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## Compassion

The true measure of our character is how we treat the poor, the disfavored, the accused, the incarcerated, and the condemned.

We are all implicated when we allow other people to be mistreated. An absence of compassion can corrupt the decency of a community, a state, a nation. Fear and anger can make us vindictive and abusive, unjust and unfair, until we all suffer from the absence of mercy and we condemn ourselves as much as we victimize others. The closer we get to mass incarceration and extreme levels of punishment, the more I believe it's necessary to recognize that we all need mercy, we all need justice, and—perhaps— we all need some measure of unmerited grace.

—Bryan Stevenson, *Just Mercy*

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

**August 6, 2023 10:55 am**

Prelude "Come Build a Church" Ken Medema

Chiming of the Hour

Welcome and Announcements Cheri Dennis

One: May the peace of Christ be with you!

Many: **And also with you.**

Introit "Like the Murmur of the Dove's Song" (v. 1) BRIDEGROOM

**Like the murmur of the dove's song, like the challenge of her flight,**

**Like the vigor of the wind's rush, like the new flame's eager might:**

**Come, Holy Spirit, come.**

\* Call to Worship (*Psalm 145:8-9, 14-21 adapted*) Kevin Decker

One: The Holy One is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

Many: **The Holy One is good to all, with compassion for all God's creation.**

One: The Holy One upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down.

Many: **The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.**

One: You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing.

Many: **The Holy One is just in all ways and always kind.**

One: The Holy One is near to all who call on God, to all who call in truth.

Many: **The Holy One fulfills the desire of all who are in fear and hears their cry and saves them.**

One: The Holy One watches over all who love the Divine Presence and will make wickedness no more.

All: **My mouth will speak the praise of the Holy One, and all flesh will bless God's holy name forever and ever.**

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

\* Hymn                    “Like the Murmur of the Dove’s Song” (v.2)                    BRIDEGROOM  
To the members of Christ’s body, to the branches of the Vine,  
To the church in faith assembled, to our midst as gift and sign:  
Come, Holy Spirit, come.

Invocation (Isaiah 55:1) (*unison*)                    Kevin Decker  
Hear, everyone who thirsts; come to the waters; and we who have need  
come, receive the abundance of substance provided freely for our bodies  
and souls. Incline our ears, and let us come to God to listen, so that we  
may live. Our Creator makes an everlasting covenant with us as God has  
with our ancestors. We ask for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in this  
sacred space, so we can recommit ourselves through word, love and action  
to our everlasting covenant with our God in Jesus’ Name. Amen.

\* Hymn                    “Like the Murmur of the Dove’s Song” (v.3)                    BRIDEGROOM  
With the healing of division, with the ceaseless voice of prayer,  
With the power to love and witness with the peace beyond compare:  
Come, Holy Spirit, come.

Prayer for Transformation & New Life (*unison*)                    Kevin Decker  
As we gather in worship, let us take this moment to consider our needs for  
transformation and forgiveness. I invite you to quietly reflect on our need for  
grace.

(Time for silent reflection)

Dear God, the creator of all things based on love, you created us in your image  
of love. There have been times we have fallen short of that love, not only to  
you but to each other and all of creation. We ask for your forgiveness. We  
thank you for the comforting strength and compassion of the Holy Spirit who  
teaches us to do better in bringing love and grace in all we do. In Jesus’ name,  
we pray. Amen.

Words of Assurance                    Cheri Dennis  
Friends, be encouraged by these words of Paul to the church in Ephesus: “Put  
away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander,  
together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving  
one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.” Rest assured, my friends, our  
sins are forgiven. Amen.

Response to God's Grace

"Glory to God"

GLORY TO GOD

Glory to God, whose goodness shines on me,  
And to the Christ, whose grace has pardoned me,  
And to the Spirit, whose love has set me free.  
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen.

World without end, without end. Amen. (3x)  
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen.

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.

Prayer for Illumination (*sung*)

SANCTUARY

Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy, tried and true.  
With thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for you.

Ho, everyone who thirsts,  
come to the waters;

and you that have no money,  
come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk  
without money and without price.

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,  
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,  
and delight yourselves in rich food.

Incline your ear, and come to me;  
listen, so that you may live.

I will make with you an everlasting covenant,  
my steadfast, sure love for David.

See, I made him a witness to the peoples,  
a leader and commander for the peoples.

See, you shall call nations that you do not know,  
and nations that do not know you shall run to you,  
because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel,  
for he has glorified you.

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

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

\* Gospel Lesson

Matthew 14:13-21

Kevin Decker

Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.' Jesus said to them, 'They need not go away; you give them something to eat.' They replied, 'We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.' And he said, 'Bring them here to me.' Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

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 "From Compassion to Miracles" Cheri Dennis

Prayer of Dedication and Thanksgiving Kevin Decker

One: Holy Covenant has been blessed with friends and members who have heard the call of God and have contributed to the work of this church through their money, time, and skills. Let us now together dedicate those offerings that have been received to the work of bringing in God's kin-dom on earth as it is in heaven.

All: **Holy One, you have called us to continue with your mission of bringing your love to all the world. And you have provided us with the resources to do this. We now dedicate those resources to this mission as we continue in the struggle to bring your justice and peace to your creation. Amen.**

\* Doxology THANK YOU LORD  
Thank you, Lord. (3x) I just want to thank you, Lord.

## SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Preparation Cheri Dennis

In the United Church of Christ, we practice an open communion, which means all are welcome at this table...God's table. You don't have to be a member of this church or any church to partake in the sharing of the bread and drinking of the wine. For God will meet each and every one of us at this table. Here, at this table, we remember what God has done through God's son, Jesus Christ. Through his teaching, healing, and loving, Jesus brought God's love, God's kin-dom of justice and peace for all, closer to fruition. Here at this table we are strengthened to continue this mission. God meets us here at this table.

Video "God Will Meet You There" Mia McClain  
*Mia McClain, Greg Jarrell, Ocie Davis, Mike Gudbauer, Sean Higgins*

[God Will Meet You There](#)

Words of Institution

We remember, the night before Jesus would be betrayed and crucified, that he sat among his friends and took bread, blessed, and broke it, and said "Take and eat for this is my body given for you. As often as you do it do it in remembrance of me". After the supper had ended, Jesus took the cup, blessed it and said, "Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." My friends, whenever we share this bread and cup, we remember the compassion and love Jesus taught and the call to follow Christ in all we do.

**“Seed, Scattered and Sown”**

***Seed, scattered and sown, wheat, gathered and grown,  
Bread, broken and shared as one, the Living Bread of God.***

***Vine, fruit of the land, wine, work of our hands,  
One cup that is shared by all;  
The Living Cup, the Living Bread of God.***

***Duet:*** Is not the bread we break a sharing in our Lord?  
Is not the cup we bless the blood of Christ outpoured? *(R)*

The seed which falls on rock will wither and will die.  
The seed within good ground will flower and have life. *(R)*

As wheat upon the hills was gathered and was grown,  
So may the church of God be gathered into one. *(R)*

Prayer of Thanksgiving after Communion *(unison)*

**Holy Creator, we remember the sacrifice of Jesus, and all who follow to bring love and justice to the world. May this bread and drink nourish us as they are the symbols of Christ’s essence in all of us. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.**

\* Hymn 76

**“Sent Forth by God’s Blessing”**

THE ASH GROVE

**Sent forth by God’s blessing, our true faith confessing,  
The people of God from this dwelling take leave.  
The Service is ended, O now be extended  
The fruits of our worship in all who believe.  
The seed of the teaching, receptive hearts reaching,  
Shall blossom in action for God and for all.  
God’s grace did invite us, and love shall unite us  
To work for God’s realm and to answer the call.**

**With praise and thanksgiving to God ever living,  
The tasks of our everyday life we will face.  
Our faith ever sharing, in love ever caring,  
Embracing God’s children of each tribe and race.  
With your grace you feed us, with your light now lead us,  
Unite us as one in this life that we share.  
Then may all the living with praise and thanksgiving  
Give honor to Christ and that name which we bear.**

\* 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

“Love Is Your Way”

Shirley Erena Murray

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*Portions of this service adapted from For Compassion: Service Prayers for the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost written by Rev. Roberto Ochoa, the Minister for Ethnic Inclusion, & Congregational Support for Rural and Small Churches for the National Setting of the United Church of Christ. He is a member of Mt. Zion Congregational UCC in Cleveland, OH.*

*The video used in the communion service is God Will Meet You There ©2021 Mia McClain. Written and performed by Mia McClain, accompanied by Greg Jarrell, Ocie Davis, Mike Gudbauer and Sean Higgins. Filmed by Wes Cobb, West Art Video. Edited by Jason Chesnut, ANKOS films. All publishing rights reserved. Permission granted to reproduce and stream for use in services of worship or church education. Complete YouTube video is available here: 2021 UCC Communion Service*

*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, 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 HCUCS Choir 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/>

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

All are welcomed to participate in our sandwich making mission. No experience necessary! Join us in the conference room following worship. Come join in the fun and fellowship!

### **CHARLOTTE PRIDE INTERFAITH SERVICE: Prosper and Persevere**

Sunday, August 13, 4pm, Caldwell Presbyterian Church, 1609 E 5th St, Charlotte  
For more information visit: <https://cltpri.de/interfaith>

### **CONFRONTING WHITENESS, SECOND SESSION STARTING SOON**

This course, developed by Rev. Ben Boswell, the Senior Minister at Myers Park Baptist Church, will be offered virtually on Sunday evenings from 7-8:30pm starting late August/early September and there are 9 sessions total for the course. Read, hear, and watch the work of Black creatives and discuss what we are learning from their perspectives about whiteness. There is time for reflection, confession, and hearing other people's stories in the group. You also get to do this with people from your own church community. **More details are found in the e-newsletter.** Register here: <https://forms.gle/XSfVCBQTQreCCKJH9>

Questions? Email Lisa Cloninger at [lisaswimbikesing@gmail.com](mailto:lisaswimbikesing@gmail.com)

### **SOJOURNERS CLASS**

All are welcomed to join us Sundays. Contact Cheryl Milam for more information: [docmilam@hotmail.com](mailto:docmilam@hotmail.com). Join us at 9:45am in the Conference Room or via Zoom.

## PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

### Members

Linda Carver, Gary & Linda Clark, 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

Family & Friends of Larry Griffeth; 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 Yonkovig), 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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