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Silent Meditation

“Sometimes beautiful things come into our lives out of nowhere. We can’t always understand them, but we have to trust in them. I know you want to question everything, but sometimes it pays to just have a little faith.”

— Lauren Kate

“Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.”

— Corrie ten Boom

“I am fundamentally an optimist. Whether that comes from nature or nurture, I cannot say. Part of being optimistic is keeping one’s head pointed toward the sun, one’s feet moving forward. There were many dark moments when my faith in humanity was sorely tested, but I would not and could not give myself up to despair.

That way lay defeat and death.”

- Nelson Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom:
Autobiography of Nelson Mandela

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

August 13, 2023 10:55 am

Prelude “In Christ There Is No East or West” arr. Michael Hassell

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 a 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 Jeffery Edwards-Knight

One: God moves among us.

Many: **We welcome your presence, Lord, no matter by what means you arrive.**

One: Reach out your hand and I shall always be with you.

Many: **We reach for you, Jesus, and trust that you are present when we fear or ache.**

One: Your presence, Oh Lord, calms the seas as it calms our hearts.

Many: **May we rest assured that you are ever present with us, assuaging our worries as you love our anxieties into softness.**

* 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.**

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

* Invocation (*unison*)

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

God of so many names, you command us to come to you, yet we are doubtful of our abilities to make the journey. We are so uncertain of our steps, yet we long to have the faith in ourselves that you have in us. Be with us and embolden us through faith to rise as we are called to walk with you and walk alongside those who need companionship. Show us how to be children of God who can set skepticism down and take up the mantle of faithful presence.

* 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*)

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

God our gentle parent, bring calm to the storms that batter us and blow us off course. We do not need to walk on water; we need only walk through our lives as whole and holy children who recognize that your love unites us, buoys us, and carries us forward to face miraculous challenges in a complex world. Help us to see through the clutter of daily existence in order to focus on what is most important: love, compassion, faith, and connection. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Cheri Dennis

Even when we doubt, God is with us. God walks beside us, through us, with us, in all that we do. Miracles are among us if we see ourselves with God’s loving gaze.

Special Music

“Bound for Glory”
Handbell Choir

arr. Tammy Waldrop

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.

Special Music

“Great Is Your Faithfulness”
Lisa Cloninger & Kathi Smith, vocals

arr. William Runyan

A Reading from Psalms Psalm 139
O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
 you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
 and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
 O Lord, you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before,
 and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
 it is so high that I cannot attain it.
Where can I go from your spirit?
 Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
 if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
If I take the wings of the morning
 and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
 and your right hand shall hold me fast.
If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall cover me,
 and the light around me become night’,
even the darkness is not dark to you;
 the night is as bright as the day,
 for darkness is as light to you.
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!

Keith Dennis

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.
O that you would kill the wicked, O God,
and that the bloodthirsty would depart from me—
those who speak of you maliciously,
and lift themselves up against you for evil!
Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord?
And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?
I hate them with perfect hatred;
I count them my enemies.
Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my thoughts.
See if there is any wicked way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

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

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

Choral Anthem

“Wade in The Water”

arr. Donald Moore

* Gospel Lesson

Matthew 14:22-33

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking towards them on the lake. But when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified, saying, ‘It is a ghost!’ And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, ‘Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.’

Peter answered him, ‘Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.’ He said, ‘Come.’ So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came towards Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, ‘Lord, save me!’ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, ‘You of little faith, why did you doubt?’ When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God.’

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

“Treading Water Across the Pacific”

Cheri Dennis

Prayer of Dedication and Thanksgiving (*unison*)

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

One: The gifts of faith come to us in many ways, and the miracles we witness are not always so obvious. May the manifestation of God’s great abundance in our lives inspire us to generosity in as many ways as we see God’s love unfurl. Join me now as we dedicate those gifts Holy Covenant as received.

Many: **Holy One, we thank you for revealing yourself to us in ways both big and small, in ways miraculous and mundane. Use our gifts to further your loving justice in our communities near and far. Amen.**

* Doxology

THANK YOU, LORD

Thank you, Lord. (3x) I just want to thank you, Lord!

Special Music

“Turn, Turn, Turn”
Brian & Laura Hankins

Pete Seeger

LITANY OF DEPARTURE AND FAREWELL

Jeffery Edwards-Knight, President of Holy Covenant Consistory; Rev. Gregg Walker, ordained UCC Minister

One: Our church family is constantly changing. People come and go. Babies are born. Children grow up. People commit themselves to one another. Loved ones and friends among us come to the end of their lives. Individuals move into our community and church life. Others leave us, moving away to new places, new experiences, and new opportunities. It is important and right that we recognize these times of passage, of endings and beginnings. In May 2021, Cheri Underwood Dennis began serving Holy Covenant United Church of Christ as Interim Minister. Today we say farewell to Cheri as she leaves in preparation for the beginning of our new settled minister.

Many: **We are sad to see her go, but we recognize that just as she has been your gift to us, so now she goes as a gift to the wider community.**

One: We pray for each other now as our once parallel roads of pilgrimage diverge.

Many: **We thank you for all we have done and learned and shared together.**

One: We pray for Cheri as she explores and clarifies new ventures onward from here.

Many: **May she grow in your grace and in the knowledge of your love, so that she may be a blessing to many. We pray for Holy Covenant, that you will keep us faithful to the vision we have shared, and that you will show us what we should do, how we should be, now that Cheri is no longer with us.**

One: As we part, we reaffirm that it has been your Spirit who brought us together, your Spirit who has enlivened our fellowship;

Many: **your Spirit who goes with Cheri and your Spirit who stays with us.**

All: **Thanks be to God! Amen.**

Minister: I thank Holy Covenant United Church of Christ, its members and friends, for the love, kindness, and support shown me these last three and a half years. I ask forgiveness for the mistakes I have made. I am grateful for the ways my leadership has been accepted. As I leave, I carry with me all that I have learned here.

All: **We receive your thankfulness, offer forgiveness, and accept that you are now retiring to serve and minister in new ways. We express our gratitude for your time among us. We ask your forgiveness for our mistakes. Your influence on our faith and faithfulness will not leave us at your departure.**

Minister: I forgive you and accept your gratitude, trusting that our time together and our parting are pleasing to God.

VOWS OF RELEASE

Leader: Do you, the members and friends of Holy Covenant United Church of Christ release Cheri Underwood Dennis from the duties of interim minister?

All: **We do, with the help of God.**

Leader: Do you offer your encouragement for her ministry as it unfolds in new ways?

All: **We do, with the help of God.**

Leader: Do you, Cheri Underwood Dennis, release this local church from turning to you and depending on you?

Minister: I do, with the help of God.

Leader: Do you offer your encouragement for the continued ministry here and on the relationship with another who will come to serve?

Minister: I do, with the help of God.

WITNESS OF THE DENOMINATION

One: As a minister in the United Church of Christ, I am witness to the words spoken: words of thankfulness, forgiveness, and release. The member churches of our Association and Conference hold each of you in prayer. We pledge our support in the transitions signified in this service.

Officers: Thanks be to God.

Leader: Let us pray.

All: God, whose everlasting love for all is trustworthy, help each of us trust the future which rests in your care. The time we were together in your name saw our laughter and tears, our hopes and disappointments. Guide us as we hold these cherished memories and move in new directions, until that time to come when we are completely one with you and with each other, in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Presentation

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

* Hymn “God, Be the Love to Search and Keep Me” GREEN TYLER

God, be the love to search and keep me;
God be the prayer to move my voice;
God, be the strength to now uphold me:
O Christ, surround me; O Christ, surround me.

Bind to myself the Name of Holy,
Great cloud of witnesses enfold;
Prophets, apostles, angels witness:
O Christ, surround me; O Christ, surround me.

Brightness of sun and glow of moonlight,
Flashing of lightning, strength of wind,
Depth of the sea to soil of planet:
O Christ, surround me; O Christ, surround me.

Walking behind to hem my journey,
Going ahead to light my way,
And from beneath, above, and all ways:
O Christ, surround me; O Christ, surround me.

Christ in the eyes of all who see me,
Christ in the ears that hear my voice,
Christ in the hearts of all who know me:
O Christ, surround me; O Christ, surround me.

* 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

“Thuma Mina/Siyahamba”
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arr. Mark Sedio

*Portions of this service adapted from **For Faith: Service Prayers for the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost** written by Dr. Sherry Warren who serves as Minister of Women’s and Gender Justice for the National Ministries of the UCC. She loves to garden and grow things.*

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.

Many thanks to our Consistory 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/>

WE PROVIDE OUR EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME WITH HELP FROM:

D Evans, Brian Hankins, Jo Ann 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>



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>

CHARLOTTE PRIDE PARADE, SUNDAY, AUGUST 20

The 2023 Charlotte Pride Parade will take place on Sunday, August 20 beginning at 1:00 pm. Since there will be 135 groups in front of us before we start walking, plan to be at our staging area on 11th Street at 1:30 pm. Wear your Holy Covenant T-Shirts! There's maps and details printed in the Gathering room, or check the e-newsletter for more downloadable details.

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. Questions? Email Lisa Cloninger at lisawimbikesing@gmail.com Register here: <https://forms.gle/XSfVCBQTQreCCkjh9>

SOJOURNERS CLASS

All are welcomed to join us Sundays. Our next book selection will be The Gnostic Gospels by Elaine Pagels. Contact Cheryl Milam for more information: docmilam@hotmail.com. Join us at 9:45am in the Conference Room or via Zoom.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Members

Rev. Jerry Rhyne and family in the death of his wife, Rev. Marion Rhyne
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 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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