

Church of the Covenant

Boston, MA



Bird Power: FLIGHT
The first Sunday in lent
february 18, 2024

Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ



Church of the Covenant

The First Sunday in Bird Power Lent: FLIGHT

February 18, 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 “Meditation 2” on the *Mysteries of the Holy Trinity* Olivier Messiaen

Welcome & Announcements

One: Peace be with you.

Many: And also with you.

* A Litany for Bird Power

O Loving God, Our Mothering Hen,
This Lent we long to become free and unfettered.

As we engage this sacred season,
Help us to shatter the chains of all that holds us from your love.

As we journey with Jesus through the holy wilderness,

May we find blessing in the power of birds.

As we seek through faith to do more than we thought we could,

May we imagine our wings and rise up.

As we long to catch new vistas of what is possible,

May our vision become clear and long like the eagle’s eye.

As we strive to do justice and love mercy,

May we build nests that are wide enough for all.

As we migrate back and forth in search of You,

May our movements for love and peace know no boundary.

As we call out to each other in accompaniment and prayer,

May our collective solidarity be beautiful like the song of the chickadee.

And as we remember we are as precious as the sparrow,

May we continue to flock together as your beloved community.

In the shadow of your wings, O God, we pray, **Amen.**



Black-capped chickadee.

*** Kindling the Christ Light**

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

*** Opening Hymn PH 464 (blue)**

Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee

Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee, God of glory, Lord of love;
Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee, opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; drive the gloom of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day.

All Thy works with joy surround Thee, earth and heaven reflect Thy rays,
Stars and angels sing around Thee, center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing sea,
Chanting bird and flowing fountain, call us to rejoice in Thee.

Mortals, join the happy chorus which the morning stars began;
Love divine is reigning o'er us, joining all in heaven's plan.
Ever singing, march we onward, victors in the midst of strife,
Joyful music leads us sunward in the triumph song of life.

Prayer for Grounding in God's Grace

Many: **God of Glory, Lord of Love, as we enter the sacred wilderness with Jesus and the chanting birds, we ask that you open all our senses to your presence. During this journey, may we open ourselves to honesty and self-reflection. May we see and feel how some of the things we have done, some of the things we have left undone, and some of the systems of privilege from which we benefit – hurt others. May we be converted anew to the ways of reconciliation, compassion, and love of neighbor.**

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

Listening to God in Silent Prayer

Assurance of God's Grace

One: Just as the Spirit Dove was present to Jesus in the wilderness, God's presence is with us in all times and in all places. There is nothing therefore that can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. Therefore, let us celebrate together:

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

* Sung Response NCH (black) 475 (refrain)

God's Eye is on the Sparrow

I sing because I'm happy,
I sing because I'm free,
God's eye is on the sparrow,
And I know God watches me.

"Landscape"

Mary Oliver

Isn't it plain the sheets of moss, except that
they have no tongues, could lecture
all day if they wanted about
spiritual patience? Isn't it clear
the black oaks along the path are standing
as though they were the most fragile of flowers?
Every morning I walk like this around
the pond, thinking: if the doors of my heart
ever close, I am as good as dead.
Every morning, so far, I'm alive. And now
the crows break off from the rest of the darkness
and burst up into the sky—as though
all night they had thought of what they would like
their lives to be, and imagined
their strong, thick wings.



Readings from Scripture

Gospel Reading – Mark 1:9-15

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

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.”

Gospel Reading – Matthew 6:26-34 (*The Message* translation)

Look at the birds, free and unfettered, not tied down to a job description, careless in the care of God. And you count far more to God than birds. Has anyone by fussing in front of the mirror ever gotten taller by so much as an inch? All this time and money wasted on fashion—do you think it makes that much difference? Instead of looking at the fashions, walk out into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They never primp or shop, but have you ever seen color and design quite like it? The ten best-dressed people in the country look shabby alongside them. If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which are never even seen—don’t you think God will attend to you, take pride in you, do the best by you? What I’m trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with getting, so you can respond to God’s giving. People who don’t know God and God’s way, fuss over these things, but you know both God and how God works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don’t worry about missing out. You’ll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don’t get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.

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

Many: **Thanks be to God.**

Sung Response

God’s Eye is on the Sparrow

Sermon

“Free Bird”

Song

I'll Fly Away

Some bright morning when this life is over, I'll fly away
To that home on God's celestial shore, I'll fly away

Refrain

I'll fly away O glory,

I'll fly away in the morning

When I die, **to the sacred** by and by, I'll fly away

When the shadows of this life have gone, I'll fly away

Like a bird from these prison's walls have flown, I'll fly away. *Refrain*

O how glad and happy when we meet, I'll fly away

No more cold iron shackles on our feet, I'll fly away. *Refrain*

Installation of New Deacon & Council Members: Mocky Day and Anne Crane

Call to Offering

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

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

Offertory

The Lone Wild Bird

arr. David Johnson

* 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.

All God's children gonna eat together,
All God's children gonna eat together, some of these days.
All God's children gonna eat together,
All God's children gonna eat together, some of these days.

* The Great Thanksgiving

One: May God be with you!

Many: And also with you.

One: People of Bird Power, 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 and birds 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

Communion Meditation

The Lone Wild Bird

arr. Wilbur Held

Post Communion Prayer

*** Closing Hymn**

In Spirit When I Took My Flight

(to hymn tune: ST ANNE “O God, Our Help in Ages Past”)

In spirit when I took my flight
Above the mount, to see
My Lord, transfigured in the light
Of Christ’s own Deity:—

I cried, not knowing what I said,
“‘Tis good to tarry here!”
But, when the heavenly vision fled,
Transport gave way to fear.

Ah! thus, my soul, it should not be;
O Jesus! hear my prayer;
Give me a heart to follow Thee
All times, and everywhere.

Let but Thy presence with me go,
Thy love be my delight,
Then shall I fly, through weal or woe,
By faith, and not by sight.

*** 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

Worship Leader – Rev. Joshua Lawrence Lazard

Minister of Music – Tom Handel

Liturgist – Maria Arruda

Lector – Jack Ammerman

Covenant Choir

Vocal Soloist – Betsy Groves

Communion Servers – Barbara Darling Trudi Veldman

Ushers – Anne Crane, Trudi Veldman

Digital Minister – Diane Lauber

Audio Visual Tech Team – Venkatesh Balasubramanian, Abhishek John

Sexton – Jesús Vargas

Cover Art, “Great Blue Heron” – Brooks Mathewson

A Note on the Prelude: Olivier Messiaen's *Meditations on the Mysteries of the Holy Trinity* is a massive work of nine movements, lasting approximately one hour. Composed in 1969, the work represents Messiaen's mature musical language in which almost every note and rhythm serves as a symbol ranging from liturgical, biblical, and theological texts to meticulously notated birdsong. “Meditation 2” focuses on the Holiness of God, symbolized by a Gregorian Chant Alleluia followed by a chorus of celebratory birdsongs.

The work unfolds as follows: God is Holy (Gregorian Chant); an excerpt from the Gloria (dissonant, sometimes extremely dissonant chords that always find a peaceful resolution) and birdsong (wren, blackbird, chaffinch, garden warbler in an extended solo, and blackcap warbler). The movement concludes with a return of the Gregorian Alleluia, followed by the off-key song of the yellowhammer.

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 25: Second Sunday in Lent, SIGHT, Rev. Joshua Lawrence Lazard preaching, All-Church Potluck After Worship
- Sunday, March 3: Third Sunday in Lent, NEST, Rev. Rob Mark preaching, Baptism of Isaac Anthony Miller Waters, Communion, Climate Jubilee Unshakeable Hope Adult Ed. After Worship
- Sunday, March 10: Fourth Sunday in Lent, MIGRATE, Nica Companions-Led Celebration of the Word Service

LIFE ALIVE BRUNCH TODAY! The young adults group, Life Alive (20s-40s), will go out for brunch after worship today. See Rev. Joshua after church or email him with any questions: joshua.lazard@cotcbos.org.

DEACONS MEETING TODAY. The Deacons will meet after worship today in the Williams Library.

LENTEN BIRD COVER PHOTOS. Throughout Lent, our bulletin images are being provided to us by **Brooks Mathewson**. Brooks is an ecologist, educator, and photographer with a Master's in Forest Science from Harvard University. He has published over two dozen peer-reviewed papers, technical reports, and popular articles on his research on terrestrial salamander ecology, tree phenology, breeding bird biology, and bird migration. Brooks' photography has been published in magazines, newspapers, textbooks, and conservation reports and has been displayed at the National Science Foundation, Harvard Forest, Appalachian Mountain Club,

National Wildlife Refuges, Massachusetts and Rhode Island Audubon Society Sanctuaries, libraries, and in personal collections. Brooks has designed and led numerous citizen science research projects focusing on urban ecology and has taught natural history, ecology, and photography to elementary, middle school, high school, college, and continuing education students. He has appeared on radio and television programs and has given over one hundred lectures to the general public.

GBIO IN-DISTRICT MEETING CHANGE OF DATE & LOCATION. On **Wednesday, February 21, at 7:00 pm**, the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization is organizing an In-District Meeting with Representatives Livingston and Michlewitz at Old South Church, 645 Boylston Street. This is one of several meetings with state senators and representatives where we will be asking for their commitment to \$1.6 billion for state-funded public housing, at least \$189 million for the operating budget in public housing, the real estate transfer fee to increase affordable housing, state IDs for people who are returning from prison upon release, and \$9 million in rental assistance for those who are returning from incarceration. Register here:

<https://secure.everyaction.com/lZDRyk172k2Gk/FUy6pNWQ2>.

CLIMATE HOPE. Workshop, **Sunday, March 3**, following worship. When you think of our planet, is it sometimes hard for you to conjure hope? Receive our Climate Jubilee Team's invitation to join an important free, all-church workshop, "Unshakeable Hope," led by climate resilience ethicist Dr. Tallessyn Zawn Grenfell-Lee, MDiv, PhD. We will gather with sustainable snacks and hot beverages in Bates Hall (and on Zoom) to kindle some hope in the spirit of COTC Adult Education together. Questions? Email Rob at revrobmark@gmail.com.

GREATER BOSTON INTERFAITH ORGANIZATION HOUSING

JUSTICE ACTION. Join GBIO on **Sunday, March 3, at 3:00 pm**, to push the Housing Justice Campaign across the finish line! Major action to call for the passing of the Affordable Homes Act and GBIO's budget and legislative asks to:

- Improve public housing,
- Expand affordable homeownership and rental, and
- Improve housing access for Returning Citizens.

At the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center, 100 Malcolm X Boulevard, Roxbury, MA 02120. To register: bit.ly/gbiomarch3.

ALL-CHURCH BOOK DISCUSSION. Join us after worship on **Sunday, March 10**, for an Adult Ed. and all-church read of *Transforming: The Bible & the Lives of Transgender Christians* by Austen Hartke. During this Lenten season in which we seek a more “free and unfettered” world, and as Covenant continues living into and growing our Open and Affirming and More Light commitments, we will read this important book, sharing the stories of several trans Christians and inviting readers into trans theology. Rev. Kate and Rev. Rob will lead the discussion, and we hope you’ll come ready to participate! The book is available at bookshop.org or at pcusastore.com.

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!

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](https://cotcbos.org) (link on cotcbos.org). During Lent, we will start each service with congregants and experts sharing some bird wisdom (“word from a bird”).

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](https://cotcbos.org/worship-recordings) (cotcbos.org/worship-recordings).

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



Common Tern in Flight

Climate Jubilee Adult Ed. on March 3, 2024, After Worship



CLIMATE RESILIENCE LEADERSHIP

HOPE • ACTION • IMPACT

COURAGE AND ABUNDANCE FOR YOUR CLIMATE JUSTICE MINISTRY



Workshop Leader Tallessyn Zawn Grenfell-Lee

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*