

Church of the Covenant

Boston, MA



Bird Power: SIGHT
The Second Sunday in Lent
February 25, 2024

Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ



Church of the Covenant

The Second Sunday in Bird Power Lent: SIGHT

February 25, 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

Round Dance from *Firebird*

Igor Stravinsky

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 Eagle

*** Kindling the Christ Light**

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

*** Opening Hymn** NCH 32 (black)

God of the Sparrow God of the Whale

God of the sparrow God of the whale
God of the swirling stars
How does the creature say Awe
How does the creature say Praise

God of the earthquake God of the storm
God of the trumpet blast
How does the creature cry Woe
How does the creature cry Save

God of the rainbow God of the cross
God of the empty grave
How does the creature say Grace
How does the creature say Thanks

God of the hungry God of the sick
God of the prodigal
How does the creature say Care
How does the creature say Life

God of the neighbor God of the foe
God of the pruning hook
How does the creature say Love
How does the creature say Peace

God of the ages God near at hand
God of the loving heart
How do your children say Joy
How do your children say Home.

Prayer for Grounding in God's Grace

Many: God of Glory and Eagle-eyed sight, as we continue on our Lenten journey, turning our attention to the winged creatures over our head, we come to you realizing that we have sometimes forgotten to pay attention to our neighbor. During this journey, let us be open to seeing your wonder in the birds that perch on vacant tree branches, as well as seeing the beauty in the human faces that we pass on the street in the busyness of everyday life. There are things that we have left undone, and we collectively come asking for forgiveness. Let us be open to seeing beauty and wonder everywhere we turn.

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

Listening to God in Silent Prayer

Assurance of God's Grace

One: Just as God's eye is on the sparrow, let us be assured that like the eagle, God sees us up close and even from faraway 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.

"Dreams"

Langston Hughes

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.



Adult Horned Lark

Readings from Scripture

Hebrew Bible Reading – Isaiah 40:28-31 (New King James Version, modified)

Have you not known?

Have you not heard?

The everlasting God, the Lord,

The Creator of the ends of the earth,

Neither faints nor is weary.

God's understanding is unsearchable.

God gives power to the weak,

And to those who have no might God increases strength.

Even the youths shall faint and grow weary,

And the young shall utterly fall,

But they that wait on the Lord

Shall renew their strength;

They shall mount up with wings like eagles,

They shall run and not be weary,

They shall walk and not faint.

Gospel Reading – Mark 8:31-38

Then Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Humankind must undergo great suffering and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

He called the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Humankind will also be ashamed when he comes into the glory of God with the holy angels."

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

Sung Response

God's Eye is on the Sparrow

Sermon

“A Hope That Transforms”

New Member Joining Liturgy — Margaret Motte Snyder

Call to Offering

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

Offertory

Soar Away

Shape Note Hymn

*** 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 81 (black)**

God Be with You

God be with you till we meet again;
By good counsel guide, uphold you,
With a shepherd's care enfold you:
God be with you till we meet again.

Refrain:

Till we meet, till we meet,
Till we meet at Jesus' feet;
Till we meet, till we meet,
God be with you till we meet again.

God be with you till we meet again;
Wings of shelter safely hide you,
Daily manna still provide you:
God be with you till we meet again. *Refrain*

God be with you till we meet again;
When life's perils thick confound you,
Put unfailing arms around you:
God be with you till we meet again. *Refrain*

God be with you till we meet again;
Keep love's banner floating o'er you,
Smite death's threatening wave before you:
God be with you till we meet again. *Refrain*

*** 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 – Ed James

Lector – So Jung Kim

Covenant Choir

Ushers – Linda Pursley, Denice Thornhill

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

Digital Minister – Diane Lauber

Sexton – Jesús Vargas

Cover Art, “Bald Eagle” – Brooks Mathewson

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.



ALL-CHURCH POTLUCK TODAY! Join us after worship for a plant-based potluck downstairs in Bates Hall. Come for good food and good conversation. All are welcome, whether you brought food or not!

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, 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

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.

CLIMATE HOPE. Workshop, next **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 next **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 Gospel of Mark. 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://www.cotcbos.org) (link on [cotcbos.org](https://www.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://www.cotcbos.org/worship-recordings) ([cotcbos.org/worship-recordings](https://www.cotcbos.org/worship-recordings)).

WEEKLY CALENDAR. Click [here](https://www.cotcbos.org/calendar-of-events) ([cotcbos.org/calendar-of-events](https://www.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

Kathryn Barry, *President of the Corporation*

Trudi Veldman, *Clerk of the Council*

Jon Schwarz, *Moderator of the Board of Deacons*

Faith Perry, *Treasurer*