

Church of the Covenant

Boston, MA



The Third Sunday in Epiphany
January 21, 2024

Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ



Church of the Covenant

The Third Sunday in Epiphany

January 21, 2024, 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

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

Away in the Manger

arr. Mark Hayes

Welcome & Announcements

One: Peace be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

* Call to Worship

One: Gather this day in silence and hope.

Many: **We wait for God's word for us.**

One: Let your hearts and spirits be open.

Many: **God is our strength and salvation.**

One: Wait patiently for the God Almighty.

Many: **With willing hearts and spirits we wait for God.**

* Kindling the Christ Light

One: The light of Christ,

Many: **Thanks be to God!**

* **Opening Hymn** PH (blue) 467 (*verses 1, 2, and 4*)

How Great Thou Art

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works Thy hands have made,
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy pow'r throughout the universe displayed!

Refrain:

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze. *Refrain*

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!
Then I shall bow in humble adoration
And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art! *Refrain*

Prayer for Grounding in God's Grace

Many: We listen to the stories of the call of Jonah and John the Baptist and find them interesting but unrealistic. When we look at our own lives, we believe that we could not leave everything to follow someone we didn't know. We have many responsibilities and ties which keep us from following. But God is persistent. God understands our confusion and doubts. And God continues to call us to be in ministry and mission in this world.

It may not mean leaving everything behind, but it does mean being willing to serve wherever God calls us. This is hard work. We want to place conditions on service, and usually those conditions are “if we have time,” “if we have energy,” “if we can just try serving God for a little while to see how it all works out.” Still, God calls to each of us. Following the Way of Christ is difficult. Forgive us, patient and persistent God, for the very many times we turn our backs on serving you and focus on our own comforts. Forgive us when we look the other way when people are in need. Forgive us when our angry attitudes and actions hurt rather than heal. Wrap your arms around us, heal our wounds, bind us to you. Move us into service in your name. Ground us in grace and mercy for the journey ahead.

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

Listening to God in Silent Prayer

Assurance of God's Grace

One: Do not be afraid. God is with you! That is good news. You do not have to go through life alone, wondering if anyone cares about you or knows your heart. God knows you and God loves you. Rejoice, for thus it is, has always been, and will continue to be. God's love for you is eternal. 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 – Jonah 3:1-5, 10

The word of God came to Jonah a second time, saying, “Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.” So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of God. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days’ walk across. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s walk. And he cried out, “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed God’s mind about the calamity that they had said they would bring upon them, and God did not do it.

Gospel Reading – Mark 1:14-15

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

One: God is still speaking, the word of God,

Many: **Thanks be to God.**

Sung Response

This Little Light of Mine

Sermon

“A Prayer That Changes God’s Mind”

Call to Offering

Online Giving Option: <http://www.cotcbos.org/give.html>

Click on Give Now, then choose Pledges or Gifts-General.

Offertory

The Gift of Love

arr. Hal Hopson

* Communion Doxology

Tune: Old Hundredth

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 to the Table

* Communion Summons

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 Epiphany, 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 God.**

One: It is right for us to thank and praise you God...

...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: **Holy, holy, holy One, God of heaven and earth. All
creation is full of your love and grace. Hosanna in the highest!
Blessed is the One who comes in the name of peace. Hosanna
in the highest!**

One: Holy are you, O God...

*** The Prayer of Jesus**

Our God in heaven, holy is your name. Your kingdom 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 do not let us fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Breaking of the Bread

Sharing of the Bread & Cup

Post Communion Prayer

*** Closing Hymn PH (blue) 281**

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty;
Hold me with Thy powerful hand;
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
Feed me till I want no more,
Feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain,
Whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through;
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
Be Thou still my strength and shield,
Be Thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death, and hell's destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side;
Songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to Thee,
I will ever give to Thee.

* 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.**

Worship Participants

Preacher – Rev. Joshua Lawrence Lazard

Minister of Music – Tom Handel

Liturgist – Rev. Rob Mark

Lector – Mocky Day

Covenant Choir

Communion Servers – Kathryn Barry, Harry Forsdick

Ushers – Anne Crane, Linda Pursley

Digital Minister – Trudi Veldman

Audio Visual Tech Team – Venkatesh Balasubramanian, Abhishek John, Jon Schwarz

Sextons – Jesús Vargas, Fred Lopes

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 welcomed 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.

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.



LIFE ALIVE BRUNCH TODAY. The 20s-40s group will gather after worship and share a meal together. See Rev. Joshua if you are interested in participating.

NICA COMPANIONS ADULT ED. TODAY! Please join the Adult Ed. after worship today, **Sunday, January 21**, for a hybrid conversation to explore relationships across differences of opportunity and abundance. How are we called into these relationships as Christians, and how do they affect us, as individuals and as a community? Covenant members with experience being in relationship with people in Nicaragua, Malawi, Lesotho, Congo, and Boston will share, and then open up the conversation to everyone present to share experiences, reflections, and questions.

UPCOMING 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 services (in-person and Zoom options). [Zoom Link for each service.](#)

- Sunday, January 28: Rev. Rob Mark preaching, Denominational Meetings & Deacons Meeting After Worship
- Sunday, February 4: All-Ages Service, **Annual Meeting After Worship**
- Sunday, February 11: Winter Walk “Worship in the Streets”

DENOMINATIONAL MEETINGS. The denominational meetings of the Central Congregational Society (Barbara Darling, chair) and the First Presbyterian Society (Tim Groves, chair) will be held on **January 28, 2024**, immediately following worship for the purpose of electing the nominees—Faith Perry (UCC) and Ellice Miller (PCUSA)—to serve on the Nominating Committee for two years in the class of 2025.

ANNUAL MEETING. The annual meetings of the Corporation and Congregation will be held on **Sunday, February 4, 2024**, following worship at Church of the Covenant and on Zoom (hybrid meeting) for the purpose of adopting the 2024 budget, electing members to the Covenant Council and the Board of Deacons, and accepting members to the Nominating Committee as elected at the denominational meetings.

WELCOME CHILDREN & YOUTH!! 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. We welcome all children, youth, and families—those we know already and those who are here for the first time. 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 THE STREETS: BOSTON'S WINTER WALK. On **Sunday, February 11**, we will once again take our worship to the streets by joining the 8th 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 at 9:00 am; to join the walk virtually on your own; or to join in a virtual “prayer walk” at home. We are invited to join Women’s Lunch Place for a pancake brunch afterward in Bates Hall! To register, please visit <http://tinyurl.com/cotcwinterwalk-inperson> and RSVP to Covenant staff at <http://tinyurl.com/cotcwinterwalk2024>.

BIBLE STUDY WEDNESDAYS. Our weekly Bible Study meets on Wednesday mornings at 9:45 on Zoom. We are studying the book of Isaiah. If you’d like more information or want to be on the list to get regular reminders and Zoom info, contact Jan Gough at revjangough@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 on cotcbos.org).

COTC SNOW CANCELLATION PROCEDURE. In the event of a significant snowstorm over a weekend, please check our website to find out whether our in-person service has been cancelled. Zoom worship will still be held at the same link.

VIDEO CAMERAS/POSTING FULL SERVICE RECORDINGS. To best serve our diverse community and new worshippers, we livestream and record each service, including Celebrations and 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](http://cotcbos.org/calendar-of-events) (cotcbos.org/calendar-of-events) to view the weekly calendar of events.

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 voucher.

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 after going outside the sanctuary 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 rest rooms. Please ask an usher to help you locate these resources.



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 outcasts, 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, and we strive to include them in our ministry. We maintain 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 the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the United Church of Christ, and the Presbyterian Church USA to join couples of all sexual orientations in fully legal and holy marriage.

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*
Alan Lane, *Food Cupboard Coordinator*
Kelsie Lawhorn, *Child Care Provider*
Venkatesh Balasubramanian, *Digital Communications & Audio Visual Tech Manager*

CHURCH OFFICERS

Liz Vizza, *President of the Corporation*
Trudi Veldman, *Clerk of the Council*
Anita Gram, *Moderator of Board of Deacons*
Faith Perry, *Treasurer*