

Church of the Covenant

Boston, MA



Bird Power: NEST

The Third Sunday in lent

March 3, 2024

Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ



Church of the Covenant

The Third Sunday in Bird Power Lent: NEST

March 3, 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.

If you would like a prayer of Celebration or Concern to be prayed aloud today, please take a moment at any time to write it into the Red Book at the back of the sanctuary. For those online, you will be invited to place a prayer in the chat. We will not be passing the mic during Celebrations & Concerns today.

**You are invited to rise in body or spirit.*

Prelude

The Nest in Old North Church

Ned Rorem

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.



Black-capped chickadee.

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.**

*** Kindling the Christ Light**

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

*** Opening Hymn**

Birds and Woods

(A hymn from 1918, by L.F. Cole, TUNE-HYMN TO JOY)

Birds are winging, woods are ringing,
With full praises, God they sing;
Lake and mountain, field and fountain,
To your throne their tributes bring.

Refrain:

We, thy children, join the chorus,
With glad voices praising thee
Glad hosannas, glad hosannas,
Joyfully we lift to thee.

Waters dancing, sunbeams glancing,
Sing thy glory cheerily;
Blossoms breaking, nature waking,
Chant thy praises merrily. *Refrain*

Angels o'er us join the chorus
Which on earth we sing to thee;
Heav'n is ringing, earth is singing
Praises to thee joyfully. *Refrain*

Prayer for Grounding in God's Grace

Many: God of all creation, joyfully we sing to thee. There is so much to be grateful for. There is also so much to lament. As we look at the broken and breaking parts of our world and ourselves, we lift the words of Psalm 55, “fear and trembling at times come upon us, and we are overwhelmed.” So now, in quietness and humility, with great longing for your healing touch, we turn and open ourselves to you in honesty and truth.

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

Listening to God in Silent Prayer

Assurance of God's Grace

One: Psalm 55 goes on to say, “O that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest; I would lodge in the wilderness; *selah*. I would hurry to find a shelter for myself from the raging wind and tempest.” Friends, hear this good news—in God's grace—we all have wings. We all can fly away to find shelter and healing and restoration in the shadow of God's loving wing. Therefore, let us celebrate together:

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

* Sung Response NCH (black) 475 (refrain)

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.

God's Eye is on the Sparrow



Readings from Scripture

Hebrew Bible Reading – Genesis 8:1-12

But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and all the domestic animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided; the fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained, and the waters gradually receded from the earth. At the end of one hundred and fifty days the waters had abated; and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth

day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. The waters continued to abate until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains appeared.

At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made and sent out the raven; and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. Then he sent out the dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground; but the dove found no place to set its foot, and it returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took it and brought it into the ark with him. He waited another seven days, and again he sent out the dove from the ark; and the dove came back to him in the evening, and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. Then he waited another seven days, and sent out the dove; and it did not return to him anymore.

Gospel Reading – John 2:13-17

Passover was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, “Take them out of here! Stop making my Parent’s house a marketplace!” His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.”

Gospel Reading – Matthew 8:19-21

Now when Jesus saw great crowds around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. A scribe then approached and said, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.” And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Child of Humanity has nowhere to lay his head.”

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

Sung Response

God’s Eye is on the Sparrow

Sermon

“Releasing Doves”



The Sacrament of Baptism: Isaac Anthony Miller Waters

Invitation to the Font of Every Blessing

Baptism Gathering Song

Down in the River

Chorus: As I went down in the river to pray
Studying about that good old way
And who shall wear the starry crown,
Good Lord, show me the way.

O children, let's go down, let's go down, come on down
O children, let's go down, down in the river to pray. *Chorus*

Questions for the Congregation

Do we trust that Isaac will be held in God's grace wherever his journey in life and faith lead? Do we promise to provide education that will help him reveal the work and movement of God within him? Do we promise to incorporate him into the life and mission of this congregation through all stages of his childhood? Do we promise to share our faith and our questions with him, to answer his questions as we are able, and to encourage his inquiry? Will we share with him the wonder, love, and joy of life connected to the Holy Spirit? Will we surround him with a church ready to hear and act upon God's word in this day and age? And finally, will we give thanks that Isaac is always held in the Spirit's loving care?

If so, please answer together: **"We do and we will."**

Welcoming the Newly Baptized

Call to Offering

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

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

Offertory

Like a Bird

Luigi Cherubini

* 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

Commissioning of Child Care Provider Kelsie Lawhorn

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 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 PH 320 (blue)**

The Lone, Wild Bird

The lone, wild bird in lofty flight
Is still with Thee, nor leaves Thy sight.
And I am Thine! I rest in Thee.
Great Spirit, come, and rest in me.

The ends of earth are in Thy hand,
The sea's dark deep and far off land.
And I am Thine! I rest in Thee.
Great Spirit, come, and rest in me.

*** 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 – Betty Southwick

Lector – Joe Waters

Covenant Choir

Ushers – Holly Humphreys, Trudi Veldman

Communion Servers – Tim Groves, Debbie Howland

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

Digital Minister – Christine James

Sexton – Jesús Vargas

Cover Art, “Black-Crowned Night Heron” – 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.



WANT TO JOIN COTC? We'd love to welcome you as our newest member. Did you know we have three forms of membership at Church of the Covenant? Speak to pastors Rob or Joshua at any point, or email our Parish Administrator Nancy if you'd like to know more: nancy.stockford@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, March 10: Fourth Sunday in Lent, MIGRATE, Nica Companions-Led Celebration of the Word Service, Book Discussion After Worship
- Sunday, March 17: Fifth Sunday in Lent, CALL, Rev. Joshua Lawrence Lazard preaching, Communion
- Sunday, March 24: Palm Sunday, FLOCK, All-Ages Worship

CLIMATE HOPE TODAY! Workshop today, **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 the sanctuary (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 TODAY. It is not too late to join the group going to the GBIO Housing Justice Action today, **Sunday, March 3, at 3:00 pm**. Please let Anne Crane, Tim Groves, Holly Humphreys, or Faith Perry know if you are interested. For those who are going, you are invited to bring your lunch, and eat together following the Climate Jubilee program. Or you can get lunch at one of the local eateries. We will gather on the platform at the Back Bay Orange Line station at 2:00 pm and take the Orange Line to Roxbury Crossing. GBIO actions are always exciting! This is a 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.

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.

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 “A Word from a Bird” 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). 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](#) (cotcbos.org/worship-recordings).

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



Osprey in Nest

“Nest”

Marianne Boruch

I walked out, and the nest
was already there by the step. Woven basket
of a saint
sent back to life as a bird
who proceeded to make
a mess of things. Wind
right through it, and any eggs
long vanished. But in my hand it was
intricate pleasure, even the thorny reeds
softened in the weave. And the fading
leaf mold, hardly
itself anymore, merely a trick
of light, if light
can be tricked. Deep in a life
is another life. I walked out, the nest
already by the step.

TODAY IMMEDIATELY AFTER WORSHIP!
Climate Jubilee Adult Education on March 3, 2024



CLIMATE RESILIENCE LEADERSHIP

HOPE • ACTION • IMPACT

COURAGE AND ABUNDANCE FOR YOUR CLIMATE JUSTICE MINISTRY



Workshop Leader Dr. 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

Kathryn Barry, *President of the Corporation*

Trudi Veldman, *Clerk of the Council*

Jon Schwarz, *Moderator of the Board of Deacons*

Faith Perry, *Treasurer*