



Church of the Covenant

Boston, MA

The Fifth Sunday of Easter
May 3, 2026

Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ



Church of the Covenant

May 3, 2026, 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.*

Gathering Song

Down by the Riverside

I'm gonna lay down my burdens
Down by the riverside (x 3)
I'm gonna lay down my burdens
Down by the riverside study war no more
I ain't gonna study war no more / Ain't gonna study war no more (x2)

Prelude

When Morning Gilds the Skies

arr. Teresa Wilhelmi

Welcome & Announcements

One: Peace be with you.
Many: And also with you.
One: Alleluia! Christ is risen!
Many: Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Experiencing God

* Call to Worship

(Psalm 61, as interpreted by Daniel Berrigan)

One: At land's end, where the sea turns in sleep
Ponderous, menacing
And my spirit fails and runs
Landward, seaward, askelter

**Many: I pray you
Make new
This hireling heart
O turn your face to me**

One: – winged, majestic, angelic –
tireless, a tide

**Many: my prayer goes up –
show me your face, O God!**

*** Kindling the Christ Light**

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

*** Opening Hymn NCH (black) 85**

I Woke Up This Morning

Woke up this morning with my mind stayed on Jesus (x3)

Refrain:

Hallelu, hallelu, hallelujah.

Singing and praying with mind stayed on Jesus (x3) *Refrain*

You can't hate your neighbor when your mind is – stayed on Jesus (x3) *Refrain*

Prayer for Grounding in God's Grace

Many: Loving God, we reveal to you and each other that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. We repent also of the structural sins all around us that we are complicit in, even when not fully aware. For the violence that creeps in. For the sake of your Child Jesus Christ, shower compassion on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name.

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

Listening to God in Silent Prayer

Assurance of God's Grace

One: Friends, hear again the Good News: there are no structures, there are no forces, there is no evil or violence out there or within that can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. We are all crafted in the very image of God, and in Christ liberated and made new. Therefore, let us celebrate together:

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

* Sung Response

Alleluia Amen

Al - le - lu - ia A - men. Al - le - lu - ia A - men. Al - le - lu - ia

A - men A - men and A - men. men and A - men...

The musical notation is written on a single staff in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are placed below the notes. The first line contains three phrases: 'Al - le - lu - ia A - men.', 'Al - le - lu - ia A - men.', and 'Al - le - lu - ia'. The second line contains two phrases: 'A - men A - men and A - men.' and 'men and A - men...'. The second phrase in the second line is marked with a first ending bracket and a double bar line, followed by a second ending bracket.

Readings from Scripture

New Testament Reading – Acts 6:1, 8, 10-15; 7:55-60

Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food.

Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. But (some people) stood up and argued with Stephen. But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke. Then they secretly instigated some men to say, “we have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.” They stirred up the people as well the elders and scribes; then they suddenly confronted him, seized him, and brought him before the council, setting up false witnesses against him...and all who sat in the council looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel...

But filled with the Holy Spirit, Stephen gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. “Look,” he said, “I see the heavens opened and the Child of Humanity standing at the right hand of God!” But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he died. And Saul approved of their killing him.

Gospel Reading – John 14:1-7

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Parent’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Rabbi, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to God except through me. If you know me, you will know my Parent also. From now on you do know God and have seen God.”

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

Many: **Thanks be to God.**

Sung Response

Alleluia Amen

Sermon

“Getting Stoned”

Call to Offering

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

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

Offertory

Lead With Love

Melanie DeMore

The congregation is invited to sing the refrain:



Verse 1 (choir)

Don't give up hope, You're not alone.

Don't you give up, Keep movin' on.

Repeat Refrain x 2

Verse 2 (choir)

Lift up your eyes, Don't you despair.

Look up ahead, The path is there.

Repeat Refrain x 2

Verse 3 (choir)

I know you're scared, And I'm scared too.

But here I am, Right next to you.

Repeat Refrain x 2

*** 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 Hymn**

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 the Empty Tomb, 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 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 Steve Caruso, *translation from Aramaic* (prayed in unison)

O cosmic Birther of all radiance and vibration. Soften the ground of our being and carve out a space within us where your Presence can abide.

Fill us with your creativity so that we may be empowered to bear the fruit of your mission.

Let each of our actions bear fruit in accordance with our desire.

Endow us with the wisdom to produce and share what each being needs to grow and flourish.

Untie the tangled threads of destiny that bind us, as we release others from the entanglement of past mistakes.

Do not let us be seduced by that which would divert us from our true purpose, but illuminate the opportunities of the present moment.

For you are the ground and the fruitful vision, the birth, power and fulfillment, as all is gathered and made whole once again. AMEN.

Breaking of the Bread

Sharing of the Bread & Cup

Post Communion Prayer

* Closing Hymn NCH (black) 595

Some Glad Morning (I'll Fly Away)

Some glad morning when this life o'er, I'll fly away;
To a home on God's celestial shore, I'll fly away.

Refrain:

I'll fly away, O glory, I'll fly away;
When I die, hallelujah, by and by, I'll fly away.

When the shadows of this life have gone, I'll fly away;
Like a bird from prison bars has flown, I'll fly away. *Refrain*

Just a few more weary days and then, I'll fly away;
To a land where joys shall never end, I'll fly away. *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. Rob Mark

**Minister of Music** – Thomas Handel

**Liturgist** – Rev. Dr. Joshua Lawrence Lazard

**Lector** – Kathryn Barry

**Covenant Choir**

**Communion Servers** – Debbie Howland, Sally Pomeroy

**Usher** – Holly Humphreys

**Digital Minister** – Trudi Veldman

**Audio Visual Tech Team**

**Sexton** – Jesús Vargas

**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 welcome 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.

**SACRED RECKONINGS SPIRITUAL EDUCATION TODAY!** Please join the Sacred Reckonings Team's Spiritual Education session today after worship (in person and online). We need and value your input! Covenant's Sacred Reckonings Team is learning about how built spaces, including churches, can perpetuate White supremacy through their design and use practices (i.e., locked doors, restricted hours, entry by invitation only, etc.). For example, historic churches like Covenant that are designed in a Neo-Gothic style with vaulted ceilings, pointed arches, and multiple large-format stained-glass windows are awe-inspiring among many people, especially those of European ancestry. But for people with other frames of reference, these same features might seem intimidating, ostentatious, or exclusive. Because we want 67 Newbury Street to be as welcoming as possible to those seeking a faith home, our Spiritual Education class today will look at the outside of our church and the sanctuary with accessibility and welcome in mind, with the goal of helping our space feel more inviting to a wider diversity of people.

**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](mailto:kate.carlisle@cotcbos.org) if you want to receive updates.

**UPCOMING SUNDAY 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 (in person and on Zoom) services.

- May 10: Rev. Dr. Joshua Lawrence Lazard preaching
- May 17: Rev. Rob Mark preaching, Life Alive Brunch After Worship
- May 24: All-Ages Pentecost Service
- May 31: Fifth Sunday Selah Service, Deacons' End of Life Planning Session After Worship

**MOTHER'S DAY WALK FOR PEACE ON MAY 10.** Would you please consider supporting the Mother's Day Walk for Peace? Funds raised from the Walk support families of homicide victims through the programs and services of the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute, including immediate and long-term care for survivors, youth and multigenerational arts/education programming, advocacy for survivor-centered policies, trainings focused on peace-making, and reentry support for formerly incarcerated people.

Diane Lauber has done this walk for years, but this year she'll be at her son, Jon's, graduation, so I'll be walking in her place. If you've already donated, thank you! If you'd like to donate, just go to <https://www.mothersdaywalk4peace.org/Donate> and find the team, "Kathy and Diane for COTC," or make a general donation.

**LIFE ALIVE BRUNCHES.** Every third Sunday, Life Alive meets immediately after church for monthly fellowship. Life Alive is a small group for adults navigating career, family, and life transitions. If you want to join or have questions, see or email Rev. Joshua at [joshua.lazard@cotcbos.org](mailto:joshua.lazard@cotcbos.org). Next brunch will be **May 17**.

**CLIMATE JUBILEE BIRD WALK ON MAY 20.** Join the Climate Jubilee Team on a bird walk in the Arboretum on **Wednesday, May 20, at 6:00 pm**. We will be led by Nora Rasanen (a friend of Nancy Stockford's who led an excellent bird walk last year!). Meet in front of the Hunnewell building at the main entrance to the Arboretum on Route 203 in Jamaica Plain. Questions? Email Nancy ([nancy.stockford@cotcbos.org](mailto:nancy.stockford@cotcbos.org)).

**FORMATION WITH OUR SIBLING COMMUNITY IN NICARAGUA.** On either May 20 or 27 (date to be finalized soon), starting at 4:00 pm, we have a very special, first-time opportunity for the whole congregation to participate in an online formation with our sibling community in Dulce Nombre de Jesús, Nicaragua. It will be through Zoom and will be facilitated by Entre Culturas, the Nicaraguan organization that facilitates our relationship. The focus will be on the history of our relationship. Participating in formation has been a highlight of the delegations that have traveled to Nicaragua. The formation will replace Evening Prayers.

**ALL-CHURCH READ ON JUNE 16.** Tuesday, June 16, 6:30-7:30 pm, via Zoom. The Climate Jubilee Team will host an online discussion of *Refugia Faith: Seeking Hidden Shelters, Ordinary Wonders, and the Healing of the Earth* by Debra Rienstra. The book explores how Christian spirituality and practice must adapt to prepare for life on a climate-altered planet. Plan to read as much of the book as you can and join us on June 16! Contact Betty Southwick with any questions ([southwickbetty@gmail.com](mailto:southwickbetty@gmail.com)).

**COVENANT CONNECTIONS.** Are you in college? Just moved to the Boston area for grad school? Are you early in your career and looking for a spiritual home? Covenant Connections is a small group for those looking for a spiritual community to discern what God has next for them through Bible studies and connecting over meals. If you want to know more, email Rev. Joshua at [joshua.lazard@cotcbos.org](mailto:joshua.lazard@cotcbos.org).

**WANT TO JOIN COTC?** We'd love to welcome you as our newest member! Joining a faith community in these chaotic days is one practical action one can take to counter the forces of isolation, division, and hopelessness in our world and country these days. Did you know we have multiple forms of membership at Church of the Covenant including Affiliates and Associates? We also have customizable to your schedule "COTC 101" classes to deepen your exposure to our congregation. 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).

**BIBLE STUDY WEDNESDAYS.** Bible Study meets weekly on Wednesday mornings at 9:45 on Zoom. The Wednesday morning Bible study is exploring the Gospel of Matthew. If you would like more information or want to be on the list to get regular reminders and Zoom details, contact Jack Ammerman at [jwacooks@gmail.com](mailto:jwacooks@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 also on <http://www.cotcbos.org>).

**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.

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**NEIGHBORS DON'T  
LET NEIGHBORS  
GO HUNGRY**

PROJECT BREAD'S  
**THE WALK FOR  
HUNGER**<sup>®</sup>  
SUNDAY MAY 3, 2026

Please support Team Covenant's fundraising for the Church of the Covenant Food Pantry:

<https://give.projectbread.org/team/813492>. Sixty percent of what is raised goes directly to the Food Pantry.

# IMMIGRANTS & REFUGEES WELCOME



FAITHFUL  
AMERICA

See ICE? Call LUCE 617-370-5023



*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 sticker.

**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 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](http://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](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 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. Dr. 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*

Venkatesh Balasubramanian, *Music Composition Fellow 2025-2026*

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*