

# Church of the Covenant

## Boston, MA



**The 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**  
*Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ*  
[ZOOM LINK \(click here\)](#)



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**The 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**

September 10, 2023

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 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 above link. Please keep your mic muted during the service.

The full service is recorded and later posted online.

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

**Prelude**

*What a Covenant*

arr. Bill Wolaver

**Welcome & Announcements**

One: Peace be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

**\* Call to Worship**

*adapted from Psalm 100*

One: Make a joyful noise unto God, all the earth.

Many: **We serve God with gladness and come into God’s presence with singing.**

One: Know that God is good and it is God who has made us, we are God’s people and the sheep of God’s pasture.

Many: **We will enter into God’s presence with thanksgiving and into the courts with praise**

One: For God is good and God’s mercy is everlasting and God’s truth endures to all generations.

**\* Kindling the Christ Light**

**\* Opening Hymn NCH (black) 31**

*All Things Bright and Beautiful*

*Refrain:*

All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small,  
All things wise and wonderful, our dear God made them all.

Each little flower that opens, each little bird that sings,  
God made their glowing colors, and made their tiny wings. *Refrain*

The purple-headed mountain, the river running by,  
The sunset, and the morning that brightens up the sky. *Refrain*

The cold wing in the winter, the pleasant summer sun,  
The ripe fruits in the garden, God made them every one. *Refrain*

### **Prayer for Grounding in God's Grace**

**Many:** Forgiven and loving God, our hearts are filled today with emptiness and nothingness as we bear the burdens for the future of humankind. Words of anger, alternative facts, falsehoods, and outright hatred assail our airways—we cannot escape from the threats being thrown about. In our fear, we cry “Where are you, O Lord?” We wander around in the darkness of the spirit, the nihilism of our world around ever seeking light and hope. Remind us when we forget that you are always with us, through times of peace and times of war; through times of comfort and times of civil unrest. Heal our souls and heal our land. Empower us to reach out to others with the assurance of your love and presence.

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

### **Listening to God in Silent Prayer**

#### **Assurance of God's Grace**

**One:** God hears our prayers and our cries. God leads us out of the quagmire of disbelief past into the bright promise of today. We are called to stand strong and confident in God's Love. Friends, be reminded, for that love which began before creation flows in and through you this day. Therefore, let us rejoice together:

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

## \* Sung Response

*Over My Head*

Refrain



O-ver my head, I hear mu-sic in the air; o-ver my head, I hear mu-sic in the air; o-ver my head, I hear mu-sic in the air; there must be a God some-where.

## Readings from Scripture

**Hebrew Bible Reading** – Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

The words of the Teacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

What do people gain from all the toil at which they toil under the sun? A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises, and the sun goes down and hurries to the place where it rises. The wind blows to the south and goes around to the north; round and round goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns. All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they continue to flow. All things are wearisome, more than one can express; the eye is not satisfied with seeing or the ear filled with hearing. What has been, is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has already been in the ages before us. The people of long ago are not remembered, nor will there be any remembrance of people yet to come by those who come after them.

**New Testament Reading** – Revelation 3:14-22

And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God's creation:

“I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth. For you say, ‘I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.’ You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. Therefore, I advise you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich, and white robes to clothe yourself and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. I reprove and discipline those whom I love. Be earnest, therefore, and repent.

Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and eat with you, and you with me. To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with God on the throne. Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.”

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

Many: **Thanks be to God.**

**Sung Response**

*Over My Head*

**Sermon**

“The Complexities of Hope”

**Call to Offering**

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

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

**Offertory**

*Hang Gliding*

Maria Schneider

**\* 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**

**Blessing of the Backpacks: Prayers for a New School Year**

**Celebrations and Concerns**

One: God, in your grace,  
Many: **Receive our prayer.**

**Pastoral Prayer**

**\* Closing Hymn** NCH (black) 352 *My God, Accept My Heart This Day*

My God, accept my heart this day, and make it always yours  
That I from you no more may stray, as long as life endures.

Before the cross of One who died, I bow in deep regret.  
Let every sin be crucified, and every wrong offset.

Anoint me with your love and grace, adopt me for your own,  
That I in heaven may find my place, and worship at your throne.

Let every thought and work and word be given, O God, to you.  
In life and death, may I be stirred your purpose to pursue.

**\* 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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*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!*

### **Worship Participants**

**Preacher** – Rev. Joshua Lawrence Lazard

**Minister of Music** – Tom Handel

**Liturgist** – Rev. Rob Mark

**CYCE Coordinator** – Rev. Kate Carlisle

**Lector** – Ed James

**Digital Minister** – Evelyn Kimber

**Audio Visual Tech Volunteers** – Abhishek John, Jon Schwarz

**Ushers** – Denice Thornhill, Trudi Veldman

**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).



**WELCOME CHILDREN & YOUTH!!** Today is our CYCE (Children & Youth Christian Education) Kickoff Sunday! During our Blessing of the Backpacks we will share prayers for all students, teachers, families, and everyone else in this back-to-school season. This week we're resuming Godly Play (ages 3-9), and youth classes for ages 10-13 and 14+. The nursery is open for little 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. Feel free to come back and forth as needed—parents are always welcome to stay with their kids downstairs, and all ages are welcome to stay in worship as you'd prefer.

Here are some upcoming CYCE highlights:

- Sunday, October 1, World Communion Sunday All Ages Worship
- Saturday, October 28, All-church retreat in Hingham—families welcome!
- Date TBA, Parents' Day Out—child care and lunch provided after worship

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!

**WELCOME BACK POTLUCK TODAY!** Please join us today following worship as our Climate Jubilee Team is hosting a **Plant-based Potluck** with tables in the Berkeley Street vestibule and people flowing onto the steps and sidewalk, and others sharing a meal and conversation on Zoom. If you brought a plant-based dish to share (think even simple cut up veggies/fruit/hummus), please place it in the back Berkeley Street vestibule when you come in for worship. It will be great to break bread together!

**CHOIR INVITATION.** The Covenant Choir began rehearsing today after a well-deserved summer off. We are an all-volunteer choir that rehearses on Sunday mornings from 9:30 to 10:15. In addition, choir members have access to practice recordings and electronic scores so they can study the music during the week as needed. The atmosphere in the choir is warm and supportive and we are always happy to welcome new members. If interested, speak to Minister of Music Tom Handel after church or send an email to [thomasghandel@gmail.com](mailto:thomasghandel@gmail.com).



**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, September 17, Worship in the Streets at the March to End Fossil Fuels
- Sunday, September 24, Rev. Rob Mark preaching
- Sunday, October 1, All Ages Service for World Communion Sunday

**WORSHIP IN THE STREETS FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE. On Sunday, September 17,** we will be “worshipping in the streets” in the March to End Fossil Fuels in New York City. If you plan on being in worship that day, you are invited to join us in the streets. Similar to our annual Winter Walk, we will not offer a separate worship service in our sanctuary that day to emphasize this critical call to justice. We encourage all members and friends of the congregation to join our pastors, many Covenanters, and other climate justice groups in person in New York City for the March to End Fossil Fuels (COTC is an official sponsor of this march). If you are unable to make this trip, we invite you to join an informal prayer service online at 10:30 am. All are encouraged to let us know how you plan to worship with us on September 17—please click the link [here](https://tinyurl.com/cotc917) (<https://tinyurl.com/cotc917>) to RSVP if you are joining us in New York, or indicate how you will worship with us if you are unable to attend. Transportation information can be found in the sign-up form.

**FALL EQUINOX SUNSET EVENSONG SERVICE. Friday, September 22,** 6:00-7:00 pm. Join our Climate Jubilee Team as they host this simple outdoor prayer gathering along the sacred shores of the Quinobequin (settler-named Charles) River to give thanks to God for the seasons and profound wonder and peace of God's natural world, as we together take in the sunset. [RSVP HERE – thanks!](#)

**LIFE ALIVE RETREAT 2023.** COTC's young adult community will be gathering for our annual retreat on **Saturday, September 23**, for a day of fellowship, community building, and worship on the beautiful shores of Cape Cod. Carpooling caravans will leave Boston around 8:00 am and will aim to return by 6:00 pm at the latest. Our destination at Rob's parents' beach cottage in Barnstable is about 90 minutes away from Boston. Please let Rev. Joshua know you are interested or RSVP [with this link](#), by September 17 at 5:00 pm.

**SAVE THE DATE: ALL-CHURCH RETREAT. Saturday, Oct. 28, 9:30 am-4:30 pm, Glastonbury Abbey, Hingham, MA.** Please mark your calendars to join us for our annual all-church retreat as we return to the sacred setting at Glastonbury Abbey in Hingham where we will get to enjoy a Saturday together to take in the blessings of God's nature just a few miles from the ocean, surrounded by sacred pines and cedars and the fellowship of our community. "Second" breakfast and lunch will be provided. Stay tuned for the registration form.

**BIBLE STUDY WEDNESDAYS. Note new day and time!** Our weekly morning Bible Study is moving to Wednesday mornings at 9:45 am on Zoom. We are studying the book of Romans. 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 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](http://cotcbos.org))

**POSTING FULL SERVICE RECORDINGS/CELEBRATIONS AND CONCERNS ONLINE.** We will be posting the entire service, including our sharing of celebrations and concerns (that is livestreamed online) on our [Worship Recordings Page](#) ([cotcbos.org/worship-recordings](http://cotcbos.org/worship-recordings)). Please let us know if you have any questions.

**OPEN NEWBURY STREET CONTINUES.** Newbury Street between Berkeley Street and Mass. Ave. will be closed to vehicles, and open to pedestrian traffic, on **Sundays through October 15.** Please keep this in mind when planning travel to and from COTC.

**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 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. for the first (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 and inquirers 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, *Sunday Sexton*  
Alan Lane, *Food Cupboard Coordinator*  
Kelsie Lawhorn, *Child Care Provider*

#### **CHURCH OFFICERS**

Liz Vizza, *President of the Corporation*  
Trudi Veldman, *Clerk of the Council*  
Anita Gram, *Moderator of Board of Deacons*  
Faith Perry, *Treasurer*