



Photo by Praxis: Faith in Action

“It’s the highest form of praise,” Abba had said,
“to keep believing that God is good
even when it doesn’t seem that way.”

–Lynn Austin

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

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HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 14, 2024, 10:55 am

** Your whole self is welcomed here. Please feel free to take care of your body during worship in ways that work for you.*

Prelude “O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing” arr. M. Dorian

Chiming of the Hour

Welcome and Announcements Terry Raley-Dennis

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

Introit 73 “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 the Heart Jon Heaslet

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

One: Let us fill our hearts and minds with hope as we hear the Words of Jesus Christ.

Many: **“Peace be with you.”**

One: When peace and justice seem uncertain, let us hear anew the Words of Jesus Christ.

Many: **“Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?”**

One: Let us be comforted by the presence of Christ, whose love, and light dwells within us.

Many: **Let our lives be witnesses of these things.**

One: Help us to be instruments of Christ’s peace to all in need of God’s healing love.

* Invocation (*unison*) Jon Heaslet

Risen Christ, create in us a clean heart so that we can meditate in your peace; abide in your mercy; be filled with your justice; and be made new by your love. In your name, we pray. Amen.

O for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise,
The glories ever echoing
The triumphs of God's grace!

My gracious Savior and my God,
Assist me to proclaim,
To spread through all the earth abroad
The honors of your name.

Jesus! the name that calms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease
Is music in the sinner's ears,
Is life, and health, and peace!

Glory to God, and love and praise
Be ever, ever given
By all the saints in every age,
The church in earth and heaven.

Prayer for Transformation and New Life (*unison*)

Jon Heaslet

Loving God, in your infinite wisdom, we are glad that you make all things new. Where there is hate, show your love. Where there is war, bring your peace. Where there is despair, bring your hope. Where there is fear, bring your understanding. Where there is scarcity, bring your abundance. Where there is systemic oppression, bring equal justice for all. By your perfect grace and mercy, make us new. May it be so. Amen.

Song

"Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive"

DETROIT

“Forgive our sins as we forgive,” you taught us, Lord, to pray,
But you alone can grant us grace to live the words we say.

Words of Grace

Rev. Melissa McQueen-Simmons

Loving God, thank you for the assurance of your grace. You grant us all your peace. Help us to trust in your peace, especially in times of conflict. Believing you will bring peace in our hearts, and to all the earth. Guiding us, so that all may come to know Jesus Christ, who is our Prince of Peace. In his name, we pray. Amen.

Response to God's Grace

GOODNESS IS STRONGER

**Goodness is stronger than evil; love is stronger than hate;
Light is stronger than darkness; life is stronger than death.**

Victory is ours; victory is ours through God who loves us. (2x)

Stories for All People

Linda Heaslet

Pastoral Prayer

Rev. Melissa McQueen-Simmons

Lord's Prayer (*unison*)

Our Creator who art in heaven, hallowed 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; 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*)

O CHRIST, SURROUND ME

**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.**

**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.**

Reading from Psalm 50:1-6

Terrence Hayes

The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Translation

A Psalm of Asaph

YHWH our God, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth. YHWH comes and won't be silent: a devouring fire goes before God, while storms rage all around. God summons heaven and earth to the trial of God's people:

"Gather to me my faithful ones, who make their covenant with me by sacrifice!"

The heavens affirm God's justice because it is God who is the judge! *Selah*

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

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

* Gospel Reading

John 5:24-29

Jon Heaslet

The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Translation

The truth of the matter is, whoever listens to my words and believes in the One who sent me has eternal life and isn't brought to judgment, having passed from death to life. The truth of the matter is, the hour will come- in fact is here already-when the dead will hear the voice of God's Only Begotten, and all who hear it will live. For just as Abba God is the source of life, God has ordained that the Only Begotten also be the source of life-and be given authority to execute judgment as the Chosen One of God. Don't be surprised at this, because the hour is coming when those in the grave will hear the Chosen One's voice and come forth: those who did good will rise to life and those who did evil will rise to condemnation.

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.**

The Good News

Rev. Melissa McQueen-Simmons

Invitation to Generosity

Jon Heaslet

Now is the time for our ministry of giving and sharing...

One: All are invited to give joyously to the church that bears witness to Christ's love.

Many: **Let us give with a joyful heart.**

One: God's generous love has given us every good and gracious gift.

Many: **We offer our gratitude for God's abundant blessings in our lives.**

One: Now, let us be a blessing to others in the ways that God has faithfully and generously blessed us.

* Doxology

LASST UNS ERFREUEN

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.

Praise God, all creatures high and low. Alleluia, alleluia!

Praise God, in Jesus fully known: Creator, Word, and Spirit one.

Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication (*unison*)

Jon Heaslet

Let us remember that weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes early in the morning. May these gifts of blessing be a sign of the love, light, and glory of our redeeming God who has created a world of abundance with all that we need. May we remain thankful witnesses to your generosity, O God, as we dedicate these offerings to you and your beloved creation.

* Hymn

“My Lord! What a Morning”

SPIRITUAL

Refrain:

**My Lord! what a morning; my Lord! what a morning;
O my Lord! what a morning,
When the stars begin to fall, when the stars begin to fall.**

**You will hear the trumpet sound to wake the nations underground;
Looking to my God’s right hand, when the stars begin to fall. (R)**

**You will hear the sinner cry to wake the nations underground,
Looking to my God’s right hand, when the stars begin to fall. (R)**

**You will hear the Christian shout to wake the nations underground,
Looking to my God’s right hand, when the stars begin to fall. (R)**

* Benediction

Rev. Melissa McQueen-Simmons

Living God, we are witnesses to your love and light. Your peace is seen in the dawning of each new day. Your equal justice bears witness in the interconnected universe that you have created. Faithful God, help us to feel the warmth of your loving light in the cooler moments of life. As we leave this worship service, let us go back into the world renewed as instruments of your loving peace and justice for all. May it be so. Amen.

* Benediction Response

HALLE, HALLE

Halle, halle, hallelujah! (3x) Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Postlude

“Will You Come and Follow Me”

arr. C.E. Walz

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*Parts of the liturgy for today’s service were written and adapted by UCC
Worship Ways, written by The Rev. Dr. Sheila Harvey, Pastor of Union
Congregational United Church of Christ.*

*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.*

WELCOME BACK REV. MELISSA MCQUEEN-SIMMONS

Rev. Melissa McQueen-Simmons is a native of Greensboro, North Carolina, and a first-generation college graduate. She is a mother to a fun and creative child, Camdyn, and the spouse to the beautiful and graceful Vondalyn. She is a creative, an empath, an author, mystic, and Iraq-Veteran. Melissa was born into Generation X, the demographic cohort between Baby Boomers and Millennials. She earned her Master of Divinity (M.Div.) with an emphasis in Pastoral Care at Howard University School of Divinity. Melissa is the Spiritual Director/virtual pastor for Wholy Ground Spiritual center. Melissa is ordained in the United Church of Christ and is currently pulpit supply for the Southern Conference, and co-leader for the Racial Justice and Equity team, she is also a member of the Committee on Ministry team for the Southern Conference. She is a facilitator for Our Whole Lives: Lifespan Sexuality Education that fosters informed, responsible, and values-based decisions about sexual health and behavior. She is intentional about healthy relationships with self, others, and the Divine of our understanding. Melissa is committed to relationship-building within the community. Her goal is to work with the oppressed and advocate for restorative justice in both church and community with the intention to enforce God's inclusive love for all of creation.

WE PROVIDE OUR EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME WITH HELP FROM:

D Evans, Brian Hankins, Jo Ann Jellison

Greeters and ushers are needed starting at 10:30am every Sunday. Liturgists and readers roles are also available.

Please sign up in the Gathering Room or at

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C44ACAD23A2FE3-ushers>

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Members

Mel Andersen, Linda Carver, Kevin Decker, Kevin & Jeff Edwards-Knight, Linn Finger, Tom & Kathy Habel, Jim Humphrey, Sharon Landis, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Alice Phelan & Sally Young, Isabelle Reedy Powell, Jerry Rhyne, Ed & Beth Sharp, Cynthia & Tommy Simpson, Shakti Subramanian, Anita Taylor

Friends & Family Members

Melissa Brown, Phillip Cherry (Anne Pigg), Gregg Clare (Kathleen Wagner), Craig Chrismon (Melissa Noll), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), the Jeffreys family (Kathleen Wagner), Darin Jellison (Jo Ann Jellison), Charles Jernigan (Lee Brigman), Dave Johnson, Judah L. Jones & Bill Englebreth, Matty & Simone McKinnon (Joy Decker), John Schiel (Dawn Simmons), Michelle Sharp (Beth & Ed Sharp), 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.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

Stay connected! There are many new events in our future! 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/>

SOJOURNERS CLASS, SUNDAYS AT 9:45AM

We gather Sundays at 9:45am in the Conference Room, or via Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89561758099?pwd=d1gvUmh3K2hCNmdidm1QdjllNkF5QT09>

CRAFTER'S CIRCLE MEETS MONDAYS AT 1:30PM

Bring a craft, learn a craft. Join us in the Gathering Room. All are welcome!

SANDWICH BUILD TODAY

Following worship, we will make 400 sandwiches to be delivered to A Roof Above tomorrow. All are welcomed, and no experience is necessary!

JOIN US NEXT SUNDAY FOR 2024 UCC CREATION CARE

Earth Sunday is April 21. The Creation Justice team is planning an appropriate worship service and some creative indoor and/or outdoor activities.

FELLOWSHIP HOUR HOSTS NEEDED

Please sign up in the gathering room for light refreshments after worship on Sundays, plus set-up and clean-up.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C44ACAD23A2FE3-sunday1#/>

CHARLOTTE'S 2024 AIDS WALK, MAY 18

Questions? Please let Debbie Davis know at Debbiekdavisnc@gmail.com.

AIDS WALK Charlotte 2024 - Holy Covenant United Church of Christ
(onecause.com)

BELLS OF LAKE NORMAN CONCERT AT HCUCC, MAY 18, 4PM

All are welcomed for a community handbell concert "Musical Escapades"

Secular pieces "Ob-la-di, Ob-la-da" and "Cracked Crystal"; non-secular pieces such as "By the Lakeside". We hope you can join us!