

Church of the Covenant

Boston, MA



JESUS CHRIST LIBERATOR

Third Sunday in Epiphany

January 26, 2025

Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ



Church of the Covenant
Third Sunday in Epiphany
January 26, 2025, 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 burdens
Down by the riverside (x 3)
I'm gonna lay down my burdens
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

Be Thou My Vision

arr. David Hamilton

Welcome & Announcements

One: Peace be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

*** Call to Worship**

(from Psalm 27)

One: God is life and light and love!

Many: **God is our safe and secure place. Of whom shall we be afraid?**

One: God will shelter us in the days of trouble,

Many: **We will not be afraid of our enemies.**

One: God will set us high on a rock, out of harm's way.

Many: **And we will praise God with shouts of joy!**

One: Come, let our hearts look for God's face—for yes:

Many: **We shall see the goodness of our God in the land of the living.**

*** Kindling the Christ Light**

One: The light of Christ,

Many: **Thanks be to God!**

*** Opening Hymn** NCH (black) 164

Arise, Your Light Is Come

Arise, your light is come! The Spirit's call obey;
Show forth the glory of your God which shines on you today!

Arise, your light is come! Fling wide the prison door;
Proclaim the captive's liberty, good tidings to the poor.

Arise, your light is come! All you in sorrow born,
Bind up the broken-hearted ones and comfort those who mourn.

Arise, your light is come! The mountains burst in song!
Rise up like eagles on the wing; God's power will make us strong.

Prayer for Grounding in God's Grace

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. 1965

One: In the face of injustice, the timing may feel off; the end of the road
might be out of sight,

Many: Yet we trust in your grace.

One: How long?

Many: Not long, because no lie can live forever.

One: How long?

Many: Not long, because you still reap what you sow.

One: How long?

**Many: Not long. Because the arm of the moral universe is long,
but it bends toward justice.**

One: How long?

**Many: Not long, because you are our God, and all may take refuge in
the shadow of your wings.**

One: Let us open our hearts to God now in silent prayer..

Listening to God in Silent Prayer

Assurance of God's Grace

One: In the midst of the chaotic or the traumatic; in the midst of the
exciting or the mundane—God's voice resounds like the trumpets of
jubilee with the good news of liberation:

**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

“In the name of our God, have mercy!” ~ The Right Rev. Mariann Edgar Budde

Reading from Scripture

Gospel Reading – Luke 4:14-30

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of our God is upon me,
because the Most High has anointed me
to bring good news to those who are poor.

God has sent me to proclaim release to those held captive
and recovery of sight to those who are blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, “Is not this Joseph's son?” He said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Doctor, cure yourself!’ And you will say, ‘Do here also in your home town the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.’” And he said, “Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's home town. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up for three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in

Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

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

Sung Response

This Little Light of Mine

Sermon

“And So It Begins”

Sermon Hymn NCH (black) 476

How Can I Keep From Singing?

My life flows on in endless song; above earth's lamentation,
I hear the sweet, though far off hymn that hails a new creation.
Through all the tumult and the strife, I hear the music ringing;
It finds an echo in my soul—how can I keep from singing?

What though my joys and comforts die? My Savior still is living.
What though the shadows gather 'round? A new song Christ is giving.
No storm can shake my inmost calm, while to that Rock I'm clinging;
Since Love commands both heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?

When tyrants tremble, sick with fear, and hear their death knells ringing;
When friends rejoice both far and near, how can I keep from singing?
In prison cell and dungeon vile our thoughts to them are winging;
When friends by shame are undefiled, how can I keep from singing?

I lift my eyes; the cloud grows thin; I see the blue above it;
And day by day this pathway smooths, since first I learned to love it.
The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart, a fountain ever springing;
All things are mine since I am Christ's—how can I keep from singing?

Call to Offering

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

Offertory

A Touching Place

John Bell and Graham Maule

* 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

The Spirit Sends Us Forth to Serve



1. The Spir - it sends us forth to serve; we
2. We go to com - fort those who mourn and
3. We go to be the hands of Christ, to
4. Then let us go to serve in peace, the



go in Je - sus' name to bring glad tid - ings
set the bur - dened free; where hope is dim, to
scat - ter joy like seed and, all our days, to
gos - pel to pro - claim. God's Spir - it has em -



to the poor, God's fa - vor to pro - claim.
share a dream and help the blind to see.
cher - ish life, to do the lov - ing deed.
pow - ered us; we go in Je - sus' name.

WORDS: Delores Dufner, OSB
MUSIC: USA folk melody

LAND OF REST
CM

Words © 1993 Delores Dufner, admin. by OCP Publications

* 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. Rob Mark

Minister of Music – Tom Handel

Liturgist – Nancy Ammerman

Lector – Kathryn Barry

Covenant Choir

Ushers – Anne Crane, Denice Thornhill

Digital Minister – Trudi Veldman

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

Schwarz

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 welcomed during this service. If you have any questions about who we are as a community of faith, please reach out an Usher in person or to 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.



DENOMINATIONAL MEETINGS TODAY. The denominational meetings of the Central Congregational Society (Barbara Darling, chair) and the First Presbyterian Society (Anne Crane, chair) will be held today immediately after worship (in person and on Zoom) for the purpose of electing the nominees—rose ann olmstead (UCC) and Abhishek John (PCUSA)—to serve on the Nominating Committee for two years in the class of 2026.

ANNUAL MEETING ON FEBRUARY 2! The annual meetings of the Corporation and Congregation will be held on **Sunday, February 2**, after worship at Church of the Covenant and on Zoom (hybrid meeting) for the purpose of adopting the 2025 budget, electing three members to the Covenant Council for three-year terms, three members to the Board of Deacons for three-year terms, one member to the Board of Deacons for a two-year term, and accepting two members to the Nominating Committee as elected at the denominational meetings.

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.

UPCOMING WORSHIP. Please join us each Sunday at 10:30 am and during the 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 services (in-person and Zoom options). [Zoom Link for each service.](#)

- Sunday, February 2: Reflection on the Word, Holy Communion, Annual Meeting After Worship (Simple Lunch Served)
- Sunday, February 9: Boston Winter Walk (Worship in the Streets)
- Sunday, February 16: Rev. Rob preaching, Holy Communion, Return to Sanctuary!
- Sunday, February 23: Rev. Joshua Lawrence Lazard preaching

WORSHIP IN THE STREETS: BOSTON’S WINTER WALK. On **Sunday, February 9**, we will once again take our worship to the streets by joining the 9th 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 <https://tinyurl.com/nw2025register> and RSVP to Covenant staff at <https://tinyurl.com/cotcwinterwalk2025>.

WORSHIP IN BATES HALL. Due to repair of the chandelier in the sanctuary, we will hold in-person worship downstairs in Bates Hall until February 16.

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.

BIBLE STUDY WEDNESDAYS. Our weekly Bible Study meets on Wednesday mornings at 9:45 on Zoom. We are studying the book of Acts, exploring the movement of the Christian community throughout the Jewish, Greek, and Roman worlds. If you would like more information or want to be on the list to get regular reminders 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 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. 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.

*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!*

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. A weekend discount is also available for longer periods: \$10 for up to eleven (11) hours. A scannable parking voucher is available from an usher and at this link: <https://tinyurl.com/cotcsundayparking>

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 restrooms. 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 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 Massachusetts 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*

Alan Lane, *Food Cupboard Coordinator*

Venkatesh Balasubramanian, *Sound Engineering & Audio Visual Tech Manager*

Soyoung Cho, *Childcare Provider*

CHURCH OFFICERS

Kathryn Barry, *President of the Corporation*

Trudi Veldman, *Clerk of the Council*

Jon Schwarz, *Moderator of the Board of Deacons*

Faith Perry, *Treasurer*