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Silent Meditation

“Did you ever wonder if the person in the puddle is real, and you're just a reflection of him?”

— Bill Watterson

“Beauty is not who you are on the outside, it is the wisdom and time you gave away to save another struggling soul like you.”

— Shannon L. Alder

“When we label someone as good, does that mean this person is living as an image bearer of God?”

-Sinclair B. Ferguson (paraphrased)

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

May 7, 2023 10:55 am

Prelude “You Satisfy the Hungry Heart” arr. A. M. David

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 “There’s a Spirit of Love in This Place” M. A. Miller

There’s a spirit of love in this place,

There’s a spirit of love in this place.

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

There’s a spirit of love in this place.

O Alleluia, sing alleluia, we bless your holy name.

O Alleluia, sing alleluia, there’s a spirit of love in this place.

* Call to Worship (*based on Psalm 31*) Alix Felsing

One: In you, Lord, I have taken refuge.

Many: **Let me never be put to shame.**

One: Deliver me in your righteousness.

Many: **Turn your ear to me.**

One: Come quickly to my rescue.

Many: **Be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me.**

One: Since you are my rock and my fortress, lead and guide me, for the sake of your name.

Many: **Let your face shine upon your servant. Save me in your unfailing love!**

Invocation (*unison*) (*Psalm 31, 1 Peter 2*)

O God of all creation, become for us once again the solid foundation upon which we build our daily lives. We gather before you, this first day of the week, to align our lives to the strong teaching and life of Jesus Christ, our Cornerstone. Receive our praise and thanksgiving as expressions of faith and love. We come to you, O Lord, as people who desire to learn and serve like Christ. We are ready to receive your blessing and direction today. Amen.

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

* Hymn 400

“Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation”

REGENT SQUARE

Christ is made the sure foundation, Christ the head and cornerstone,
Chosen of our God and precious, binding all the Church in one;
Holy Zion's help forever, and our confidence alone.

To this temple, where we call you, come, O God of Hosts, today!
With your constant, loving kindness hear your people as they pray.
Give your fullest benediction: grace to follow Christ the Way.

Here renew your servants' vision, that by faith they may attain
Peace and hope, renewed compassion, strength to comfort those in pain,
Tears and grief transformed to gladness in your everlasting reign.

Prayer for Transformation & New Life (*unison*)

Cheri Dennis

Holy God, we were not able to love you with all our hearts and love our neighbor as ourselves. We wanted to be forgiven, but we could not forgive others. Please give us the grace of forgiveness so that we can get back on our feet today. There are still conflicts in this world. As the U.S. and Japan have experienced, conflicts and battles can only lead us to hatred. Please give us your will and wisdom to overcome conflicts and live together. Lead us to a new step, free from hatred and conflict. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Cheri Dennis

God hears our prayers. May our sins be cleansed, and we be remade as peacemakers. May God be with those who are in pain, suffering, and hardship right now. This is what the Lord says: “I have swept away your offense like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you.” Amen.

Stories for All People

Cheri Dennis

Pastoral Prayer

Cheri Dennis

Prayer for Illumination (*sung*)

IN YOUR WORD

Order my steps in your word dear Lord
Lead me, guide me, everyday.
Send your anointing, God, I pray
Order my steps in your word.
Please, order my steps in your word.

Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture:

'See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame. To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner', and 'A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.'

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

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

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

* Gospel Lesson

John 14:1-14

Alix Felsing

'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.' Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.'

Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will

do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

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

“Show Us the Father”

Cheri Dennis

Prayer of Dedication and Thanksgiving

Alix Felsing

One: Colossians 3:1-2 states, “So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.” In the giving of our gifts, we seek the kingdom, we trust in the Provider, and we follow in the way of Jesus. Together let us dedicate those offerings that Holy Covenant has and will receive for the glory of God.

Many: **Giving God, receive this portion of the gifts you have given to us. May our time, treasure, and talent be magnified and multiplied for your glory. 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!

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Preparation

Cheri Dennis

One: The Holy One be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

One: Open your hearts to the One who is Love.

Many: **We open our hearts to you, O God.**

One: We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify:

Let us join together in the UCC Statement of Faith

You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death. You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles. In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

You promise to all who trust you forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you. Amen.

Words of Institution

As Jesus was at the table with his friends, he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

Pour out your Spirit on these gifts and make this bread and this cup sustenance for our journey. By your grace, may we experience anew the call you place on our lives to serve one another. In feasting at your table, may our hearts be filled with courage once again to follow the Risen Christ, come what may.

Sharing of Bread and Cup

Hymn "We Gather Here in Jesus' Name" COME, SHARE THE LORD

We gather here in Jesus' name;
Christ's love is burning in our hearts like living flame;
For through Christ's sacrifice, the whole wide world unites.
Come, take the bread; come, drink the wine; come, share the Lord.

No one is a stranger here; everyone belongs.
Finding our forgiveness here, we in turn forgive all wrongs.

Christ joins us here; and breaks the bread;
Our God who pours the cup is risen from the dead;
The one we love the most is now our gracious host:
Come, take the bread; come, drink the wine; come, share the Lord.

We are now a family, of which our God is head.
Though unseen, Christ meets us here in the breaking of the bread.

We'll gather soon in glory rise;
We'll see the wonder of our God and of our Christ.
Now we anticipate the feast for which we wait:
Come, take the bread; come, drink the wine; come, share the Lord.

Prayer of Thanksgiving after Communion (*unison*)

God, your bread and your cup renew our spirits. No matter the times we have failed to show up to your call, or to our own needs, or to the cries of our neighbors, you receive us again. May your unending grace be our foundation as we journey with Christ towards justice. Amen.

* Hymn 388

"Help Us Accept Each Other"

AURELIA

Help us accept each other as Christ accepted us;
Teach us as sister, brother, each person to embrace.
Be present, God, among us, and bring us to believe
We are ourselves accepted and meant to love and live.

Teach us, O God, your lessons, as in our daily life
We struggle to be human and search for hope and faith.
Teach us to care for people, for all not just for some,
To love them as we find them, or as they may become.

...

Let your acceptance change us, so that we may be moved
I living situations to do the truth in love;
To practice your acceptance, until we know by heart
The table of forgiveness and laughter's healing art.

God for today's encounters with all who are in need,
Who hunger for acceptance, for righteousness and bread,
Bring us new eyes for seeing, new hands for holding on;
Renew us with your Spirit; God! Free us, make us one!

* Benediction

Cheri Dennis

* Benediction Response

KELVINGGROVE

Lord your summons echoes true when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.
In Your company I'll go where Your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

Postlude

“Come, Share the Lord”
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B. J. Leech

*Portions of this service adapted from **Worship Elements, May 7, 2023** written by John A. Brewer, Copyright © Abingdon Press. Portions of this service adapted from **The Way: Service Prayers for the Fifth Sunday in Easter** written by Rev. Motomu Ishida is Nihongo, Sycamore Congregational UCC, El Cerrito, CA.*

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:

Christine Andersen, Keith Dennis, Kevin Edwards-Knight, Henry Hankins, JoAnn Jellison, Shakti Subramanian

We welcome all in our congregation to participate! Please sign up in the Gathering Room or on the SignUpGenius link:

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



Many thanks to the **Bold and Beautiful Covenant Group** for providing today's refreshments following worship. **Covenant Groups** are a way for you to stay connected with people in your area, neighborhood or zip code. Contact Ed Vickery, ed.vickery@att.net, if you'd like to be a part of any of our Covenant Groups: Saints & Sinners; EastSiders; Southside; Bold & Beautiful; Plaza Midwood; Mountain Island, and Unstructured.

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/>

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.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Members

Bill Seaman and family in the recent death of his wife, Jan Seaman
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, Bill Seaman, Anita Taylor

Friends & Family Members

Family and friends in the recent death of Corky Myers
Rowan, Linda Burby, Laura Christian (Beth Sharp), David & Cecelia Griffin (JP Griffin), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Matty & Simone McKinnon (Joy Decker), 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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