I sent before you Moses,
Aaron, and Miriam.

O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised,
what Balaam son of Beor answered him,
and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal,
that you may know the saving acts of the Lord.'

'With what shall I come before the Lord,
and bow myself before God on high?

Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings,
with calves a year old?

Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
with tens of thousands of rivers of oil?

Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?'

He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

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

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

* Gospel Lesson (sung)

Matthew 5:1-12

Cheri Dennis

Hymn 180

“Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit”

ANNIKA’S DANCE

Solo:

Blessed are the poor in spirit: heaven will someday be theirs.

Blessed are the mourning children: comfort comes from One who cares.

Blessed the meek and patient, having courage to hang on.

Soon all earth they will inherit; times of trials will be gone.

Blessed all who thirst or hunger: righteously they will be fed.

Those who respond with mercy will see mercy up ahead.

Blessed the clean in spirit - beautiful, the pure in heart;

One day they will see their Maker, nevermore to live apart.

Each seeking peace and justice shall be known as God’s own heir.

Blessed, too, are those ill-treated for what’s good and right and fair.

Blessed the New Creation, joy beyond what we conceive;

Blessed all those who trust the promise: without seeing, they believe.

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

“Rites, Rituals, & Relationships”

Cheri Dennis

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication

Lloyd Spencer

One: A generous life counters the societal norms that depend on scarcity. Our Loving God creates in abundance so that all may live a full and flourishing life. When we give from our abundance, we proclaim our trust in God’s provision and our love of neighbor. Let us now dedicate the offerings we’ve received over this past week to the work of building God’s kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

All: Just God, we share our humble offering in hope and trust that, through these gifts, your kingdom comes and your will is done. Amen.

* Doxology

OLD HUNDRETH

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.

Refrain: Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth
 From despair to hope, from fear to trust.
 Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace;
 Let peace fill our hearts, let peace fill our world,
 Let peace fill our universe.

Still all the angry cries, still all the angry guns
 Still now your people die, earth's son and daughters.
 Let justice roll, let mercy pour down,
 Come and teach us your way of compassion. (R)

So many lonely hearts, so many broken lives,
 Longing for love to break into their anguish.
 Come, teach us love, come, teach us peace,
 Come and teach us your way of compassion. (R)

Let justice ever roll, let mercy fill the earth,
 Let us begin to grow into your people.
 We can be love, we can bring peace,
 We can still be your way of compassion. (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

“Love Is Your Way”

S. E. Murray

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WE PROVIDE OUR EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME WITH HELP FROM:

Keith Dennis, Brian Hankins, JoAnn Jellison,
Dawn Schmitz, Shakti Subramanian

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

IN-PERSON ACTIVITIES UPDATE JANUARY 27, 2023

Currently we have been hosting all in-person activities with masking being **strongly** encouraged. The current Covid community risk for Mecklenburg County has decreased to low. Consistory has made the decision that we will continue in-person worship and activities with masking being optional. We will continue to monitor the situation and make changes as appropriate.

Blessings, Jeff Edwards-Knight, Consistory President

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!

JANUARY CLEANING?

We have a need for winterwear and gently used clothing of all sizes, sheets and blankets (even miss-matched), and small kitchen appliances. Please consider donating. There is a collection box in the Gathering Room.

FEBRUARY HAPPENINGS

Crafter's circle resumes on February 6. We'll meet on Mondays at 1:30pm in the Gathering Room.

Join us in the gathering room at 9:30 next Sunday, February 5th for a muffin fellowship. Coffee & muffins will be provided. Contact Laura Hankins with any questions, laura@hankins-clt.us.

USHERS, GREETERS, LITURGIST AND COMMUNION SERVERS

We encourage sign ups of **greeters and ushers**, ready to welcome and help members and guests starting at 10:30 every Sunday; a **liturgist** to serve with Pastor Cheri; and **communion servers (elders, deacons and ordained clergy) and clean up**. Everyone is welcome in these roles! If you need an explanation of the mechanics of this, please indicate that in the comments on the sign-up and we will make sure you are comfortable on your first Sunday. Ushers and Greeters, please contact the church office with questions. Communion Servers, please contact Laura Hankins with questions, laura@hankins-clt.us. Please sign up on the SignUpGenius link:

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

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, 704-519-6016)

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Members

Family and Friends in the death of Helen Lambert

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

Friends & Family Members

Jamie & Shannon, Will & Evan Neese and family, in the death of Shannon's mother, Faye Blakely

Shyhemm (Jeff Edwards-Knight), Nikki Arrigo and family (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), Chantel Hill (Jeff Edwards-Knight), Ann Johnson (Joy Johnson), Yolanda Price (Jeff Edwards-Knight), Barbara Rutelonis (Eric Miner), Matthew Sharp, Michelle Sharp (Beth & Ed Sharp), Christopher Sizemore (Tina Ettesen), Eulene Shepherd (Robert Shepherd), Kathryn Vickery (Ed Vickery), Joyce Ward (Ed Vickery), 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.