



Photo by Milosz Roman on Unsplash

Journey

“Sometimes the smallest step in the right direction
ends up being the biggest step of your life.”

– Anonymous

“I wish you didn’t have to go so soon –
but I am so glad for the time we had together.”

– Anonymous

“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters
compared to what lies within us.”

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

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

August 27, 2023 10:55 am

Prelude “When in Our Music God Is Glorified” C. V. Stanford

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 433 “In the Bulb There Is a Flower” HYMN OF PROMISE

**In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree;
In cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter there’s a spring that waits to be,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.**

**There’s a song in every silence, seeking word and melody;
There’s a dawn for every darkness, bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future; what it holds, a mystery,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.**

**In our end is our beginning; in our time, infinity;
In our doubt there is believing; in our life, eternity.
In our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.**

* Call to Worship Jeffery Edwards-Knight

One: Words of encouragement came from the prophets to the people.

Many: **To live a life that is full. To plant, eat, build, love, and grow.**

One: We pray for the vitality of our many communities and ministries.

Many: **Keeping God at the center of all that is.**

One: We enter worship today with hope in our hearts.

Many: **For the end of struggle, and to live as God desires.**

One: God has made a faithful and enduring promise to us.

Many: **That at every turn and in every change, there is still the possibility
of life. Today we sing with joy in such hope!**

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

* Hymn

“Gather Us In”

Marty Haugen

Here in this place, the new light is streaming,
shadows of doubt are vanished away:
See in this space our fears and our dreamings
brought here to you in the light of this day.

Gather us in, the lost and forsaken,
gather us in, our spirits inflame.
Call to us now and we shall awaken,
we shall arise at the sound of our name.

Not just in buildings, small and confining,
not in some heaven light-years away,
here in this place the new light is shining,
now is God present, and now is the day.

Gather us in and hold us forever,
gather us in and make us your own,
gather us in, all peoples together -
fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

* Invocation (*unison*)

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

God of Many Names, we gather as a people formed by you. You call us from many places and from all walks of life. You call us by name with purpose, care, and love. May our time together in this sacred space, and online through the power of technology, remind us of our connectedness to you, each other, and all creation. May we be rooted in you, challenged to change, and encouraged in love. We welcome your constant presence among us. We seek your guiding Spirit. And we place our trust for a future with hope in you. Amen.

I greet you, sure Redeemer, with my heart,
Glad for the saving love that you impart,
Who pain did undergo for my poor sake;
I pray you from our hearts all cares to take.

You have the true and perfect gentleness,
No harshness have you and no bitterness;
Grant us the grace that flows in you so free
That we may dwell in perfect unity.

Our hope is all in you and you alone;
We trust the promise that your word makes known.
O dear Redeemer, make us calm and sure,
That in your strength we evermore endure.

Prayer for Transformation & New Life (*unison*) Jeffery Edwards-Knight
Renewing God, we confess that all too often we find ourselves conforming to this world. We find the voices we prioritize can be far removed from you. We drown out your Still Speaking Voice with the noise of consumerism and commercialism. We ignore your gentle nudge in favor of our own desires and comfort. We fail to actively love our neighbor, care for your creation, or extend your ever-widening welcome. We resist transformation through the renewing of our minds and settle for the thoughts and ideas that deplete and deprive our souls of abundant life. Forgive us and continually challenge us to be the people you have empowered and equipped us to be.

Words of Assurance Jeffery Edwards-Knight
The One who created you and formed you knows your struggles. God is still speaking, renewing, and transforming. God’s grace is still sufficient and has made every day to be new. God has faith in you and abides with you on this journey toward new life and transformation. Let the Christ which dwells within rise again.

The Lord's Prayer (*unison*)

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

“One Voice”

Ruth Moody

Lisa Cloninger, Kathleen Smith, Judah L. Jones, vocals;
David McGuirt, guitar

Hebrew Scripture

Psalm 121

Laura Hankins

I lift up my eyes to the hills— from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. God will not let your foot be moved; God who keeps you will not slumber. The Lord who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The Living God will keep you from all evil and will keep your life. God will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and for evermore.

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

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

Choir Anthem

“Come Build a Church”

Ken Medema

Hebrew Lesson

Jeremiah 29:11

Christopher Czarnecki

For surely, I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

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.**

Homily

Christopher Czarnecki

Prayer of Dedication and Thanksgiving

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

One: Through our offerings, we are invited to put God first in our lives, to show our gratitude and our commitment to sustaining what God has given to us. We owe a great deal to God: our lives, our health, people who love us, meaningful work, and the strength to pursue justice. Let us respond in proportion to our gratitude.

Many: **Generous God, we bring our gifts to you, and offer them as a symbol of sacrifice and service. Help us to use them in service to one another so that we may reflect your spirit and goodness. Bless these gifts and all who have shared, using our wealth, our time, our abilities for the good of all your people. Amen.**

* Doxology

THANK YOU LORD

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

Gift in Song

“Keep Me in Your Heart for Awhile”

Warren Zevon

Lisa Cloninger, Kathleen Smith, vocals; David McGuirt, guitar

LITANY OF DEPARTURE AND FAREWELL

Gregg Walker: 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. Today we share this time of farewell with long-time Holy Covenant members Kathi Smith and Lisa Cloninger as they are now moving to Marshall NC, just northwest of Asheville.

Over the years, Lisa and Kathi have been far more than just ambassadors for Holy Covenant UCC, they have been ambassadors of the United Church of Christ, both in its pursuit for a more just world and its love for all God’s people. And they have done so all while being their kind, caring, and authentic selves. In their more than twenty years with us, they have become engrained in the church’s history, truly being its pillars, movers, and shakers.

Lisa joined Holy Covenant in 1997, when she was a college student. Kathi joined just a few years later in 2001. Both have participated actively in the life of the church and been involved in various musical programs of the church. Lisa has taught children’s Sunday School, served several times on Consistory - twice as President and

as an Elder. She has chaired the Donna Collins Sunshine Fund, cochaired the Racial Justice & Equity Team, and has been a member of the WISE Team.

Kathi has served on Consistory several times, as a Deacon & Elder. She has helped coordinate Room in the Inn, participated in lunchtime devotions for Urban Ministry, marched in the MLK parade, chaired & served on the Budget/Finance, Worship, and Communication Teams, served on the Endowment, Strategic Planning and Pastoral Search Teams, served as Treasurer and interim accompanist, led retreats, and co-written several successful grants for Holy Covenant. Lisa and Kathi helped lead this church through pastoral sabbaticals and the merger with Pilgrim Congregational UCC.

There are many bright moments in their time with us to name, but among the brightest was when they, along with Rev. Nancy Allison, were plaintiffs in the lawsuit against the State of North Carolina for its unconstitutional marriage law. Amendment One. On October 3, 2014, they were married at Holy Covenant; a week later Amendment One was overturned by the federal court, on the basis of the UCC's lawsuit.

Gregg Walker: For the longest of time now, Kathi and Lisa have shared our common life in this church community. We have been with each other in good times and bad times, in joys and sorrows. We have joined together in the struggle for a more just and loving world. In that pursuit we have laughed and cried together, we have worshiped and praised God together, and during your time with us we have made memories that will last a lifetime. And now we say our farewells.

* Kathi and Lisa: We thank Holy Covenant United Church of Christ, its members and friends, for the love, kindness, and support shown to us during our many years with you. We ask forgiveness for the mistakes we have made. We are grateful for the ways our gifts of ministry have been accepted, allowed to flourish, and have made a difference. Together with you, we have made the world a better place, and as we leave, we not only carry with us all that we have learned here, but we carry friendships, memories, and the enduring spirit of Christ that unites beyond the walls of this church forever.

* Congregation: We receive your thankfulness, offer forgiveness, and accept that now you leave to minister elsewhere. We express our gratitude for your time among us. Your influence on our faith and faithfulness will not leave us at your departure. We feel sorrow in your leaving, yet we rejoice with you in anticipation of this new phase of your life. We will miss your love and support,

yet we know your gifts are meant to be shared with the new church and community you will call home. As you both have blessed our lives and this community, you will be a blessing where God has called you next. As you head into this next chapter of your lives we say, “goodbye,” holding you in our hearts for what will be your joyous future together.

Gregg Walker: Let us pray. God, whose everlasting love is for all, help each of us trust the future which rests in your care. The time we were together in your name we saw laughter and tears, hopes and disappointments, and the work of Christ ultimately prevail. Guide us as we hold onto the cherished memories we have made and allow Kathi and Lisa to move to this new place God is calling them. Together we made a holy covenant, and for it we all have been blessed. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Presentation

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

* Hymn 391

“In the Midst of New Dimensions”

NEW DIMENSIONS

In the midst of new dimensions, in the face of changing ways,
Who will lead the pilgrim peoples wandering in their separate ways?

Refrain: 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.

We are man and we are woman, all persuasions, old and young
Each a gift in your creation, each a love song to be sung. (R)

Should the threats of dire predictions cause us to withdraw in pain,
May your blazing phoenix spirit resurrect the church again. (R)

Presentation

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

* Benediction

Christopher Czarnecki

Song of Farewell

“Friends”

Michael W. Smith

D Evans, Judah L. Jones, Laura Murphey, Meg Houlihan, vocals

Postlude

“How Can I Keep from Singing”

Barbara Boertje

Songs in this service are used by permission.

CCLI License #11439355; CSPL164710

Portions of this service adapted from UCC Worship Ways; Life in Liturgy

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 your **Racial Justice & Equity, Budget & Finance and Worship Teams** for providing todays 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/>

GAME NIGHT, SATURDAY, AUGUST 26 6:30-8:30pm

BYOGames (Bring Your Own) or just come join us in the church Gathering Room and have some fun! Game "fanatics" as well as newbies are welcome! We've been having a blast playing "Scattergories". Snacks and beverages provided, or bring along your favorites. RSVP Suzanne Lamorey, slamorey@uncc.edu.

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 at: <https://forms.gle/XSfVCBQTQreCCKJH9>
Questions? Email Lisa Cloninger at lisaswimbikesing@gmail.com

SOJOURNERS CLASS

The Sojourners will view the next video in the Great Courses lectures on *World Religions: Hinduism* on Sept 3. We will begin a discussion of the book, *The Gnostic Gospels* by Elaine Pagels, on Sept 10. Join us in person or via Zoom, no preparation necessary. We gather at 9:45am in the Conference Room, or via Zoom Meeting ID: 87673409762 Passcode: 523903. Contact Cheryl Milam for more information, docmilam@hotmail.com.

YOUR OFFERING, YOUR WAY

Various methods are available for your convenience! Schedule offerings, one time or recurring, through your bank's online payment system. Many financial institutions offer free services to its customers. Mailing a check, from home or a financial institution? Please use this secure address:

Holy Covenant UCC, PO Box 481285, Charlotte NC 28269

Donate online at HolyCovenantUCC.org/give-2/ via PayPal or Subsplash Wallet. Look for the *Give Today* button. Questions can be directed to the church office, office@holycovenantucc.org or 704-599-9810.



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,
Jim Humphrey, Sharon Landis, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Isabelle Reedy Powell, Ed &
Beth Sharp, Cynthia & Tommy Simpson, Bill Seaman, Shakti Subramanian, Anita
Taylor

Friends & Family Members

G. D. (Joy Johnson), Laura Christian (Beth Sharp), David & Cecelia Griffin (JP
Griffin), Juana Hernandez (Melissa Noll), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie
Hildebrand), Roxanne & Moose Meyer (Dana Endsley & Mike Yonkovig), 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), Janet
Wakefield (Linda Burby), 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. Christopher Czarnecki, M. Div., MBA, Senior Pastor
RevChris@holycovenantucc.org, 314-402-8167

Jon Weddell, M.Div, MSW, Minister of Music

Dawn Simmons, BSBF, Executive Assistant

Mailing address: PO Box 481285, Charlotte NC 28269

3501 West W.T. Harris Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28269-8510

www.holycovenantucc.org 704-599-9810