

Church of the Covenant

Boston, MA



First Sunday in Lent – Being **SEEDs**
Sacred **E**mbodiment that **E**merges from the **D**epths
March 9, 2025

Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ



Church of the Covenant
First Sunday in Lent
March 9, 2025, 10:30 am [Zoom Link](#)

Welcome and thank you for worshipping together for this “hybrid” service where some will be in the sanctuary at 67 Newbury Street, and some in the sanctuary of places far and near. For those joining online, we begin on Zoom at the link above. Please keep your mic muted during the service.

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

Prelude

Arioso

J. S. Bach

Welcome & Announcements

One: Peace be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

*** Call to Worship**

Sarah Are

One: We cultivate the earth—

Many: **When we till the ground and lay new seeds.**

One: We cultivate safe space—

Many: **When we pay attention to what others need.**

One: We cultivate worship—

Many: **When we come together, our hearts on our sleeves.**

One: In this worship, may we be honest and present;

Many: **May we be faithful and gracious.**

One: For the God of the soil, who is the God of our hearts, is near.

Many: **Let us worship Holy God.**

*** Kindling the Christ Light**

One: The light of Christ,

Many: **Thanks be to God!**

*** Opening Hymn NCH (black) 12**

I Sing the Mighty Power of God

I sing the mighty power of God that made the mountains rise,

That spread the flowing seas abroad, and built the lofty skies.

I sing the wisdom that ordained the sun to rule the day;

The moon shines full at God’s command, and all the stars obey.

I sing the goodness of our God that filled the earth with food;
God formed the creatures with a word, and then pronounced them good.
Oh, how your wonders are displayed, where'er I turn my eye:
If I survey the ground I tread, or gaze upon the sky!

On earth there's not a plant or flower but makes your glory known.
The clouds arise and spread their showers by order from your throne.
All life is but a gift from you and ever in your care;
Wherever people gather, you, O God, are present there.

A Grounding Litany for Being Seeds

One: O Loving God, Gracious Sower of life,

Many: This Lent we long to embody your love.

One: As we journey with Jesus through the wilderness of this season,

Many: Draw us closer to you, the earth, and one another.

One: As we face the depths and challenges of living,

Many: May we like seeds find nurture, and courage in the soil of community.

One: Inspired by our sacred texts, practices, and actions, move us from dormancy,

Many: So we germinate as your people and emerge in the power of the Spirit.

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

Listening to God in Silent Prayer

Assurance of God's Grace

One: Just as the Spirit was present to Jesus in the wilderness, God's presence is with us at 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) 500 (to the tune of *We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder*)

We are seeds and God the Sower
We are seeds and Christ the Water
We are seeds and Spirit, Power
May we rise up strong!

Readings from Scripture

Hebrew Bible Reading – Deuteronomy 26:5-11

You shall make this response before the HOLY ONE your God: “A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When Pharaoh treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, we cried to the HOLY ONE, the God of our ancestors; God heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. God brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O God, have given me.” You shall set it down before the God and bow down before your God. Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that your God has given to you and to your house.

Responsive Reading – Psalm 97:8-12, adapted from *The Message*

One: God is Sovereign—God is President—God is King, Queen, Ruler of all.

Many: God is most high above all the cosmos, above all other gods.

One: All who love God, hate evil. God keeps us safe from the wicked.

Many: Light-seeds are planted in the souls of God's people,

One: Joy-seeds are planted in good heart-soil.

Many: So, God's people, shout praise to God, give thanks to our Holy God!

Gospel Reading – Luke 8:4-15

When a large crowd was gathering, as people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he said in a parable: “A sower went out to sow seed, and as when sowing, some fell on a path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on rock, and as it grew up it withered for lack of moisture. Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. Some fell into good soil, and when it grew it produced a hundredfold.” As he said this, he called out, “If you have ears to hear, then hear!”

Then his disciples asked him what this parable meant. He said, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but to others I speak in parables, so that ‘looking they may not perceive and hearing they may not understand.’

“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones on the path are those who have heard; then the Devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not trust and be rescued. The ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they trust only for a while and in a time of testing fall away. As for what fell among the thorns, these are the ones who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the worries, wealth, and moral decay, and their fruit does not mature. But as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart and bear fruit with endurance.”

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

Many: **Thanks be to God.**

Sung Response NCH (black) 500

(to the tune of *We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder*)

Rise, Shine, Give God Glory

Rise, Shine, Give God Glory

Rise, Shine, Give God Glory

Children of the Light

Sermon

“Earthseed”

Call to Offering

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

Offertory

All Good Gifts (Godspell)

Stephen Schwartz

We plow the fields and scatter the good seed on the land,
But it is fed and watered by God's almighty hand.
God sends the snow in winter, the warmth to swell the grain,
The breezes and the sunshine, and soft refreshing rain.

Refrain: All good gifts around us,
Are sent from Heaven above.
We thank you God, we thank you God for all your love.

We thank thee then, Creator, for all things bright and good,
The seedtime and the harvest, our life, our health, our food.
No gifts have we to offer for all thy love imparts,
But that which thou desirest, our humble, thankful hearts! *Refrain*

* 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) 433

In the Bulb There Is a Flower

In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree;
in cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be,
unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

There's a song in every silence, seeking word and melody;
there's a dawn in every darkness, bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future; what it holds, a mystery,
unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

In our end is our beginning; in our time, infinity;
in our doubt there is believing; in our life, eternity;
In our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory,
unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

*** 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 – Margy Ronna

Covenant Choir

Usher – Trudi Veldman

Digital Minister – Sandra May

Audio Visual Tech Team – Venkatesh Balasubramanian, Jon Schwarz

Sexton – Jesús Vargas

Cover Art – “New Roots” by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman, used with permission

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.

SACRED RECKONINGS SPIRITUAL EDUCATION SESSION AFTER WORSHIP TODAY! Join us after worship (in person and online) today for a Spiritual Education session led by Liz Vizza, who will teach us about what she's learned about the indigenous people who settled the area now called the Back Bay, through research during a monument intervention project done when she led the Friends of the Public Garden.

BOOK DISCUSSION AFTER WORSHIP ON MARCH 16. After worship (in person and online) on **Sunday, March 16**, the Sacred Reckonings Team will lead an All-Church book discussion on *James* by Percival Everett. *James* is a reimagined telling of Huckleberry Finn, from the perspective of Jim, a person who was enslaved and was Huck's companion. All are welcome, whether or not you have read the book!

MARCH 30 SPECIAL 5th SUNDAY. March 30 will be the first special 5th Sunday at Covenant. Join us in worship for this creative expression of worship that will look and feel new. Everyone who comes in person will receive a special gift that will infuse our Being SEEDs Lenten theme worship. For those planning to join this service online, please fill out this form (<https://www.tinyurl.com/cotcmarch30>) to let us know so we can send you a gift in advance that will help make that service more fun.

40 ACTS OF GENEROSITY THIS LENT. As we have in years past, you can sign up for this simple but profound daily discipline in practicing generosity throughout Lent, brought to you by your Generosity Generators: <https://40acts.org.uk/>. Click on the red button "Sign up today."

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, March 16: Rev. Joshua Lawrence Lazard preaching, Second Sunday in Lent, Holy Communion, Ordination/Installation of Officers, Sacred Reckonings All-Church Book Discussion of *James*
- Thursday, March 20: 6:30 pm, Spring Equinox Eco-Evensong, Arthur Fiedler Dock (in-person only)
- Sunday, March 23: Celebration of the Word Service Led by Nicaragua Companions, Third Sunday in Lent
- Sunday, March 30: Special 5th Sunday Worship (in-person *or* online)

BIBLE STUDY WEDNESDAYS. Our weekly Bible Study meets on Wednesday mornings at 9:45 on Zoom. We are studying the book of Genesis, reading the origin stories that shaped the lives and faith of ancient Jews and exploring their meaning for contemporary Christians. If you would like more information or want to be on the list to get regular reminders and Zoom details, contact Jack Ammerman at jmacooks@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.

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 sticker. A weekend discount is also available for longer periods: \$10 for up to eleven (11) hours. A scannable parking sticker is available from an usher and at this link: <https://tinyurl.com/cotcsundayparking2>.

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.

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. Note that your information goes only to our pastors and you will not be added to any email lists.



*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!*



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

Brian Bigler, *President of the Corporation*

Trudi Veldman, *Clerk of the Council*

Anita Gram, *Moderator of the Board of Deacons*

Faith Perry, *Treasurer*