

Church of the Covenant

Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ



May 5, 2024
The Sixth Sunday of Easter



Church of the Covenant

Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 5, 2024, 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

Simple Gifts

Aaron Copland

Welcome & Announcements

One: Peace be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

One: Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Many: **Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

* Call to Worship

(from Psalm 96)

One: Sing to the Lord a new song, a song of hope and rejoicing!

Many: **Praise God for wonderful acts of mercy and kindness!**

One: God has remembered God’s faithful ones.

Many: **God has poured blessing upon blessing upon us!**

One: Praise the Lord, all the earth, shout your praise!

Many: **Rejoice, for God is truly with us. AMEN.**

* Kindling the Christ Light

One: The light of Christ

Many: **Thanks be to God!**

* Opening Hymn NCH (black) 256

We Live by Faith and Not by Sight

We live by faith and not by sight; no gracious words we hear

From Christ who spoke as none e’er spoke, who still we know is near.

We may not touch Christ’s hands and side, nor follow where Christ trod;

But in confessing we rejoice: our Savior and our God!

Help then, O Christ, our unbelief; and may our faith abound
To call on you when you are near and seek where you are found:

That, when our life of faith is done, in realms of clearer light
We may behold you as you are, with full and endless sight.

Prayer for Grounding in God's Grace

Many: Forgiven and gracious God, you have called us to be the church, to live out our Resurrection faith. You have asked us to place our trust in you and to bring to all the good news of your saving love. But we have failed to do this. We have given our faith a back seat to the troubles of the world and to the stresses in our own life. We look for the quick and easy answers. Forgive us for the smallness of our faith. You, who raised Christ from the dead, have promised to raise our spirits and bring us to new life. You have done this and yet, we remain static in our response to you. Clear our spirits of the clutter of everyday living. Let us to be open always to your word and your love. Challenge us to move in directions of peace and hope for all people.

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

Listening to God in Silent Prayer

Assurance of God's Grace

One: Friends, forgiveness and love have been poured out upon us, to offer hope to all nations. We are called and blessed to be messengers of God's good news to all people:

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

* Sung Response

Easter Celtic Alleluia

Al - le - lu - ia, a - le - lu - ia!

Al - le - lu - ia, a - le - lu - ia!

Readings from Scripture

New Testament Reading – Acts 1:12-14, 20-26

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying: Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

“For it is written in the book of Psalms,

‘Let his house become desolate,
and let there be no one to live in it’;

and

‘Let another take his position of overseer.’

“So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.” So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was added to the eleven apostles.

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

Many: **Thanks be to God.**

Sung Response

Easter Celtic Alleluia

Sermon

“An Unbelievable Testimony”

* Hymn NCH (black) 576

For the Healing of the Nations

For the healing of the nations, God, we pray with one accord;
For a just and equal sharing of the things that earth affords;
To a life of love in action help us rise and pledge our word.

Lead us forward into freedom; from despair your world release,
That, redeemed from war and hatred, all may come and go in peace.
Show us how through care and goodness fear will die and hope increase.

All that kills abundant living, let it from the earth be banned;
Pride of status, race, or schooling, dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice may we hallow life's brief span.

You, Creator God, have written your great name on humankind;
For our growing in your likeness bring the life of Christ to mind,
That by our response and service earth its destiny may find.

Call to Offering

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

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

Offertory

Say, Say Yes!

Melanie DeMore

* 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: Sheep 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 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 Casa del Sol Prayer of Jesus**

(in unison)

Ground of all being, Mother of life, Father of the universe, Your name is sacred, beyond speaking. May we know your presence, may your longings be our longings in heart and in action. May there be food for the human family today and for the whole earth community. Forgive us the falseness of what we have done as we forgive those who are untrue to us. Do not forsake us in our time of conflict but lead us into new beginnings. For the light of life, the vitality of life, and the glory of life are yours now and forever. Amen.

Breaking of the Bread

Sharing of the Bread & Cup

Post Communion Prayer

*** 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 – Karen Henry

Lector – Debbie Howland

Covenant Choir

Ushers – Anne Crane, Holly Humphreys

Communion Servers – Tim Groves, Debbie Howland

Digital Minister – Diane Lauber

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

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 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 READ: *TRANSFORMING*. Join us after worship next **Sunday, May 12**, for an Adult Ed. and the second discussion of our all-church read, *Transforming: The Bible & the Lives of Transgender Christians* by Austen Hartke. As Covenant continues living into and growing our Open and Affirming and More Light commitments, we have already held one discussion around topics raised in this important book, sharing the stories of several trans Christians and inviting readers into trans theology. After our Adult Ed. during Lent, we heard interest in continuing the conversation, especially after more folks are able to finish reading. Rev. Kate will lead the discussion, and we hope you will come ready to participate! It's not too late to start reading, especially if you grab an e-reader or audiobook version. If you want to buy a paper copy, here are a couple of links for purchasing the 2023 updated edition: on [Bookshop](#) or at the [PC\(USA\) Store](#). Whether or not you came to the first session and whether or not you have read the whole book, we hope that you'll join us!

MOTHER'S DAY WALK FOR PEACE: JOIN (OR SUPPORT) TEAM COVENANT! Diane Lauber is once again leading the Covenant Team on **Sunday, May 12**, for the 28th Mother's Day Walk for Peace for the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute, whose mission is to serve as a center of healing, teaching, and learning for families and communities impacted by murder, trauma, grief, and loss. Contact Diane (dianelauber@comcast.net) with any questions, or check out the website to learn more: <https://ldbpeaceinstitute.org/>. You can join the team, or if not, you can donate, at: <https://www.mothersdaywalk4peace.org/Team/View/189511/Church-of-the-Covenant>.

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, May 12: Rev. Kate Carlisle preaching, Continuing All-Church Book Discussion of *Transforming: The Bible & the Lives of Transgender Christians* After Worship
- Sunday, May 19: Pentecost, All-Ages Worship, Holy Communion
- Sunday, May 26: Rev. Joshua Lawrence Lazard preaching

TOM REID RECITAL ON MAY 18. Pastor of Newton Presbyterian Church and former Covenant member Tom Reid will be singing in “Beyond the Sea: A Musical Journey” at NPC (75 Vernon Street, Newton) on **Saturday, May 18, at 6:00 pm.** He will be accompanied by Anran Qian on piano. Admission is free.

COVENANT CABARET! Saturday, June 1, 7:00 pm. Come join us for this lively event with tasty refreshments and fun entertainment (music, poetry, storytelling, standup comedy, and whatever else YOU want to offer). If you are interested in performing, please contact Karen Henry (kams.henry@gmail.com). And please **save the date!** The Cabaret is a fundraiser to support our sibling relationship with the Church of the Poor in Dulce Nombre de Jesús, Nicaragua.

REV. ROB ON EXTENDED REFLECTION LEAVE UNTIL SEPTEMBER. Lead Pastor Rob Mark will be away until September 12, taking three months of Extended Reflection/Study Leave, four weeks of vacation, and two weeks of unpaid leave. Rob has shaped his leave around his ongoing love of the deep mystical roots of Celtic Christian spirituality: *The Sophia of Anam Cara: The Wisdom of Soul Connections*. Rob plans to use this leave to create space to breathe, be, and love more. He hopes this time will allow him and at times his family to pray for the life of our world and take stock of the enormous shifts that have happened and are happening in our world, the Church, and in their lives over these past six years—trusting that these months away may help him refocus, reflect, and refresh in the spirit of Sabbath and Jubilee. Rev. Joshua will shift from half-time Associate Pastor to full-time Lead Pastor during Rob’s reflection leave, ensuring us a smooth transition and pastoral continuity. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Rev. Joshua (joshua.lazard@cotcbos.org).

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 <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 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://www.cotcbos.org/worship-recordings) ([cotcbos.org/worship-recordings](http://www.cotcbos.org/worship-recordings)).

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

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!

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. Joshua Lawrence Lazard, *Lead Pastor (pro tem)*
Rev. Rob Mark, *Lead Pastor (on sabbatical)*
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*