



Photo by Gary Butterfield on Unsplash

Silent Meditation

**All those times you walked through loss,
wandered in disorientation,
trudged on an endless trek to nowhere...**

and thought you were alone.

**There is a kind of being held
that, if you let it hold you, holds you
through the deepest abyss, the bleakest ruin,
and never loses you.**

**But the Unseen One gives no clues,
you can't detect your being held
any more than a fetus can.
Only afterward can the child
recognize the mother.**

**Even only now, late in the poem,
do you see:
someone has been reading with you
from the first word.**

Steve Garnaas-Holmes

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

April 23, 2023 10:55 am

Prelude

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

“People, We Have Met to Worship”
Bell Choir

HOLY MANNA

* Call to Worship

Cheri Dennis/Kristin Andes

Leader: Jesus is with you while you walk from Jerusalem to Emmaus,

Reader: Jesus is with us while we walk from Charlotte to Fort Mill, or Charlotte to Concord.

People: We journey with Jesus on the road.

Reader: Jesus travels with us on Interstate 77 and Interstate 85.

Leader: And yet we could not recognize Jesus

People: until we broke bread together,

Reader: until we shared some vegetarian chili and fried chicken.

Leader: At once, our eyes are opened and we say:

People: Oh! Our hearts were burning for that familiar voice!

Reader: Yes! We had a gut feeling when we were walking and talking!

Leader: Christ is risen! Ua ala hou ka Haku.

People: Christ is risen, indeed!

Reader: Ua ala no 'o ia.

People: Praise God! Alleluia!

* Hymn

“There’s a Spirit of Love In This Place”

arr. M.A. Miller

There’s a spirit of love in this place. (2x)

You can’t see it, but it’s there, just as precious as the air.

There’s a spirit of love in this place.

There’s the presence of peace in this room. (2x)

In God’s tenderness is found peace that passes human bounds.

There’s the presence of peace in this room.

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

Prayer for Transformation and New Life (*unison*)

Cheri Dennis

Merciful God, look at our hearts. The words of prophets and apostles cut us to the heart, for we too have crucified Jesus. Even when Christ shows up as a stranger in our walk, like the apostles, we too sigh and say, “Don’t you know anything?” Then, we often wish they would go back to where they came from as we “faithsplain” to them the way things work or what everyone from around here already knows. Yet, our hearts burn even while Jesus walks with us and we are blind to Christ’s presence. Your prophets have shown us our guilt, ignorance, and arrogance and we look at one another and ask, “What should we do?” Can you forgive us, God?

Words of Grace

Cheri Dennis

Let us remember how Peter said, “Repent, and be baptized every one of us in the name of Jesus Christ so that our sins may be forgiven; and we will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” We have been born anew through the living and enduring word of God. This promise is for us, for our children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom our God calls. Welcome this message, remembering our baptisms: rejoice knowing that we are added to the number of believers.

Song

“Beautiful Things”

M. Gungor

Brian Hankins, guitar & vocals; D. Evans, drums; Lisa Cloninger, vocals

All this pain

I wonder if I’ll ever find my way

I wonder if my life could really change at all

All this earth

Could all that is lost ever be found?

Could a garden come up from this ground, at all?

Refrain: You make beautiful things

You make beautiful things out of dust.

You make beautiful things

You make beautiful things out of us.

All around

Hope is springing up from this old ground

Out of chaos, life is being found in you. (Chorus)

Pastoral Prayer

Candidate

* Choral Anthem "Praise God's Holy Name" arr. Keith Hampton

Reading from the Psalter Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19 (CEB) Kristin Andes

I love the Lord because he hears my requests for mercy.

I'll call out to him as long as I live, because he listens closely to me.

Death's ropes bound me; the distress of the grave found me— I came face-to-face with trouble and grief.

So, I called on the Lord's name: "Lord, please save me!"

What can I give back to the Lord for all the good things he has done for me?

I'll lift up the cup of salvation. I'll call on the Lord's name.

I'll keep the promises I made to the Lord in the presence of all God's people.

The death of the Lord's faithful is a costly loss in his eyes.

Oh yes, Lord, I am definitely your servant! I am your servant and the son of your female servant— you've freed me from my chains.

So, I'll offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to you, and I'll call on the Lord's name.

I'll keep the promises I made to the Lord in the presence of all God's people, in the courtyards of the Lord's house, which is in the center of Jerusalem. Praise the Lord!

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

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

* Gospel Lesson Luke 24:13-35 (CEB) Candidate

On that same day, two disciples were traveling to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking to each other about everything that had happened. While they were discussing these things, Jesus himself arrived and joined them on their journey. They were prevented from recognizing him. He said to them, "What are you talking about as you walk along?" They stopped; their faces downcast. The one named Cleopas replied, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who is unaware of the things that have taken place there over the last few days?" He said to them, "What things?" They said to him, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth. Because of his powerful deeds and words, he was recognized by God and all the people as a prophet. But our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him. We had hoped he was the one who would redeem Israel. All these things happened three days ago. But there's more: Some women from our group have left us stunned. They went to the tomb early this morning and didn't find his body. They came to us saying that they had even seen a vision of angels who told

them he is alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women said. They didn't see him."

Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! Your dull minds keep you from believing all that the prophets talked about. Wasn't it necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then he interpreted for them the things written about himself in all the scriptures, starting with Moses and going through all the Prophets. When they came to Emmaus, he acted as if he was going on ahead. But they urged him, saying, "Stay with us. It's nearly evening, and the day is almost over." So, he went in to stay with them. After he took his seat at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight. They said to each other, "Weren't our hearts on fire when he spoke to us along the road and when he explained the scriptures for us?"

They got up right then and returned to Jerusalem. They found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying to each other, "The Lord really has risen! He appeared to Simon!" Then the two disciples described what had happened along the road and how Jesus was made known to them as he broke the bread.

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

"On the Road to Emmaus"

Candidate

* Hymn

"Holy Spirit, Burn Within Us"

JOYFUL, JOYFUL

**Holy Spirit, Sun of Heaven, source of light and warmth and power,
fill us and transform us like a seed that turns into a flower.**

Kindle in your willing people joy's bright spark, compassion's flame.

Set us all afire to bear your loving light in Jesus' name.

Holy Spirit, burn within us, radiant with your healing grace.

Give us brand new ways to meet and love the stranger face to face.

Help us find new ways of caring. Help us set new, daring goals.

Give us brand new languages to speak your love to seeking souls.

Holy Spirit, let your fire consume us, changing us at last.

Let us rise like light emerging from the embers of the past.

May the star of pure compassion shine within and set us free.

Holy Spirit, make us all your flame that burns eternally.

Prayer of Dedication and Thanksgiving

Kristin Andes

One: Servants of God, God has loosed our bonds. What can we offer to the One who has heard our cries and has saved us? What shall we return to God for all his bounty to us? Our gifts serve as vows to serve God, in the presence of all God's people and everywhere around the world.

Many: Gracious God, through the precious lamb who is our Christ, you have redeemed us beyond the perishable silver and gold we now present to you. We pay our vows of devotion, offering you these sacrifices of thanksgiving. 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 391

"In the Midst of New Dimensions"

NEW DIMENSIONS

In the midst of new dimensions / In the face of changing ways,

Who will lead the pilgrim peoples / Wandering in their separate ways?

Refrain: 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.

Through the flood of starving people, warring factions and despair,
Who will lift the olive branches? Who will light the flame of care? (R)

As we stand a world divided by our own self-seeking schemes,
Grant that we, your global village, might envision wider dreams. (R)

We are man and we are woman, all persuasions, old and young,
Each a gift in your creation, each a love song to be sung. (R)

Should the threats of dire predictions cause us to withdraw in pain,
May your blazing phoenix spirit resurrect the church again. (R)

* Benediction

Candidate

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.

10 Minute Break

Zoom Link for those not able to be here in person:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88488349196?pwd=U05adFg3S09lOGxHUXFvbWZoK1pDZz09>

Meeting ID: 884 8834 9196 Passcode: 760869

Congregational Meeting Call to Order

Postlude

*Songs in this service are used by permission.
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*Portions of this service adapted from While You Walk, the Third Sunday of
Easter, Year A, written and revised by the Rev. Mitchell Young, pastor of
Montebello Plymouth Congregational Church, UCC in Montebello, CA.*

*Holy Spirit, Burn Within Us lyrics by Steve Garnaas-Holmes,
www.unfoldinglight.net*

*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:

Keith Dennis, Brian Hankins, JoAnn Jellison, Suzanne Lamorey,
Terry Raley-Dennis, Barbara Schneller, Shakti Subramanian

Many thanks to our **Consistory** for providing today's refreshments following
worship. Have an interest to serve, or questions?

Contact Consistory President, Jeffery Edwards-Knight

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/>

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, 704-519-6016. Join us at 9:45am in the Conference Room or via Zoom.

Game Night, Saturday, April 29th 6:30-8:30pm

BYOGames (Bring Your Own) or just come join us in the church Gathering Room and learn some new ones. Game "fanatics" as well as newbies are welcome!

There will be beverages as well as snacks. RSVP Suzanne Lamorey slamorey@uncc.edu

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. <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.

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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