

# Church of the Covenant

## Boston, MA



**Bird Power: CALL**  
**The Fifth Sunday in Lent**  
**March 17, 2024**

*Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ*



# Church of the Covenant

## The Fifth Sunday in Bird Power Lent: CALL

March 17, 2024, 10:30 am [Zoom Link](#)

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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**

*God's Eye Is on the Sparrow*

arr. Harvey Burgett

### 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 NCH (black) 517

*I Need You Every Hour*

1. I need you every hour, O God of grace;  
The peace your voice affords, I now embrace.

*Refrain:*

I need you, how I need you! Every hour I need you;  
O bless me now, my Savior; I come to you.

2. I need you every hour, in faith or fear;  
Temptations lose their power when you are near. *Refrain*

3. I need you every hour, in joy or pain;  
Come quickly and abide or life is vain. *Refrain*

4. I need you every hour; teach me your will,  
And your rich promises in me fulfill. *Refrain*

## International Day to Combat Islamophobia

### Prayer for Grounding in God's Grace

**Many:** God of the sparrows and swallows, we confess that our actions don't always align with things that please you. We acknowledge that we don't always listen to you calling us toward the things that are good and righteous, and away from that which dishonors you and humanity. Forgive us, O God. Plant our feet on the solid ground of your always abiding love for us; let the city of our soul bear wings and take flight with the knowledge that in your forgiveness comes restoration, renewal, and revival.

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

### Listening to God in Silent Prayer



## Assurance of God's Grace

One: Where can we go from your spirit, O God? Or where can we flee from your presence? Whether we ascend into the heavens, or make our bed in hell—you are there. If we were to take wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, you always hold us close in the hollow of your hand. 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 – Psalm 84:1-4

How lovely is your dwelling place, O God! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young—a place near your altar, O God, my Savior. Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.

### Gospel Reading – Luke 12:1-7

Meanwhile, when the crowd had gathered by the thousands, so that they trampled on one another, he began to speak first to his disciples, “Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees, that is, their hypocrisy. Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered and nothing secret that will not become known. Therefore, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed from the housetops.

“I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body and after that can do nothing more. But I will show you whom to fear: fear the one who, after killing, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear that one! Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight.

But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.”

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

## **Sung Response**

*God's Eye Is on the Sparrow*

## **Sermon**

“Stay Grounded”

## **Call to Offering**

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

## **Offertory**

*God's Eye Is on the Sparrow*

arr. Bill Wolaver

## **\* 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.

## \* 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

## Post Communion Prayer

**\* Closing Hymn** NCH (black) 475

*God's Eye Is on the Sparrow*

1. Why should I feel discouraged, why should the shadows come,  
Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home;  
When God is ever my portion? My constant friend will be:  
God's eye is on the sparrow, and I know God watches me;  
God's eye is on the sparrow, and I know God watches me.

*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.

2. "Let not your heart be troubled," Christ's tender word I hear,  
And resting on God's goodness, I lose my doubts and fears;  
Though by the path God leads me but one step I may see:  
God's eye is on the sparrow, and I know God watches me;  
God's eye is on the sparrow, and I know God watches me. *Refrain*

3. Whenever I am tempted, whenever clouds arise;  
When song gives place to sighing, when hope within me dies,  
I then draw close to my Savior, from care I am set free:  
God's eye is on the sparrow, and I know God watches me;  
God's eye is on the sparrow, and I know God watches me. *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.

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## **Worship Participants**

**Preacher** – Rev. Joshua Lawrence Lazard

**Minister of Music** – Tom Handel

**Liturgist** – Rev. Rob Mark

**Lector** – Nancy Stockford

**Covenant Choir**

**Ushers** – Holly Humphreys, Denice Thornhill

**Communion Servers** – Karen Henry, Liz Vizza

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

**Digital Minister** – Christine James

**Sexton** – Jesús Vargas

**Cover Art, “Red-Winged Blackbird”** – 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](http://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](mailto:nancy.stockford@cotcbos.org).

**LIFE ALIVE BRUNCH.** The young adults group (20s-40s) is going out for brunch today, **March 17**, after worship. Please let Rev. Joshua know if you are interested in joining.



**CLIMATE HOPE & RESILIENCE MAPPING.** Receive the invitation from our Climate Jubilee Team to join us today, **Sunday, March 17**, for part two of the workshop led by climate resilience ethicist Tallessyn Zawn Grenfell-Lee, MDiv, PhD. We will gather with sustainable snacks and hot beverages in Bates Hall (and on Zoom) to do some important followup work to our workshop on Unshakeable Hope on March 3, and specifically dive deeper into some community capacity mapping as we look at how our church community can specifically respond with faith and action to the climate crisis. Read this brief e-book beforehand if you can: <https://tinyurl.com/climateconfidence>.

**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](#).

- Wednesday, March 20: 6:30 pm, Spring Equinox Eco Evensong at Arthur Fiedler Dock (in-person only)
- Sunday, March 24: Palm Sunday, FLOCK, All-Ages Worship, Deacons Meeting After Worship
- Friday, March 29: 7:00 pm, Good Friday, Tenebrae Service with Seven Last Words, with Newton Presbyterian Friends
- Saturday, March 30: 7:00 pm, Intergenerational Easter Vigil Service
- Sunday, March 31: Easter, Rev. Rob Mark preaching, Redline Brass

**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 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 widely throughout New England.

**PUBLIC WORSHIP & ACTION FOR CEASEFIRE.** Join clergy and faith leaders on **Good Friday, March 29, at 4:00 pm**, at Faneuil Hall Square to make it known: we demand a ceasefire now. This action will be grounded in the Christian tradition, but people of all faith or no faith backgrounds are welcome to join us.

**PRO ARTE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA CONCERT ON APRIL 7.** Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra (including violinist Barbara Englesberg) is presenting “The Unbroken Circle” on **Saturday, April 7 at 3:00 pm**, at Second Church in Newton. Emmy-winning composer Jeff Beal will be the guest conductor. The varied program will include Strauss’ French Horn Concerto, played by BSO hornist Michael Winter, and Ottorino Respighi’s “Gli Uccelli” (“The Birds”). For more information: <https://www.proarte.org/concerts/the-unbroken-circle>.

**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](mailto: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](mailto:revjangough@gmail.com).

**WEDNESDAY EVENING PRAYERS “A Word from a Bird” 6:00-6:30 pm.**  
**Note: NO Evening Prayers on March 20 due to Spring Equinox service.** 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](http://cotcbos.org)). During Lent, we 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](http://cotcbos.org/worship-recordings) ([cotcbos.org/worship-recordings](http://cotcbos.org/worship-recordings)).

**WEEKLY CALENDAR.** Click [here](http://cotcbos.org/calendar-of-events) ([cotcbos.org/calendar-of-events](http://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](http://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](mailto: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](http://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*

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*