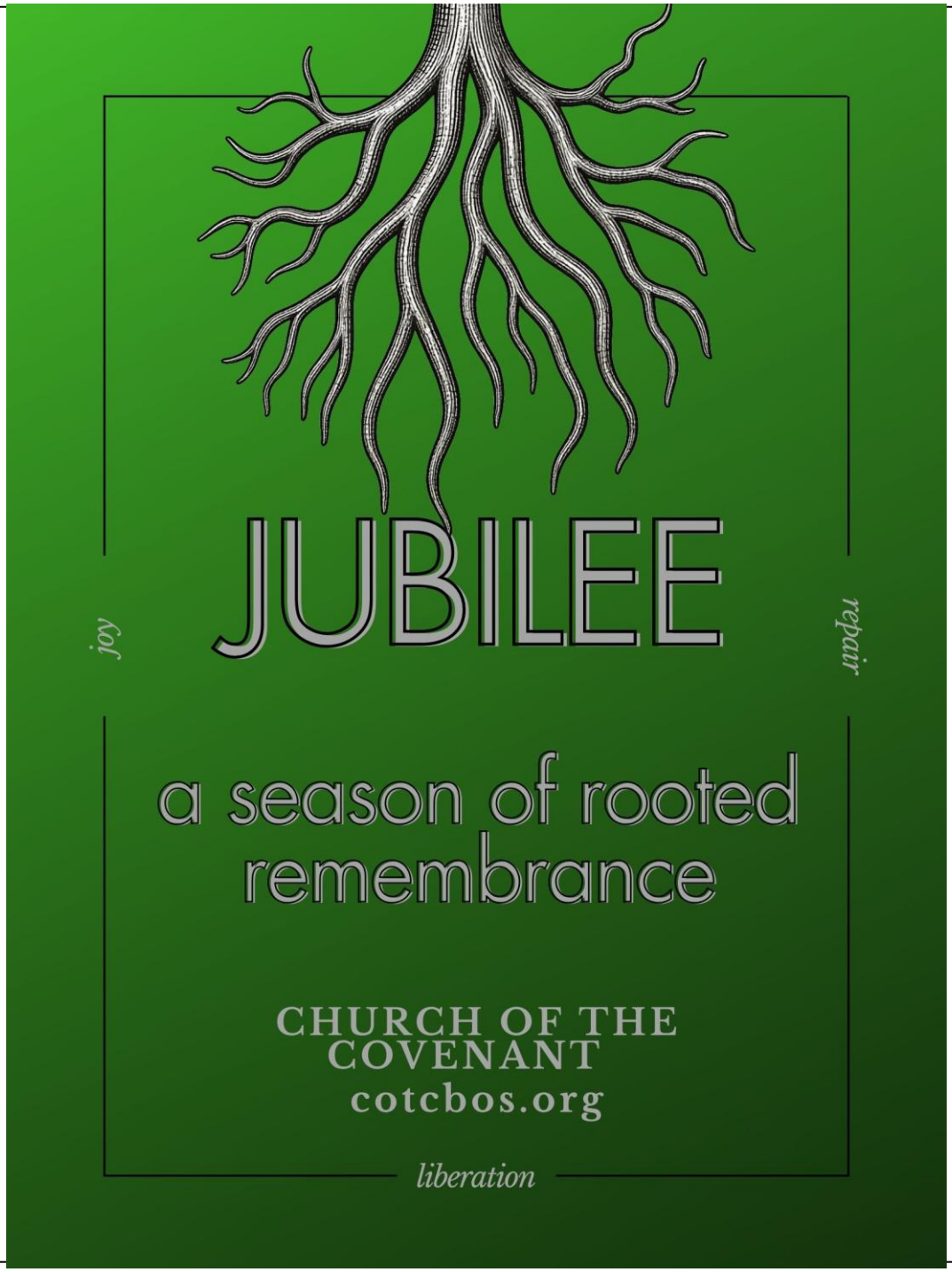
Church of the Covenant

Boston, MA



Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 27, 2026

Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ

Church of the Covenant
Season of Jubilee
Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 27, 2026, 10:30 am Zoom Link

Welcome and thank you for worshipping together for this Zoom-only service. 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 *Vivace from Trio Sonata VI* J. S. Bach

Welcome & Announcements

One: Peace be with you.
Many: And also with you.

Experiencing God

*** Call to Worship** (based on Psalm 146)

One: As protectors, come, let us praise God together!
Many: For our God is the Painter of the heavens, Sculptor of the earth, the sea, and all that lives within them;
One: Our God keeps every promise, and remains faithful forever.
Many: Our God gives justice to those who are oppressed, and is in solidarity with all who hunger.
One: Our God frees the prisoners, and lifts the burdens of those who are overwhelmed.
Many: Our God cherishes those who do what is right, protects the immigrants, cares for the orphans and widows.
One: Our God is alive—and is the author of all we need.
Many: Thanks be to God!

*** Kindling the Christ Light**

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

*** Opening Hymn** PH (blue) 464 *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee*

Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee, God of glory, Lord of love;
Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee, Opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; Drive the gloom of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness, Fill us with the light of day.

All Thy works with joy surround Thee, Earth and heaven reflect Thy rays,
Stars and angels sing around Thee, Center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain, Flowery meadow, flashing sea,
Chanting bird and flowing foundation, Call us to rejoice in Thee.

Mortals, join the happy chorus Which the morning stars began;
Love divine is reigning o'er us, Joining all in heaven's plan.
Ever singing, march we onward, Victors in the midst of strife,
Joyful music leads us sunward In the triumph song of life.

Prayer for Grounding in God's Grace

Many: **Love Divine, Giver of Immortal Gladness, we reveal to you and each other that we as individuals and as a society have fallen short 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 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.**

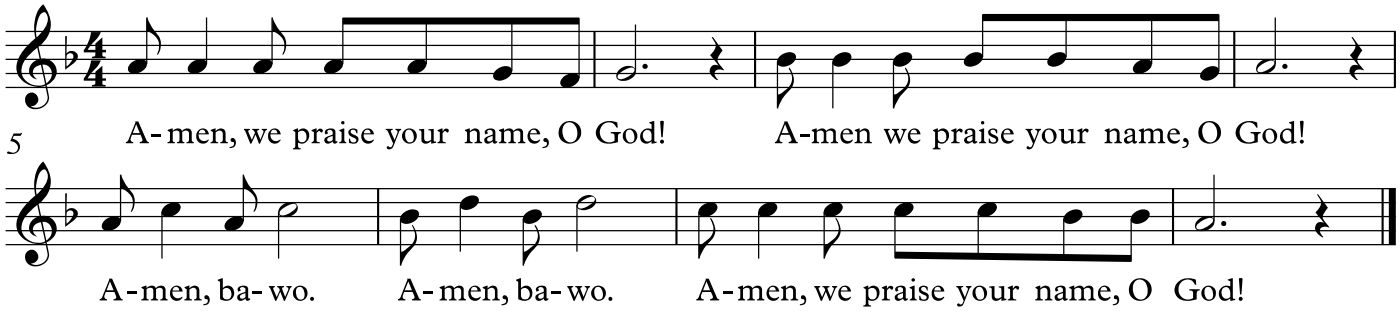
One: Let us open ourselves to God now in silent prayer…

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 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!

*** Sung Response** *Amen, Bawo*

Readings from Scripture

Hebrew Bible – Exodus 17:1-7

From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as GOD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. The people quarreled with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test GOD?" But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" So Moses cried out to GOD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." GOD said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested GOD, saying, "Is GOD among us or not?"

Gospel Reading – Matthew 21:23-32

When Jesus entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?"

And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet." So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

"What do you think? A farmer had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' He answered, 'I will not'; but later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir'; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him."

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

Sermon "There is No 'I' in AI"

Call to Offering

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

Offertory *How Can I Keep from Singing* arr. Taylor Davis
Tom Reid - Vocal Soloist

*** Doxology**

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

*** Charge & 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. Sara Garrard
Lector – Kathryn Barry
Vocal Soloist – Tom Reid
Djembe – Rev. Rob Mark
Cantors – Barbara Darling, Ted Goodfleisch, Theodor Langenbruch, Rachel Case
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.

WELCOME CHILDREN & YOUTH!! Children from age 3 through early elementary are invited to Godly Play classes, and the nursery is open for the littlest ones. If you need help finding us, please ask an usher. We also offer youth classes and other activities for all ages. We share CYCE info regularly via email, so please email Rev. Kate at *kate.carlisle@cotcbos.org* if you want to receive updates.

UPCOMING SUNDAY WORSHIP. Please join us each Sunday at 10:30 am and during 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 (in-person and Zoom) services.

- October 4: World Communion Sunday, All-Ages Service, Holy Communion
- October 11: Rev. Dr. Sara Garrard preaching, Voting Rights Spiritual Education Session After Worship
- October 18: Rev. Kate Carlisle preaching, Life Alive Apple Picking After Worship

ALL-CHURCH RETREAT: TIME TO REGISTER! The all-church retreat will be held on **Saturday, October 24,** back at Glastonbury Abbey in Hingham. The registration deadline is Sunday, October 11, at 11:59 pm. Register at: *https://tinyurl.com/cotcretreat2026*.

LIFE ALIVE BIBLE STUDY & APPLE PICKING & BRUNCHES. Life Alive has a few activities of note in October: on **Saturday, October 10, at 12:00 noon**, Life Alive will meet for Bible study in Williams Library, and after worship on **Sunday, October 18**, they will have their annual apple-picking outing (instead of brunch). 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. Sara at *sara.garrard@cotcbos.org*. Brunches will be held on **November 15 and December 20**.

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. Sara at *sara.garrard@cotcbos.org*.

BIBLE STUDY WEDNESDAYS. Our Bible Study gathers at **9:45 on Wednesday mornings on Zoom**. With the beginning of Fall, we turn to the Psalms to explore the many ways these songs express both the rage and despair we often feel and the joy and thanksgiving we experience. If you are interested in joining, email Jack Ammerman at *jwacooks@gmail.com* for more information and the weekly Zoom link.

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*).

VIDEO CAMERAS/POSTING FULL SERVICE RECORDINGS. To best serve our diverse community and new worshippers, we livestream and record each service, including Celebrations & 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 (*cotcbos.org/worship-recordings*).

WEEKLY CALENDAR. Click here (cotcbos.org/calendar-of-events) to view the weekly calendar of events.

HYMNS STREAMED with permission under One License #A-741135.

The earth is alive, and all life is sacred.
We are part of the web of life,
and the web is holy.
Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance*

Listen to your life.
See it for the fathomless mystery that it is.
In the boredom and pain of it, no less than in the excitement and gladness:
touch, taste, smell your way
to the holy and hidden heart of it
because in the last analysis all moments are key moments,
and life itself is grace.
Frederick Buechner,
Now and Then: A Memoir of Vocation

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.

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*. 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 Massachusett 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. Sara Garrard, *Transitional 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*