Church of the Covenant
Boston, MA

Second Sunday of Epiphany
January 11, 2026

Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ

ZOOM LINK (click here)

Church of the Covenant
Second Sunday of Epiphany
January 11, 2026, 10:30 am Zoom Link

Welcome and thank you for worshipping together for this "hybrid" service where some will be in Bates Hall at 67 Newbury Street, and some in the sanctuary of places far and near. For those joining online, we begin on Zoom at the above link. Please keep your mic muted during the service.
**You are invited to rise in body or spirit.*

Gathering Song *Down by the Riverside*

I'm gonna lay down my sword and shield
Down by the riverside (x 3)
I'm gonna lay down my sword and shield
Down by the riverside study war no more

I ain't gonna study war no more
Ain't gonna study war no more
Ain't gonna study war no more (repeat)

Prelude *Fairest Lord Jesus* arr. Teresa Wilhelmi

Welcome & Announcements

One: Peace be with you.
Many: And also with you.

Experiencing God

*** Call to Worship** (from Isaiah 43)

One: But now thus says GOD who created you,
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.
Many: When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

One: For I am the HOLY ONE your God, your Liberator.
Because you are precious in my sight,
and honored, and I love you…

Many: Do not fear, for I am with you; everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.

*** Kindling the Christ Light**

One: The light of Christ,

Many: Thanks be to God!

*** Opening Hymn** PH (blue) 339 *Be Thou My Vision*

Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Nought be all else to me, save that Thou art—
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise,
Thou mine inheritance, now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
Great God of heaven, my treasure Thou art.

Be Thou my wisdom, and Thou my true word;
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

Prayer for Grounding in God's Grace

Many: Most Gracious God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name, through Christ our Liberator. Amen.

One: Let us now listen to God in silent prayer.

Listening to God in Silent Prayer

Assurance of God's Grace

One: As God was with Joseph, Mary, and the baby Jesus when they fled Egypt, God is with us today and until the end of the age. Therefore, let us celebrate together:

Many: **In Jesus Christ we are set free and made whole. Alleluia! Amen.**

*** Sung Response** *This Little Light of Mine*

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine (x3)
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine (x3)
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

Readings from Scripture

Hebrew Bible Reading – Isaiah 41:11-13, 17-20

All who are incensed against you
shall be ashamed and disgraced;
those who strive against you
shall be as nothing and shall perish.
You shall seek those who contend with you,
but you shall not find them;
those who war against you
shall be as nothing at all.
For I, your Sovereign God,
hold your right hand;
it is I who say to you, "Do not fear,
I will help you."

When the poor and needy seek water,
and there is none,
and their tongue is parched with thirst,
I will answer them,
I, the God of Israel will not forsake them.
I will open rivers on the bare heights
and fountains in the midst of the valleys;

I will make the wilderness a pool of water
and the dry land springs of water.
I will put in the wilderness the cedar,
the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive;
I will set in the desert the cypress,
the plane and the pine together,
so that all may see and know,
all may consider and understand,
that the hand of God has done this,
the Holy One of Israel has created it.

Gospel Reading – Matthew 2:12-23
And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another road.

Now after they had left, an angel of God appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the magi. Then what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

"A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled, because they are no more."

When Herod died, an angel of the God suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazarene."

One: God is still speaking, the word of God,
Many: Thanks be to God.

Sung Response *This Little Light of Mine*

Sermon "Sweet Dreams and Beautiful Nightmares"

Call to Offering

Online Giving Option: http://www.cotcbos.org/give.html
Click on Give Now, then choose Pledges or Gifts-General.

Offertory *Say, Say Yes!* Melanie DeMore

*** Doxology** Tune: *Old Hundredth*

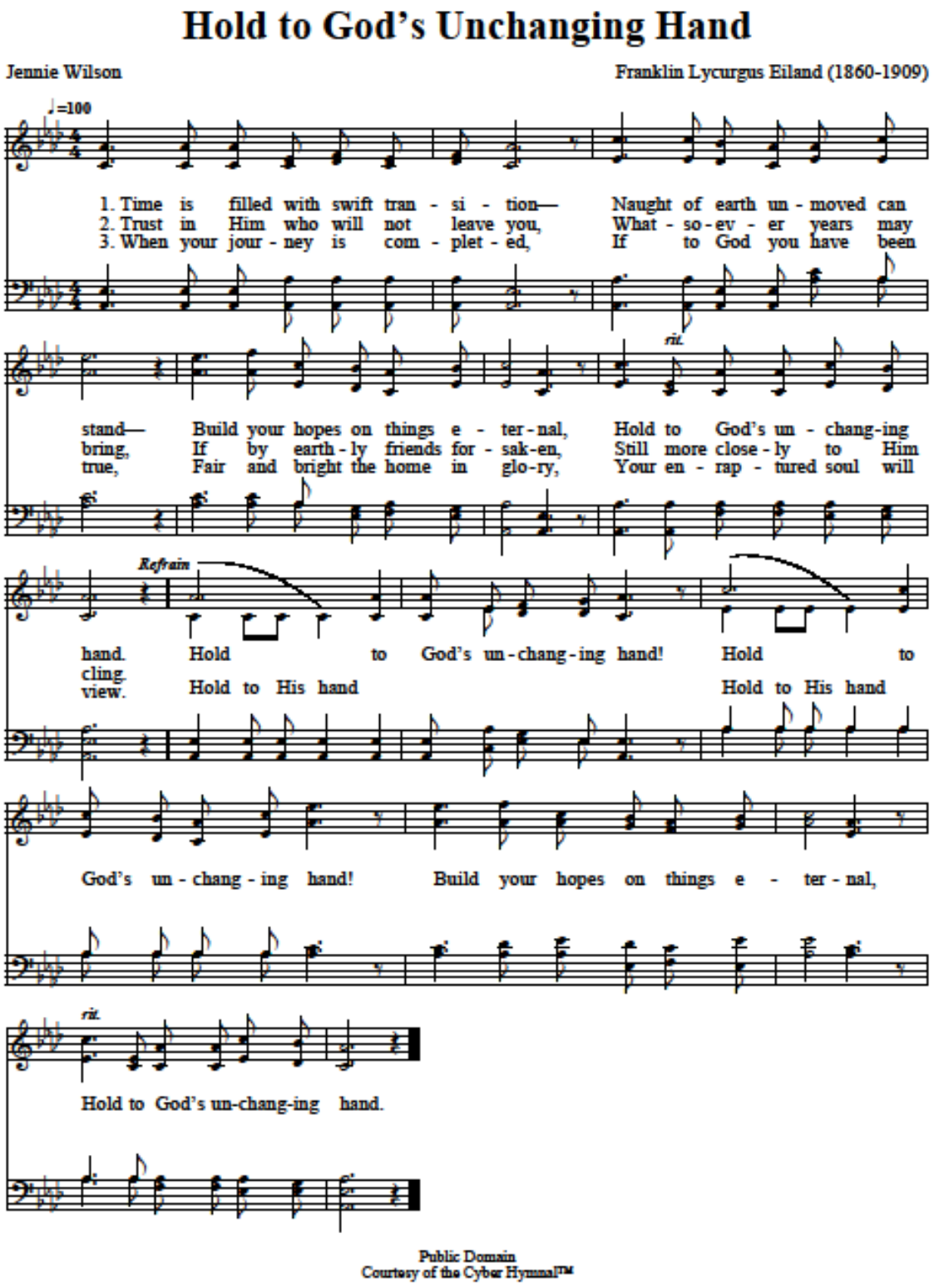
Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God all creatures here below,
Praise God for all that love has done,
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One.

*** Prayer of Dedication**

Celebrations & Concerns

One: God, in your grace,
Many: Receive our prayer.

Pastoral Prayer

*** Closing Hymn** *Hold to God's Unchanging Hand*

Public Domain
Courtesy of the Cyber Hymnal™

*** Charge and Benediction**

*** Exchange of the Peace**

(Please exchange greetings of Christ's peace and reconciliation)

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.

Many: And also with you.

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Worship Participants

Preacher – Rev. Joshua Lawrence Lazard
Worship Leader – Rev. Rob Mark
Minister of Music – Tom Handel
Liturgist – Nancy Ammerman
Lector – Christine James
Covenant Choir
Ushers – Trisha Thompson, Trudi Veldman
Digital Minister – Sandra May
Audio Visual Tech Team
Sexton – Hudson Sangi

WELCOME TO CHURCH OF THE COVENANT! We are so glad to have you worshipping with us today! If you are new to our community, we hope you will feel at home and welcome during this service. If you have any questions about who we are as a community of faith, please reach out to an usher in person or our Digital Minister in the chat.

SACRED RECKONINGS SPIRITUAL EDUCATION TODAY. Following worship today (in person in Bates Hall and on Zoom), join us as we report back about a December 20 meeting with the Boston People's Reparations Commission related to the Ten Demandments to historically white churches in Boston.

BULLETIN COVER ART. "Flight to Egypt" by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman, A Sanctified Art. Inspired by Matthew 2:13-23 | Digital painting. Our ancestors forge pathways that become a part of who we are. It is difficult to break those patterns, even if you aren't keenly aware of them. In this context, one of the most defining ancestral narratives of an Israelite's life would be the Exodus narrative. Joseph is advised to move in direct opposition to the way his ancestors moved. He must go toward Egypt instead of away. It takes great courage to consider the ingrained patterns of your history and blaze a new trail.

Joseph must uproot his family from their home to ensure their son will become who he was made to be. In this image, the Holy Family escapes the wrath of Herod in Bethlehem and faithfully travels toward the looming unknown in Egypt. They are flanked by flowers: on the left are Star of Bethlehem flowers and on the right are stylized lotus flowers you might see in Egyptian art. In the background are shadowy figures. On the left, they represent Herod's men seeking to kill Jesus, and on the right, they represent the weight of the past—God's enslaved people and their oppressors. The menacing silhouettes surround the family, personifying the inherent risk in either path they choose to take. The angel of God envelops the Holy Family in an embrace, comforting them from the grief of leaving home and shielding them from the fear of what is to come. In other icons of this pilgrimage, the Nile River often flows below, teeming with fish, but I chose to fill the water with lotus flowers, Egypt's national flower and a symbol of regeneration. God is writing a new story, transforming their destination, which swells with generational trauma and pain, into a haven of refuge and rebirth.

WELCOME CHILDREN & YOUTH!! Welcome to all children, youth, and families—those we know already and those who are here for the first time. We offer Christian education through Godly Play for ages 3-9, youth classes for ages 10-13 and 14+, and a nursery for the littlest ones. If you need help finding us, please ask an usher. We share CYCE info regularly via email, so please email Rev. Kate at *kate.carlisle@cotcbos.org* if you want to receive updates.

WORSHIP IN BATES HALL IN 2026! Due to our sanctuary getting roof repairs starting in January, we will hold in-person worship downstairs in Bates Hall until February 15, at the earliest. Questions? Contact our Building Committee.

UPCOMING SUNDAY WORSHIP. Please join us each Sunday at 10:30 am as we come together in community to pray, sing, share celebrations and concerns, and hear God's still-speaking Word proclaimed in these hybrid (in person and on Zoom) services.

- January 18: Rev. Rob Mark preaching, Holy Communion, Life Alive Brunch After Worship
- January 25: Rev. Rob Mark preaching, Denominational Meetings After Worship
- February, 1: Sunday Worship, Holy Communion, Annual Meeting After Worship

FANEUIL HALL NAME-CHANGE COMMUNITY-LED MEETING. The New Democracy Coalition is a holding community meeting on **Saturday, January 24, at 2:00 pm**, at the Grove Hall Public Library. The Boston City Council has voted to change the name of Faneuil Hall. This meeting will give community members one minute each to offer name suggestions. Please join in this public process.

WORSHIP IN THE STREETS: BOSTON'S WINTER WALK. On **Sunday, February 8**, we will once again take our worship to the streets by joining the 10th annual Boston Winter Walk, walking two miles in shoulder-to-shoulder solidarity with those experiencing homelessness in our city, and re-committing ourselves to the prayerful work of housing justice. There will be three options: to join the walk in person; to join the walk virtually on your own; or to join in a virtual "prayer walk" at home. Registration information to come next week.

ALL-CHURCH READ, Wednesday February 25, 6:30-7:30 pm via ZOOM. During the recent Solar Justice Sunday on November 23, Rev. Rob mentioned Bill McKibben's book *Here Comes the Sun*. Bill talks about the Solar Revolution and the spirituality of knowing that God will take care of us—the sun warming us every day. Buy the book or take it out of the library.

ANNUAL REPORTS ARE DUE JANUARY 16! Please submit your 2025 annual reports for committees and staff members to our Parish Administrator, Nancy Stockford, at *nancy.stockford@cotcbos.org*. Please create each report in a Word document using Garamond 11-point font with the title (committee or staff member name) centered at the top. Each report's author(s) should be provided at the bottom. Deadline: no later than noon on Friday, January 16. Thank you!

BIBLE STUDY WEDNESDAYS. Bible Study meets weekly on Wednesday mornings at 9:45 on Zoom. The Wednesday morning Bible study is exploring the Gospel of Matthew. If you would like more information or want to be on the list to get regular reminders and and Zoom details, contact Jack Ammerman at *jwacooks@gmail.com*.

WEDNESDAY EVENING PRAYERS 6:00-6:30 PM. Join us for our weekly Wednesday evening prayers with intentional liturgy, contemplative song, psalms, and sharing of prayers with our siblings from Newton Presbyterian on Zoom (link also on *http://www.cotcbos.org*).

VIDEO CAMERAS/POSTING FULL SERVICE RECORDINGS. To best serve our diverse community and new worshippers, we livestream and record each service, including Celebrations & Concerns. If you would prefer not to be in occasional camera shots, you are welcome to sit on the outside aisles on either side of the sanctuary. Recordings of each service are available on our Worship Recordings Page (*cotcbos.org/worship-recordings*).

WEEKLY CALENDAR. Click here (cotcbos.org/calendar-of-events) to view the weekly calendar of events.

IMMIGRANTS & REFUGEES WELCOME

FAITHFUL AMERICA

See ICE? Call LUCE 617-370-5023

Visitor or Newcomer? Welcome to Church of the Covenant!

We are glad you are here. Please let us know if there are ways we can help you connect to the church community. Learn more about the church by visiting our website at www.cotcbos.org. To sign up for email updates about worship services and other events in our community, please fill out a visitor's card in your pew, or email us at info@cotcbos.org.

Parking Bargain – Worshippers may park at the Back Bay Garage [Clarendon Street, between Boylston and St. James] on Sundays between 6:00 am and 9:00 pm for the first three (3) hours for only $5. To get this discounted rate, please ask an Usher before or after the worship service for a parking discount sticker.

Prayers of Celebration or Concern May Be Shared in the Red Book – At the rear of the Sanctuary is a red book where prayers that you wish to have spoken aloud during the Pastoral Prayer time may be written. The book will be available until the time of the offering.

Time of Greeting – After worship this morning, we hope that you will take a few minutes to connect with others worshipping with you, especially people you may not know as well.

Hearing Assisted Devices – Speak with an usher if you would like to use these devices that work with or without a hearing aid. These devices are specifically designed to work only with our sound system. Please remember to return the device at the close of the service. Thank you!

Building Accessibility – Our building includes an exterior ramp on Newbury Street and an elevator (in the Parish House part of the building) which allows access to the fellowship hall, meeting rooms, offices, and other parts of the building. We also have accessible restrooms. Please ask an usher to help you locate these resources.

NEW TO COTC? We are so glad you are here! Let us know a little bit about how we can welcome you by filling out the form at this QR code, and learn more on our website at *cotcbos.org*. Note that your information goes only to our pastors and you will not be added to any email lists.

Church of the Covenant is focused on following Jesus in our world through accompaniment, compassion, peace, joy and creative beauty.
We are passionate about hospitality, committed to justice, and wild about faith.
We embrace an embodied spirituality that is not afraid of questions.
We advocate for a just climate for our earth, liberation in our world, and equality in our neighborhoods.
We are a community where ALL are welcome and celebrated as beautiful reflections of God– all genders, all faiths, all orientations, all backgrounds, all abilities, all ages, all struggles, and all hopes. Come journey with us!

Church of the Covenant
Boston Massachusetts

67 Newbury St., Boston MA 02116 | (617) 266-7480 | www.cotcbos.org

Worship at Church of the Covenant is the heart and soul of our life together as a community of faith. Since 1932 we have been a federated church, maintaining membership in the United Church of Christ and the Presbyterian Church (USA) and welcoming pilgrims from all traditions to our life and work. Through our prayer and praise, in our concerns and celebrations, by word and sacrament, art and silence, we seek empowerment, together and individually, as a covenant people, for the work of Christ.

Jesus taught that the Spirit invites all people, including society's marginalized, to enjoy seats at God's table. This congregation seeks to demonstrate that vision by welcoming individuals and families without regard to race, gender identity, age, physical/mental condition, or sexual orientation. We rejoice in the presence of children among us as integral to our community. We maintain vital ties of faith with the Church of the Poor in the community of the Sweet Name of Jesus, in Northwestern Nicaragua.

We believe God's blessings are found in marriage equality for all. Thus, we joyfully welcome the opportunity afforded us by our Commonwealth and both denominations to join couples of any sexual orientation in fully legal and holy marriage.

Covenant's sanctuary resides on the ancestral and unceded lands and waterways of the Massachusett people. We lament the pain of displacement, honor the ongoing work of repair, and give thanks for all past, present and future stewards of this sacred place.

In our worship we use language and imagery that reflect the wonderful diversity of the image of God in humanity and all of creation; that transcend the exclusive language of the church's past. And as stewards, we seek to live into the Spirit's blessing as we move in solidarity on this shared and sacred, common home we call earth. We invite you to join us in the journey toward God's justice and peace for all of Boston and beyond!

CHURCH STAFF
Rev. Rob Mark, *Lead Pastor*
Rev. Joshua Lawrence Lazard, *Associate Pastor*
Thomas Handel, *Minister of Music*
Bill Brown, *Building Manager*
Rev. Kate Carlisle, *CYCE Coordinator*
Nancy Stockford, *Parish Administrator/Financial Secretary*
Jesús Vargas, *Sexton*
Venkatesh Balasubramanian, *Music Composition Fellow 2025-2026*
Soyoung Cho, *Childcare Provider*

CHURCH OFFICERS
Brian Bigler, *President of the Corporation*
Trudi Veldman, *Clerk of the Council*
Anita Gram, *Moderator of the Board of Deacons*
Faith Perry, *Treasurer*