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## Silent Meditation

“Sometimes just getting up in the morning and standing at the gate can bring the gate down.”  
— Joan Bauer

“Which gate to enter? Which path to choose? Which stairs to take? Which direction to go? These questions can be very depressive! And sometimes the solution lies in being bold, in being imprudent!”  
— Mehmet Murat ildan

“Sadie walked under the gates, one by one by one. At first, she felt nothing, but as she kept moving ahead, she began to feel an opening and a new spaciousness in her chest. She realized what a gate was: it was an indication that you had left one space and were entering another. She walked through another gate.”  
—Gabrielle Zevin

**HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

**April 30, 2023 10:55 am**

Prelude

Jon Weddell

Chiming of the Hour

Welcome and Announcements

Cheri Dennis

One: May the peace of Risen Christ be with you!

Many: **And also with you.**

Introit

“Ubi Caritas”

TAIZÉ

*(Where charity and love are, God is there.)*

**Ubi caritas et amor, Ubi caritas, Deus ibi est.**

\* Call to Worship

Lloyd Spencer

One: Can you hear the voice of God?

Many: **We hear God calling us by name.**

One: Are you troubled or distressed?

Many: **We come here to find a place to rest for a while.**

One: Come and find a guide who knows these lands.

Many: **We come to praise our Shepherding God, whose pathways and doors lead to life.**

Invocation (*unison*)

Lloyd Spencer

**Shepherding God, bring us into your fold. Lead us beside still waters and restore our souls. Help us see the way we should go, the way we should live. Help us hear your voice calling our name. Enliven this time of worship, that we may find true life as we join with others: praising your name, celebrating your great goodness, and sharing your love for all people. Amen.**

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

I sing the mighty power of God that made the mountains rise,  
That spread the flowing seas abroad, and built the lofty skies.  
I sing the wisdom that ordained the sun to rule the day;  
The moon shines full at God’s command, and all the stars obey.

I sing the goodness of our God that filled the earth with food;  
God formed the creatures with a word, and then pronounced them good.  
Oh, how your wonders are displayed, where’er I turn my eye;  
If I survey the ground I tread, or gaze upon the sky!

On earth there’s not a plant or flower but makes your glory known.  
The clouds arise and spread their showers by order from your throne.  
All life is but a gift from you and ever in your care;  
Wherever people gather, you, O God, are present there.

Prayer for Transformation and New Life (*unison*)

Cheri Dennis

Shepherding God, be with us in our need. Like sheep who have gone astray—we have not heeded your voice, calling us to follow the right paths, beckoning us to lie down and be restored; we have acted as if our salvation lies in busyness and control. We do not want to be sheep—dependent on a shepherd for everything. We want to do it alone—to maintain our independence. Forgive us for rejecting your shepherding care and your love and guidance. Forgive us for our need to do it by ourselves, to be separate from the flock. Forgive us for doubting your presence in times of trouble. Forgive us our despair in the face of seemingly unrelenting evil and death. Lead us back to the path of life. Amen.

Words of Grace

Cheri Dennis

Jesus said, I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly. In so confessing, we have returned to the shepherd, the guardian of our souls who welcomes us with open arms and a glad heart. Know that the shepherd of our lives never abandons us, is always calling our name, and unfailingly loves and forgives us.

Stories for All People

Laura Hankins

O for a world where everyone respects each other's ways,  
Where love is lived and all is done with justice and with praise.

O for a world where goods are shared and misery relieved,  
Where truth is spoken, children spared, equality achieved.

We welcome one world family and struggle with each choice  
That opens us to unity and gives our vision voice.

The poor are rich, the weak are strong, the foolish ones are wise.  
Tell all who mourn: outcasts belong, who perishes will rise.

O for a world preparing for God's glorious reign of peace,  
Where time and tears will be no more, and all but love will cease.

Pastoral Prayer

Cheri Dennis

Responsive Reading

Psalm 23

Suzanne Lamorey

*Refrain sung:*

Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants  
Beyond my fears, from death into life.

One: The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Many: He makes me lie down in green pastures.  
He leads me beside still waters. *Refrain*

One: He restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Many: Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for  
you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me. *Refrain*

One: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;  
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Many: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.  
*Refrain*

\* New Testament Reading

Acts 2:42-47

Lloyd Spencer

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

**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

“And Had All Things in Common”

Cheri Dennis

Prayer of Dedication and Thanksgiving (*unison*)

Lloyd Spencer

**Generous, life-giving God, you sent Jesus that we might have life and have it abundantly. In response to this great gift, we've offered ourselves and our resources. May the gifts this church has received be used to help us be your voice, calling all people to abundant life and to their true identities as your beloved. Amen.**

\* Doxology

LASST UNS ERFREUEN

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.**

**Praise God, all creatures high and low. Alleluia, alleluia!**

**Praise God, in Jesus fully known: Creator, Word, and Spirit one.**

**Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!**

\* Hymn

"When God Restored Our Common Life"

RESIGNATION

When God restored our common life, our hope, our liberty,  
At first it seemed a passing dream, a waking fantasy;  
A shock of joy swept over us, for we had wept so long;  
The seeds we watered once with tears sprang up into a song.

We went forth weeping, sowing seeds in hard, unyielding soil;  
With laughing hearts, we carry home the fruit of all our toil.  
We praise the One who gave the growth, with voices full and strong.  
The seeds we watered once with tears sprang up into a song.

Great liberating God, we pray for all who are oppressed.  
May those who long for what is right with justice now be blest.  
We pray for those who mourn this day, and all who suffer wrong;  
May seeds they water now with tears spring up into a song.

\* 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

Jon Weddell

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*Portions of this service adapted from Worship Elements: April 30, 2023 written  
by Rev. Dr. Joan Carlson Brown, ©Abingdon Press.*

*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:**

Joy Decker, Keith Dennis, Brian Hankins, JoAnn Jellison,  
Suzanne Lamorey, Shakti Subramanian

Many thanks to our **Personnel Team** for providing today's refreshments  
following worship. Have an interest to serve, or questions?  
Contact Gregg Walker, [greggwalker33@gmail.com](mailto:greggwalker33@gmail.com)

Masking is currently optional at Holy Covenant. Thank you for respecting those who  
continue to wear masks for their comfort and safety.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

**Stay connected!** Check out all the current happenings in the weekly newsletter  
via Constant Contact. Not seeing it in your inbox? Sign-up here:  
<https://holycovenantucc.org/newsletters/>

### **SANDWICH BUILD TODAY FOLLOWING WORSHIP**

No experience needed! Join us in the conference room today for a 600-count  
sandwich build for our neighbors in need at the Men's Shelter.

### **SOJOURNERS CLASS**

Join us Sundays as the Sojourners Class discusses Munther Isaac's book *The  
Other Side of the Wall*. Isaac is a native Palestinian Lutheran pastor living and  
pastoring in the midst of the Palestine/Israel conflict. Contact Pastor Cheri for  
more information: [cherid@holycovenantucc.org](mailto:cherid@holycovenantucc.org), 704-519-6016. Join us at  
9:45am in the Conference Room or via Zoom.

## **AIDS WALK CHARLOTTE SATURDAY, MAY 6, 2023**

This continues to be the largest HIV fundraising event in the Carolinas. We hope you can join us this year. Questions? Contact Debbie Davis, [Debbiekdavisnc@gmail.com](mailto:Debbiekdavisnc@gmail.com).  
<https://p2p.onecause.com/aidswalkclt/team/holy-covenant-united-church-of-christ>

### **PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER**

#### **Members**

Joe & Patrick Behr-Stenzel in the death of Joe's father, James R. Behr  
Family & friends in the recent death of Irene Mikkelson  
Lisa Cloninger & Kathi Smith in the death of Lisa's aunt, Teena Barnes  
Linda Carver, Gary & Linda Clark, Cindy Coble, Kevin Decker, Linn Finger, Tom & Kathy Habel, Jim Humphrey, Sharon Landis, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Isabelle Reedy Powell, Jerry & Marion Rhyne, Ed & Beth Sharp, Cynthia & Tommy Simpson, Jan & Bill Seaman, Anita Taylor

#### **Friends & Family Members**

Rowan, Linda Burby, Laura Christian (Beth Sharp), David & Cecelia Griffin (JP Griffin), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Matty & Simone McKinnon (Joy Decker), Corky Myers (Dawn Simmons), Sue Parrish (Terry Raley-Dennis), Marie Raley (Jean Raley-Dennis), Suzie & John Robinson (Dana Endsley & Mike Yonkovig), Barbara Rutelonis (Eric Miner), Pauline Savage (Dawn Simmons), Matthew Sharp, Michelle Sharp (Beth & Ed Sharp), Christopher Sizemore (Tina Ettesen), Tom & Silvia Smith (Laura Hankins), Eulene Shepherd (Robert Shepherd), Kathryn Vickery (Ed Vickery), Joyce Ward (Ed Vickery), 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 MINISTRY TEAM**

**Rev. Cheri Dennis, Interim Pastor**

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

**Dawn Simmons, BSBF, Executive Assistant**

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