

Church of the Covenant

Boston, MA



The Fourth Sunday in Epiphany
January 28, 2024

Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ



Church of the Covenant

The Fourth Sunday in Epiphany

January 28, 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.*

Prelude

Andante Sostenuto from *Gothic Symphony*

C. M. Widor

Welcome & Announcements

One: Peace be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

* Call To Worship

(by J. Phillip Newell)

One: In the morning light, O God

Many: **May we glimpse again your image deep within us.**

One: May we see the threads of eternal glory,

Many: **Woven into the fabric of every living thing.**

One: May we glimpse again the threads of light within us,

Many: **Shining more powerfully than the disappointments and distortions of living.**

One: Let us learn of the strength and beauty deep in our souls.

Many: **Let us learn of the strength and beauty of your image deep within.**

* Kindling the Christ Light

One: The light of Christ,

Many: **Thanks be to God!**

*** Opening Hymn NCH (black) 576**

For the Healing of the Nations
CWM RHONDDA hymn tune

Please note we repeat the ending of each verse to match the tune.

For the healing of the nations,
God, we pray with one accord;
for a just and equal sharing
of the things that earth affords;
to a life of love in action
help us rise and pledge our word, help us rise and pledge our word.

Lead us forward into freedom;
from despair your world release,
that, redeemed from war and hatred,
all may come and go in peace.
Show us how through care and goodness
fear will die and hope increase, fear will die and hope increase.

All that kills abundant living,
let it from the earth be banned;
pride of status, race, or schooling,
dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice
may we hallow life's brief span, may we hallow life's brief span.

You, Creator God, have written
your great name on humankind;
for our growing in your likeness
bring the life of Christ to mind,
that by our response and service
earth its destiny may find, earth its destiny may find.

Holocaust Remembrance

Prayer for Grounding in God's Grace

Many: Loving God of mercy and light,
As we look at our world, we see sin abound: genocide,
structural racism, othering, climate hurt, unprecedented
income inequality. As we look at ourselves, we long for
healing: from the wounds the world inflicts upon us, from the
hurts we unknowingly pass along, from the forgetfulness of
your image deep within. Help us to learn of your love, healing,
and grace.

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

Listening to God in Silent Prayer

Assurance of God's Grace

One: Friends, let us hear and learn this: the steadfast love of God never
ceases. God is always welcoming us in. All that we are is known,
loved, and forgiven. 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

Responsive Reading of Psalm 111 (Nan C. Merrill, *Psalms for Praying*)

One: Praise the Beloved, O my soul!
I will give thanks to you with my whole heart;
to all who will listen, I will tell of your goodness.

Many: **Wondrous is Creation, Great Builder;**
I take pleasure in pondering your work.

One: Full of honor and integrity are your teachings;
those who follow them will find new life.

Many: **You lift the hearts of those who suffer;
 You come to them in their need.**

One: Your steadfast Love is food for the soul,
 nourishment in times of fear.

Many: **You are ever mindful of your covenant,
 a very Presence to the weary and afflicted.**

One: Your voice is truth to those with ears to hear,
 your precepts are sure; written on the hearts of your people,
 they are to be lived forever with faith-filled love and assurance.

Many: **You bring new life to the world;
 Yes! life in abundance is your gift to us.**

One: Holy and glorious is your name!

Many: **Reverence for you, O Holy One, is the beginning of wisdom;
 a good understanding have all who practice it.
 Your Spirit endures forever.**

Gospel Reading – Mark 1:21-28

They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, Jesus entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” And the unclean spirit, throwing him into convulsions and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

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

Sung Response

This Little Light of Mine

Sermon

“Exercise to Exorcise”

Call to Offering

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

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

Offertory

To Christ the Seed

Sean O’Riada

* 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 NCH (black) 179

We Yearn, O Christ, for Wholeness

We yearn, O Christ, for wholeness and for your healing touch;
Too long have we felt helpless; our burdens seemed too much.
Forgetting all pretensions we make our pleadings heard,
In hope and expectation await your gracious Word.

We long to have companions who travel by our side,
Strong friends to call and answer with whom we are allied;
As we lift up each other when struggles lay us low,
Community develops; our faith and caring grow.

We need your living presence, O Christ of Galilee,
A presence that revives us and sets our spirits free.
No longer are we fearful, your love pervades each place.
Empower us with courage to claim your healing grace.

*** 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 – Diane Lauber

Lector – Kathryn Barry

Violinist – Anita Gram

Covenant Choir

Ushers – Holly Humphreys, Marnie Warner

Audio Visual Tech Team – Venkatesh Balasubramanian, 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 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.



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, February 4: All-Ages Service, **Annual Meeting After Worship**, lunch provided by Council
- Sunday, February 11: Winter Walk "Worship in the Streets"

DENOMINATIONAL MEETINGS TODAY! The denominational meetings of the Central Congregational Society (Barbara Darling, chair) and the First Presbyterian Society (Tim Groves, chair) will be held today, **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.

DEACONS MEETING TODAY. The Deacons will meet immediately after the denominational meetings in the Williams Library.

ANNUAL MEETING NEXT WEEK! The annual meetings of the Corporation and Congregation will be held on **Sunday, February 4**, 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. Lunch will be provided by members of Council.

INTERFAITH CEASEFIRE COALITION DINNER TONIGHT. Join us at the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center in Roxbury at **5:00 pm on Sunday, January 28**, for an important chance to build relationships in this time of troubling division and war as we continue to pray and press for a ceasefire in Gaza. See if spots remain to RSVP: <https://bit.ly/Jan28interfaithRSVP>.

UPDATED COTC DIRECTORY. We are working on an updated church directory. If any of your information has changed since last year that you would like updated/changed or you would like to be added to the directory, please email Nancy Stockford, parish administrator, by this **Sunday, January 28**, at nancy.stockford@cotcbos.org.

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](#) (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.

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*