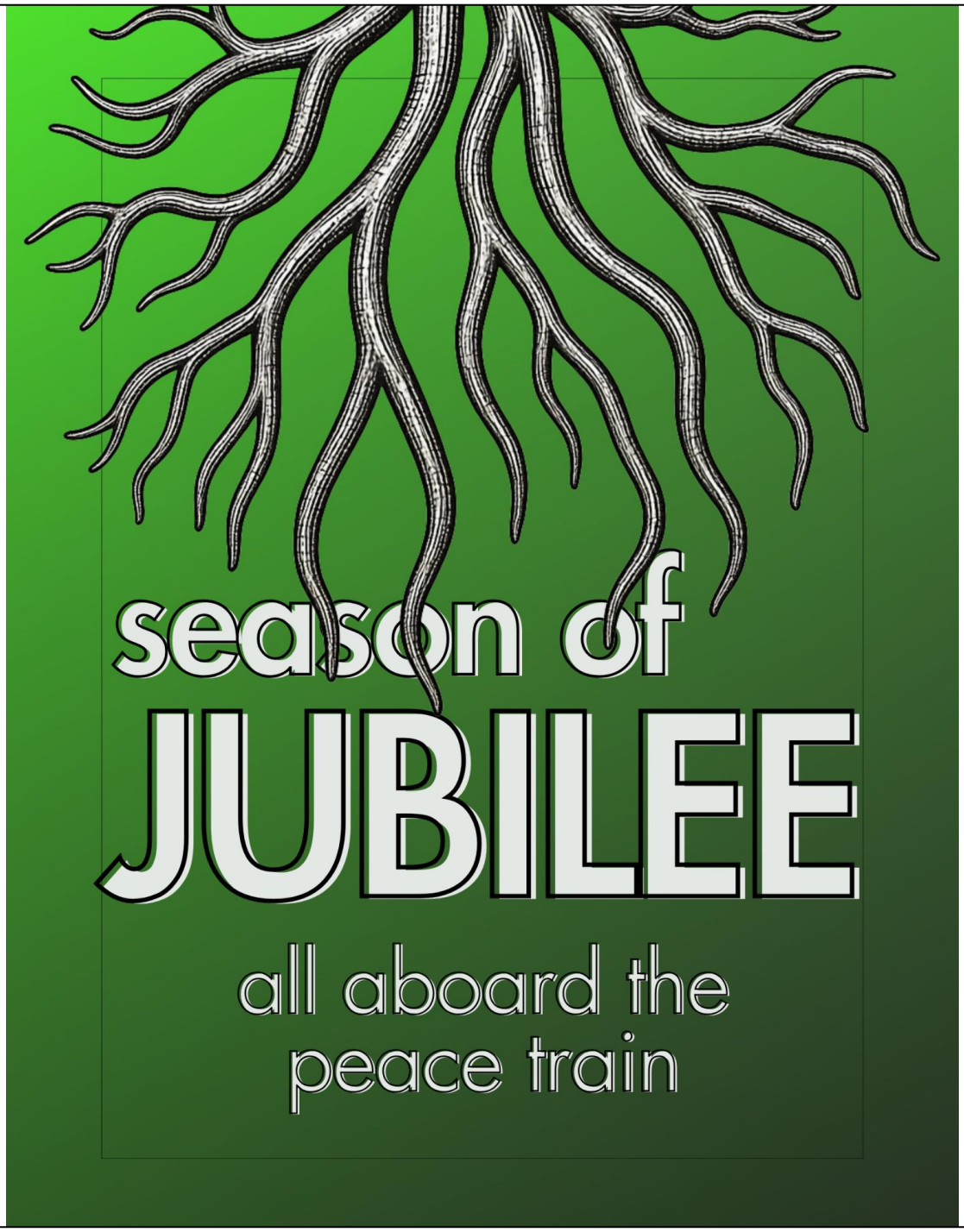
Church of the Covenant

Boston, MA



Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 20, 2026

Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ

Church of the Covenant
Season of Jubilee
Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 20, 2026, 10:30 am Zoom Link

Welcome and thank you for worshipping together for this "hybrid" service where some will be in the sanctuary 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.*

Prelude *Largo from Trio Sonata #5* J. S. Bach

Welcome & Announcements

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

Experiencing God

*** Call to Worship**

One: Siblings, beloveds, you are welcome.
Many: Just as you are, all that you are… you are fully welcome.
One: Children of the Holy One, with all of our neighbors, with all of nature, let us be free.
Many: Free to give thanks, free to worship, free to love.
One: In this season of justice and joy
Many: Let us celebrate and lean into the movement of God's liberation and restoration. Let us be the people of Jubilee!

*** Kindling the Christ Light**

One: The light of Christ,
Many: Thanks be to God!

*** Opening Hymn** PH (blue) 450 *O Day of Peace*

O day of peace that dimly shines
Through all our hopes and prayers and dreams,
Guide us to justice, truth, and love,
Delivered from our selfish schemes.
May swords of hate fall from our hands,
Our hearts from envy find release,
Till by God's grace our warring world
Shall see Christ's promised reign of peace.

Then shall the wolf dwell with the lamb,
Nor shall the fierce devour the small;
As beasts and cattle calmly graze,
A little child shall lead them all.
Then enemies shall learn to love,
All creatures find their true accord;
The hope of peace shall be fulfilled,
For all the earth shall know the Lord.

Prayer for Grounding in God's Grace

One: Christ our solid ground, upon this unstable world, we crave grace.
Many: We confess to you and one another our brokenness and our complicity in the broken structures and systems all around us.
One: For our failure to feel the sufferings of others, and our tendency to live comfortably with injustice,
Many: God forgive us.
One: For the self-righteous judgment that so easily consumes, and the self-interest that sometimes sidelines compassion,
Many: God forgive us.
One: In the light of your never-ending mercy and grace,
Many: Empower us to forgive others and live as your liberated and repair-focused people in the world.
One: Let us open ourselves to God now in silent prayer…

Listening to God in Silent Prayer

Assurance of God's Grace

One: God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of all, invites all their children to join in the movement of liberation, of repair, of joy. We are the people of Jubilee, offered grace without merit, home without exception, and love beyond measure.

As fully loved, fully known, fully forgiven siblings, let us celebrate together:

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

*** Sung Response** NCH (black) 236 *Halle, Halle, Halle*

Readings from Scripture

Gospel Reading – Matthew 20:1-16

"The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. After he agreed with the workers to pay them a denarion, he sent them into his vineyard.

"Then he went out around nine in the morning and saw others standing around the marketplace doing nothing. He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I'll pay you whatever is right.' And they went.

"Again around noon and then at three in the afternoon, he did the same thing. Around five in the afternoon he went and found others standing around, and he said to them, 'Why are you just standing around here doing nothing all day long?'

"'Because nobody has hired us,' they replied.
"He responded, 'You also go into the vineyard.'

"When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the workers and give them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and moving on finally to the first.' When those who were hired at five in the afternoon came, each one received a denarion. Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more. But each of them also received a denarion. When they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, 'These who were hired last worked one hour, and they received the same pay as we did

even though we had to work the whole day in the hot sun.'

"But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I did you no wrong. Didn't I agree to pay you a denarion? Take what belongs to you and go. I want to give to this one who was hired last the same as I give to you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with what belongs to me? Or are you resentful because I'm generous?' So those who are last will be first. And those who are first will be last."

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

Sung Response NCH (black) 236 *Halle, Halle, Halle*

Sermon "All Aboard the Peace Train"

Call to Offering

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

Offertory *Lead with Love* Melanie DeMore

*** Communion Doxology**

Though what we have in truth is small,
God's grace shall be enough for all.
So as we bless and break this bread,
Each heart be filled, each mouth be fed.

*** Prayer of Dedication**

Celebrations & Concerns

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

Pastoral Prayer

Celebration of Holy Communion

*** Invitation**

*** Communion Hymn** *I'm Gonna Eat at the Welcome Table*

I'm gonna eat at the welcome table,
I'm gonna eat at the welcome table, some of these days.
I'm gonna eat at the welcome table,
I'm gonna eat at the welcome table, some of these days.

*** The Great Thanksgiving**

One: May God be with you!
Many: And also with you.
One: People of Jubilee, let us lift up our hearts!
Many: We open our hearts to the Spirit who fills us with hope.
One: Let us give thanks to God, our light.
Many: It is right for us to offer our thanks and praise to the Holy One.
One: It is right for us to thank and praise you, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of all…
…And so, with your people here on earth, with all the ancestors, and all the saints and the great company of heaven, we glorify your name, praising you together:
Many: Santo, santo, santo
Mi corazón Te adora
Mi corazón Te sabe decir
Santo eres Dios.
One: Holy are you, O God…

*** The Prayer of Jesus** (*New Zealand Prayer Book*)

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be, Divine Parent of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:
The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world!
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever.
Amen.

Sharing of the Bread & Cup

Communion Meditation *Peace Piece* Bill Evans

Post Communion Prayer

*** Closing Hymn** NCH (black) 23 *There's a Wideness in God's Mercy*

There's a wideness in God's mercy, like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in God's justice, which is more than liberty.
There's no place where earthly sorrows are more felt than in God's heaven;
There's no place where earthly failings have such kindly judgment given.

For the love of God is broader than the measures of our minds;
And the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.
If our love were but more faithful, we would gladly trust God's word;
And our lives would show thanksgiving for the goodness of our God.

*** Charge & 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. Dr. Sara Garrard
Minister of Music – Thomas Handel
Liturgist –Rev. Rob Mark
Lector – Debbie Howland
Covenant Choir
Communion Servers – Brian Bigler, Barbara Darling
Usher – Denice Thornhill
Digital Minister – Sandra May
Audio Visual Tech Team
Sexton – Jesús Vargas

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.

LIFE ALIVE BRUNCH TODAY! After worship this morning, Life Alive will be going out for brunch. Life Alive meets on the third Sunday of each month immediately after church for monthly fellowship. Life Alive is a small group for adults navigating career, family, and life transitions. If you want to join or have questions, see or email Rev. Sara at *sara.garrard@cotcbos.org*. Next brunches are on **November 15 and December 20**.

WELCOME CHILDREN & YOUTH!! Children from age 3 through early elementary are invited to Godly Play classes, and the nursery is open for the littlest ones. If you need help finding us, please ask an usher. We also offer youth classes and other activities for all ages. We share CYCE info regularly via email, so please email Rev. Kate at *kate.carlisle@cotcbos.org* if you want to receive updates.

AUTUMN EQUINOX ECO-EVENSONG THIS WEEK. Join us on **Tuesday, September 22, at 6:00 pm**, to welcome the fall season and celebrate God's earth. Meet at the Arthur Fiedler Dock on the shore of the Quinobequin River.

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UPCOMING SUNDAY WORSHIP. Please join us each Sunday at 10:30 am and during special services listed below 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 Zoom) services.

- September 22: Autumn Equinox Eco-Evensong, Arthur Fiedler Dock, 6:00 pm (in-person only)
- September 27: Sunday Worship

LIFE ALIVE BIBLE STUDY & APPLE PICKING. Life Alive has a couple of activities of note in October: on **Saturday, October 10, at 12:00 noon**, Life Alive will meet for Bible study in Williams Library, and after worship on **Sunday, October 18**, they will have their annual apple-picking outing (instead of brunch). Contact Rev. Sara (*sara.garrard@cotcbos.org*) if you are interested or need more information.

ALL-CHURCH RETREAT: TIME TO REGISTER! The all-church retreat will be held on **Saturday, October 24,** back at Glastonbury Abbey in Hingham. The registration deadline is Sunday, October 11, at 11:59 pm. Register at: *https://tinyurl.com/cotcretreat2026*.

COVENANT CONNECTIONS. Are you in college? Just moved to the Boston area for grad school? Are you early in your career and looking for a spiritual home? Covenant Connections is a small group for those looking for a spiritual community to discern what God has next for them through Bible studies and connecting over meals. If you want to know more, email Rev. Sara at *sara.garrard@cotcbos.org*.

BIBLE STUDY WEDNESDAYS. Our Bible Study gathers at **9:45 on Wednesday mornings on Zoom**. With the beginning of Fall, we turn to the Psalms to explore the many ways these songs express both the rage and despair we often feel and the joy and thanksgiving we experience. If you are interested in joining, email Jack Ammerman at *jwacooks@gmail.com* for more information and the weekly Zoom link.

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*).

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. Dr. Sara Garrard, *Transitional 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*