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### Meditations

**“If you don’t have a righteous objective, eventually you will suffer. When you do the right thing for the right reason, the right result awaits.”**

**— Chin-Ning Chu**

**“This life therefore is not righteousness, but growth in righteousness, not health, but healing, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it, the process is not yet finished, but it is going on, this is not the end, but it is the road. All does not yet gleam in glory, but all is being purified.”**

**— Martin Luther**

**“The consistent theme in Israelite prophecy is Yahweh’s concern for the lack of social, economic, and political justice for those who are poor and unwanted in society. Yahweh, according to Hebrew prophecy, will not tolerate injustice against the poor; God will vindicate the poor. Again, God is revealed as the God of liberation for the oppressed.”**

**—James Cone**

**HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

Prelude "Unser Herrscher" Joachim Neander

Chiming of the Hour

Welcome and Announcements Cheri Dennis

One: May the peace of Christ be with you!

Many: And also with you.

Introit "In This Very Room" Carol & Ron Harris

In this very room, there's quite enough love for all of us  
And in this very room, there's quite enough joy for all of us  
And there's quite enough hope  
And quite enough power  
To chase away any gloom  
For Jesus, Lord Jesus  
Is in this very room.

\* Call to Worship Terry Raley-Dennis

One: O Creator of the Cosmos, who knows what the kin-dom of God is like,  
but also remembers what it was like before.

Many: Before creation and kin-doms, before mustard seeds and fine  
pearls, before yeast and bakers to make bread.

One: So, you know what it is like to long for them, to imagine them into  
being,

Many: And it is from this longing for your kin-dom and for you that we  
enter our worship.

One: Yes, come, let us praise and pray to our God of promise.

All: Let us rejoice in the Good News together—how nothing can  
separate us from the presence of God. Amen.

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

\* Invocation (*unison*)

Terry Raley-Dennis

O Spirit, who helps us in our struggles, and teaches us how to pray when we don't know what to say or how to feel, we call on you from a sigh too deep for words. Within that sigh, we wonder, we question, and we hope that all things do, indeed, work together for your good. And in this experience of being here together, in this time set apart to be side by side in community, we are reminded how connected we already are. Let us open ourselves to your presence here. Let us seek first, the kin-dom of God, and in our searching, may we be found by you, Beloved, the One who searches for us first. Amen.

\* Hymn

“Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty”

UNSER HERRSCHER

Open now thy gates of beauty, Zion, let me enter there,  
Where my soul in joyful duty waits for God who answers prayer;  
O how blessed is this place, filled with solace, light, and grace.

Gracious God, I come before thee; come thou also unto me;  
Where we find thee and adore thee, there a heaven on earth must be;  
To my heart O enter thou, let it be thy temple now.

Speak, O Lord, and I will hear thee; let thy will be done indeed;  
May I undisturbed draw near thee, while thou dost thy people feed.  
Here of life the fountain flows; here is balm for all our woes.

Prayer for Transformation & New Life (*unison*)

Dawn Schmitz

We call upon our ancestor, Solomon, who knew to ask God for the wisdom to discern between what is in the spirit of God, and what is not. Like Solomon, we admit that we don't always know how to make our way through life—in its nuances, violence, chaos, and unexpected burdens. We also admit that in our struggles, we've made the wrong choice, hurt others, and clung to our shame. Forgive us, O God of Wisdom, and teach us your ways of repair. Amen.

Words of Grace

Cheri Dennis

If God is for us, then who could be against us? Even in all that we've done, and all that we've left undone, nothing can separate us from the love of God. May we let this sink in, all the way to our marrow. And may such faith hold us up to move in the world with accountability, love, tenderness, and forgiveness. Amen.

Hymn                                    “For the Troubles and the Sufferings”   PELAS DORES DESTES MUNDO  
For the troubles and the sufferings of the world,  
God, we call upon your mercy: the whole creation’s laboring in pain!

Lend an ear to the rising cry for help from oppressed and hopeless  
people: Come! Hasten your salvation, healing love!

We pray for peace, the blessed peace that comes from making justice,  
To cover and embrace us. Have mercy, Lord!

We pray for power, the power that will sustain your people’s witness:  
Until your kin-dom come, Kyrie eleison!

Pastoral Prayer

Cheri Dennis

The Abba Prayer (*unison*)

Cheri Dennis

O God - heart of the world: revealed through every aspect of creation:  
understood through our awareness. May we honor the holiness of creation  
and act accordingly so that your love is reflected in the way we live. May we  
always be thankful for the food we eat and the friends we have. May we  
forgive those who transgress against us and be forgiven for our own. In the  
freedom of love may we live as your heartbeat and not be compromised by  
hesitation. Through our freedom, may your justice be seen and heard and  
experienced forever and ever. Amen.

Gift in Song

“Come, O Fount”

arr. Dennis Allen

*Lisa Cloninger & Kathi Smith, vocals; Jon Weddell, piano*

Answering God’s Call

Cheri Dennis

Prayer for Illumination (*sung*)

TRENTHAM

Breathe on me, Breath of God, stir in me one desire:  
That every earthly part of me may glow with holy fire.

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, 'I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.' When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then he said, 'Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' He said further, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Then the Lord said, 'I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.' But Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?' He said, 'I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.' But he said, 'O my Lord, please send someone else.'

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

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

## Sermon in the Form of a Skit

“Here I Am, Lord - Send Claude!”

*Terry Parrish, Ed Vickery, Terry Raley-Dennis, Martha Bomely,  
Jeff Edwards-Knight, Dawn Schmitz, Laura Hankins, Suzanne Lamorey*

... EXODUS 4:13: BUT MOSES SAID, “O MY LORD, PLEASE SEND SOMEONE ELSE.”

Terry P: The thing about burning bushes is they get our attention!  
It’s not that Yahweh God loves showing off or anything like that.

Ed: “For my next trick, I present...a burning bush!”

Terry P: Burning bushes come in many forms, in all sizes and shapes.  
We are going about our own business like, Moses there at Horeb,  
and suddenly our attention is captured...

Ed: By the number of homeless encampments in Charlotte,  
Or the number of anti-LGBTQ bills in our state legislature,  
Or the number of books banned from our schools,  
Or yet another mass shooting,  
Or the illness of a good friend,  
Or whatever...

Terry P: We see a need.  
And really, somebody ought to do something!  
Somebody has to start caring!  
We can’t stand it any longer.  
These problems won’t go away by themselves.  
We can’t ignore them anymore.  
Something must be done...

And lo and behold, we are there,  
standing at our burning bush.  
God has captured our attention,  
pinpointed a particular need.  
At work,  
in our neighborhoods,  
in our church,  
in our families,  
in the world.

Someone needs to start doing something!  
That is as clear as burning bushes.  
But who is going to do it? That is not so clear.  
Who will tackle the job?  
This is the part of the message we have trouble understanding.  
The need is clear,  
but the name we keep hearing,  
as we stand by that bush,  
the name of the doer God has in mind,  
must be a mistake, right?  
Because the name we hear is our own name?  
And that just can't be right...can it?

Ed: Moses! Moses!

Terry P: Here I am.

Ed: Moses, go down to Egypt Land;  
tell old Pharoah to let my people go.

Terry P: Right Lord, something must be done in Egypt.  
Someone must help your people there.  
Thank goodness you see the need.  
It's about time you got around to acting.  
Congratulations, Lord. I'm all for the project.

Here I am Lord,  
but send Martha.

Martha: Here I am Lord.  
But I'm already serving on three important ministry teams.  
Send Terry.

Terry R-D: Here I am Lord.  
But I work full-time in a stressful job. And I have pets to take care of.  
Send Suzanne.

Suzanne: Here I am Lord.  
But I travel too much. I can't commit to anything.  
Send Jeff.

Jeff: Here I am Lord,

but I'm completely tied up in my kids sports teams and extra-curricular activities.  
Send Dawn.

Dawn: Here I am Lord,  
but I've got to find a job.  
Send Laura.

Laura: Here I am Lord,  
but it's not in my job description.  
Send Claude.

All: Who's Claude?

Ed: Moses! Moses!

Terry P: Here I am...Send Claude.

Ed: It is natural, one supposes, to feel somewhat inadequate when confronting burning bushes.  
It is natural, one supposes, when we really have our attention directed to a crucial need in human life,  
to feel our own resources are not sufficient.  
At burning bushes, we empathize with Moses, as he shouts out...

Terry P: I am not religious enough for this job, Lord.  
I can't go to Egypt. I'm a wanted man there.  
I am not a public speaker.  
Here I am Lord,  
but Martha's friendlier.  
Send her.

Martha: Terry is more conscientious.  
Send her.

Terry R-D: Suzanne has been a member longer.  
Send her.

Suzanne: Jeff is taller.  
Send him.

Jeff: Dawn has seminary training.  
Send her.



Dawn: Laura has more experience.  
Send her.

Laura: Here I am Lord.  
Send Claude.

All: Who's Claude?

Terry P: The trouble with burning bushes is they don't go away.  
At burning bushes, we see a need.  
We hear our names being called.  
We may feel inadequate.  
We may be sure someone else could do it better.  
We may not want to be bothered.  
We wish the bush would go way,  
but burning bushes are very personal.  
That burning bush is for me.

Ed: Not Martha.  
Not Terry.  
Not Suzanne.  
Not Jeff.  
Not Dawn.  
Not Laura,  
Not Claude...

Terry P: The burning bush I meet is my own.  
It is my name I hear called.  
There God calls me to meet the particular human need I see.  
No matter how I try to escape, the name that is called remains the same.

Ed: Moses! Moses!

Terry P: That's my name.

Ed: Moses! Moses!.

Terry P: Here I am, send Martha.

Martha: Send Terry.

Terry R-D: Send Suzanne.

Suzanne: Send Jeff.

Jeff: Send Laura.

Laura: Send Claude.

All: Who's Claude?

Terry P: But the burning bush is not for Claude.  
It is for me.  
Claude has his own bush.  
The bush I see,  
the need God puts before my eyes,  
in my mind,  
on my heart,  
has my name written on it.  
My name alone.

Ed: "And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?'  
Then I said, 'Here I am! Send me!'"

\* Hymn

"Here I Am, Lord"

HERE I AM (SCHUTTE)

**I, the Lord of sea and sky,  
I have heard my people cry  
All who dwell in dark and sin  
My hand will save.**

**I, who made the stars of night,  
I will make their darkness bright.  
Who will bear my light to them.  
Whom shall I send? (R)**

**(Refrain) Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?  
I have heard you calling in the night.  
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.  
I will hold your people in my heart.**

**I, the Lord of snow and rain,  
I have borne my people's pain.  
I have wept for love of them  
They turn away.**

I will break their hearts of stone,  
Give them hearts for love alone.  
I will speak my words to them.  
Whom shall I send? (R)

I, the Lord of wind and flame,  
I will tend the poor and lame.  
I will set a feast for them.  
My hand will save.

Finest bread I will provide  
Till their hearts be satisfied.  
I will give my life to them.  
Whom shall I send? (R)

Time & Talent Survey

Cheri Dennis

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication

Suzanne Lamorey

The stories of Moses and Isaiah remind us that God gives each of us gifts to use in God's kin-dom on earth. Let us take this time to give thanks for those unique skills and talents and to give thanks for the financial offerings that Holy Covenant has received as together we dedicate our time, money, skills and talents to the work of bringing in God's kin-dom on earth as it is in heaven.

**Many: God who calls us, and never gives up on us, today we celebrate the many and diverse gifts that you have given each and every one of us. May our gifts of time, money, skills and talents be blessed by you for we dedicate them to your work of creating a just world for all. Amen.**

Hymn of Thanks 785 "We Give You but Your Own"

SCHUMANN

**We give you but your own, whate'er the gift may be;  
All that we have is yours alone, we give it gratefully.**

\* Hymn

**"I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me" I'M GONNA LIVE**

**I'm gonna live so God can use me, anywhere Lord, anytime!  
I'm gonna live so God can use me, anywhere Lord, anytime!**

**I'm gonna work so God can use me, anywhere Lord, anytime!  
I'm gonna work so God can use me, anywhere Lord, anytime!**

**I'm gonna pray so God can use me, anywhere Lord, anytime!  
I'm gonna pray so God can use me, anywhere Lord, anytime!**

**I'm gonna sing so God can use me, anywhere Lord, anytime!  
I'm gonna sing so God can use me, anywhere Lord, anytime!**

\* Benediction

Cheri Dennis

\* Benediction Response                    “You Are the Seed Refrain”  
Go, my friends, go to the world, proclaiming love to all,  
Messengers of my forgiving peace, eternal love.  
Be, my friends, a loyal witness, from the dead I arose;  
“Lo, I’ll be with you forever, till the end of the world.”

Postlude

“Song of Hope”

Alvin Schutmaat

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*Portions of this service adapted from “For Righteousness: Service Prayers for the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost written by The Rev. Dr. Elyse Berry serves as the Associate for Advocacy and Leadership Development for the Council of Health and Human Service Ministries of the United Church of Christ. Learn more at [chsm.org](http://chsm.org).*

*This skit is adapted from “Here I Am...Send Claude!” found in **The Next Voice You Hear**, ©1999 by David Steele. Published by Westminster John Knox 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:**

Kevin Edwards-Knight, D Evans, Brian Hankins, JoAnn Jellison,  
Diane Neese, 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 Christian Education Team for providing today's refreshments following worship.

## 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/>

### **UCC CLIMATE HOPE WRITING CAMPAIGN, JULY 30**

Before and after the worship service, in the gathering space, grab a coffee and donut hole (or two) and write a postcard to a legislator to encourage environmental justice. Postcards will be provided, as will addresses for legislators, sample wording, and information on the EPA. Postage has been donated.

**Monday, July 31 will be clean out the kitchen and refrigerator day...be sure to take your items home following worship on Sunday.**

### **CARD SHOWER FOR LINN FINGER**

On Thursday, August 10, Linn Finger will turn 85 years young, and we know he'd love to hear from you through a birthday card or call that week. Cards are available in the gathering room - drop in the box for a collective package, or mail yours to:

Linn Finger - Room 205B

Royal Park Health Center

2700 Royal Commons Lane

Matthews, NC 28105

His phone number is (704) 472-5556

### **CHARLOTTE PRIDE INTERFAITH SERVICE, AUGUST 13, 4pm**

Caldwell Presby, <https://cltpri.de/interfaith>

### **CHARLOTTE PRIDE PARADE, AUGUST 20, Arrive by 12:30pm**

Marchers will need to arrive by 12:30PM to line up before the parade, which starts at 1:00PM. Please sign up in the gathering room or email Holly ([hsmiddleton@gmail.com](mailto:hsmiddleton@gmail.com)) or Suzanne ([suzlam@yahoo.com](mailto:suzlam@yahoo.com)).

### **SOJOURNERS CLASS**

All are welcomed to join us Sundays at 9:45am in the Conference Room or via Zoom. We are currently reviewing the book Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy by Weaver-Zercher, Krabill, and Nolt. No preparation is necessary. Contact Cheryl Milam for more information: [docmilam@hotmail.com](mailto:docmilam@hotmail.com).

**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.

**PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER**

**Members**

Linda Carver, Gary & Linda Clark, Cindy Coble, Kevin Decker, Linn Finger, Tom & Kathy Habel, Suzanne Hopkins & Shakti Subramanian, 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**

G.D. (Joy Johnson), Jessica (Kathleen Wagner), Joyce (Kathleen Wagner), Savannah (Beth Sharp), Linda Burby, Laura Christian (Beth Sharp), David & Cecelia Griffin (JP Griffin), Juana Hernandez (Melissa Noll), 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](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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