



Art: <https://wilsonmemorial.org.uk/>

Meditations

"These are the times when our faith is not just an idea or a concept that we throw around. It's something that has to actually be lived out."

— Craig D. Lounsborough

"We are not necessarily doubting that God will do the best for us; we are wondering how painful the best will turn out to be."

— C.S. Lewis

"The Kingdom of God is not for a selected few, but for anyone who willingly follows Christ on this journey of life."

— Gift Gugu Mona

**HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST ~ PRIDE MONTH**

June 25, 2023 10:55 am

Prelude "Morning Prayer" arr. L. Bergquist

Chiming of the Hour

Welcome and Announcements Jeffery Edwards-Knight

One: May the peace of Christ be with you!

Many: And also with you.

Introit "Enter, Rejoice, and Come In" ENTER, REJOICE

Enter, rejoice, and come in. Enter, rejoice, and come in.

Today will be a joyful day: enter, rejoice, and come in.

* Call to Worship Terry Raley-Dennis

One: We are the body of Christ!

Many: **Baptized in one Spirit, we are members of one body.**

One: Many and varied in gender, color, sexuality, age, class, and ability, we are members of Christ's beautiful body.

Many: **None of us can say to another, "I have no need of you." For only together can we find wholeness.**

One: None of us can say to another, "I will not care for you."

Many: **For we are connected like muscle and bone. If one suffers, we all suffer. If one rejoices, we all rejoice!**

One: Thanks be to God who, in Christ, has made us one.

All: **Let us worship God!**

* Invocation (unison) Terry Raley-Dennis

Creator God, we marvel in wonder at the expansiveness of your creation. Your margins of diversity are boundless, and for that, we thank you. Each of our beloved LGBTQIA+, brown, and black siblings are beautifully and wonderfully made, all in your image. Teach us to love people, just as they are, and embrace their identity fully, as you have embraced us. In your mercy, hear our prayer.

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

* Hymn 503

“O Savior, Let Me Walk with You”

MARYTON

O Savior, let me walk with you in the early paths of service true;
Tell me your secret, help me bear the strain of toil, the fret of care.

Help me the slow of heart to move by some clear winning word of love.
Teach me the wayward feet to stay, and guide them in the homeward way.

Teach me your patience; let me be in closer, dearer company,
In work that keeps faith sweet and strong, in trust that triumphs over wrong.

In hope that sends a shining ray far down the future's broadening way,
In peace that only you can give, with you, O Savior, let me live.

Prayer for Transformation & New Life (*unison*)

Terry Raley-Dennis

Loving God, sometimes we have dishonored ourselves and others in our longing to fit in and to be accepted. At times we have rejected the individuality of others. Sometimes we have allowed the pressure to be popular cause us to bully ourselves and others. Occasionally we have been silent when we have witnessed people being dishonored because of their truth. Please change our hearts and help us to love our own humanity and the awesomeness of other humans. Please help us forgive ourselves for the harsh things that we have said and thought about ourselves and others. Each person is a unique and beautiful expression of God's divine light and love. We confess that we forget this sometimes and pray that you help us to do better. Starting now. Amen & Amen.

Words of Assurance

Glencie Rhedrick

Hear these words of grace and assurance taken from the words of trans artist,
Déjà Baptiste:

You are not alone

You are not the first or the only

There is a lineage you are inheriting

It is your courage, your faith, your spirit that sets you apart

We are not doomed - we are not cursed

We are the blessed ones, the blessing

We are blessed to know our spirits are not only bound in our skin (flesh)

That bodies, like names, are expressions

Manifesting the soul we bear outside of time and beyond infinity

There is a lineage here ...

*We heard and nurtured our ancestors' dreams and came forward to create
and dream,*

Imagine and plant,

Live in the physical what is celebrated

and cherished and renewed in the spiritual.

Receive these words and receive the assurance of God's full embrace of love and acceptance. Amen.

Story for All Ages

Laura Hankins

Song of Preparation

"Rain Down"

J. Cortez

Rain down, rain down, rain down your love on your people.

Rain down, rain down, rain down your love, God of life.

A Prayer of Thanksgiving

Glencie Rhedrick

The Lord's Prayer (*unison*)

Our God, in whom is heaven, blessed be your name. Your kin-dom come, your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kin-dom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Prayer for Illumination (*sung*)

OPEN MY EYES

Open our ears, that we may hear voices of truth you send so clear

And while the wave notes fall on our ears, everything false will disappear

Silently now we wait for you, ready, our God, your will to do.

Open our hearts; illumine us, Spirit divine!

A Reading from the Psalter Psalm 139:13-18

Jim Hong

For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.

My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.

In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.

How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!

I try to count them—they are more than the sand;
I come to the end—I am still with you.

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

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

* Gospel Lesson

Matthew 10:24-31

Glencie Rhedrick

A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

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

Glencie Rhedrick

Prayer of Dedication and Thanksgiving

Terry Raley-Dennis

We have been invited to partner with God and with each other in transforming the world through the privilege of giving. We have been invited to remember that all that we steward has its source in God and we join the circle of reciprocal generosity when we share of our material resources. Today we give thanks for and dedicate those offerings Holy Covenant has received. And may you also consider sharing a portion of the gifts God has given you with an organization - local, regional, or national - that advocates for members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Organizations like the Time Out Youth, Transcend Charlotte, or the Open & Affirming Coalition of the UCC. Many in our community are literally at risk of losing their lives in the current rising local, state, and national atmosphere of anti-LGBT legislation and revocation of rights. There are many ways to multiply the “God-Work” of justice and freedom through our giving. Let us now together dedicate those gifts Holy Covenant has received to the work of justice and freedom.

All: All that we have belongs to you. You provide for our every need and we bring back a part of what you’ve given to us. In love, we gladly say thank you. Receive our gifts which we return to you full hearted and freely. Take and use them for your glory and for the blessing of your beloved creation everywhere. Amen.

* Doxology

“Confitemini Domino”

TAIZÉ

(translation: Give thanks to the Lord for God is good, Psalm 118:1)

Confitemini Domino quoniam bonus.

Confitemini Domino alleluia!

* Hymn 460

“Be Not Dismayed”

MARTIN

**Be not dismayed whate’er betide, God will take care of you;
Beneath God’s wings of love abide, God will take care of you.**

**Refrain: God will take care of you, through every day, o’er all the way;
God will take care of you, God will take care of you.**

**Through days of toil when heart grows frail, God will take care of you;
When dangers fierce your path assail, God will take care of you. (R)**

**All you may need God will provide, God will take care of you;
Nothing you ask will be denied, God will take care of you. (R)**

**No matter what may be the test, God will take care of you.
Lean weary one, upon God’s breast, God will take care of you. (R)**

* Benediction

Glencie Rhedrick

* Benediction Response

“Send Us Out”

J.M. Talbot

Send us out to proclaim the reign of your kin-dom,
Send us out to proclaim and to heal,
Send us out with your power and your authority
To overcome and to heal the world.

Postlude

“We Are an Offering”

arr. L. Bergquist

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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:

D Evans, Brian Hankins

Ushers and Greeters needed! 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 **EastSiders 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 & Sunners; EastSiders; Southside; Bold & Beautiful; Plaza Midwood; Mountain Island, and Unstructured.

Portions of this service adapted from **Life: Service Prayers for the Fourth Sunday in After Pentecost Year A** written by Rev. Ann Jefferson, the Associate Pastor of Worship & Liturgy at City of Refuge UCC in Oakland, California. She is also the Director of Community Life & Spiritual Care at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, CA.

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/>

WELCOME BACK REV. GLENCIE RHEDRICK

Glencie is an ordained Baptist minister, currently serving as an associate minister at First Baptist Church-West. A graduate of Johnson C. Smith University, Glencie received her M.Div from the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University and is currently a PhD student attending California Institute of Integral of Studies. Glencie currently serves as Chaplain for several organizations, is a local and national community activist and organizer, and was the former president of Mecklenburg Ministries. She is also an active member of the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team. Currently she holds the lead positions with numerous activist and outreach organizations. She is the convenor of a Facebook live show, 'SpeakingintheKeyofWE.' a conversation concerning Black Male Privilege and Patriarchy in the Church, raising the awareness of the biases women of African Ascent encounter in the Church and other segments of society.

WE NEED YOU IN THE CHARLOTTE PRIDE PARADE SUNDAY, AUGUST 20

Instead of hosting a table at the Pride Parade this year, Holy Covenant will show our support for the LGBTQ+ community with our strong, loud, and proud presence in the parade itself. We can do that if you join in! Our marchers at the front of our group will carry a Holy Covenant banner, and a big smiling crowd of the rest of us will give out candy and other goodies along the parade route. Imagine us all wearing coordinating tee-shirts too! If you want to participate, please sign up in the gathering room or email Holly (hsmiddleton@gmail.com) or Suzanne (suzlam@yahoo.com). The parade is on Sunday morning, August 20. Marchers will need to arrive by 9:15 am to line up before the parade, which starts at 10:00. The march itself takes about 20 minutes, and after that there's a fun opportunity to explore the booths along Tryon along with the Charlotte community. Please consider being a part of this experience -- Holy Covenant has been actively standing up for LGBTQ rights since 2009 and we continue to celebrate and honor the gifts of all of God's people.

THE MICHAEL G. BROOKS SCHOLARSHIP 2023-24, APPLICATIONS DUE JUNE 30

The purpose of the Michael G. Brooks Scholarship Fund is to encourage youth in both their educational growth and their service to God. Scholarship funds up to approximately \$2,000 will be considered annually for all applicants. Contact the church office for an application. office@holycovenantucc.org

SOJOURNERS CLASS

All are welcomed to join us Sundays at 9:45am in the Conference Room or via Zoom. Contact Pastor Cheri for more information: cherid@holycovenantucc.org, 704-519-6016.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Members

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, Bill Seaman, Ed & Beth Sharp, Cynthia & Tommy Simpson, Shakti Subramanian, Anita Taylor, Kathleen Wagner

Friends & Family Members

Savannah (Beth Christian), 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 Yonkovic), Barbara Rutelonis (Eric Miner), 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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