

Church of the Covenant

Boston, MA



The Fourth Sunday in Epiphany

Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ

[ZOOM LINK \(click here\)](#)

for the living of these days.

Set our feet on lofty place; gird our lives that they may be,
armored with all Christ-like graces, in the fight to set us free.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, in the quest for liberty,
in the quest for liberty.

Save us from weak resignation to the evils we deplore;
let the search for your salvation be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, serving you whom we adore,
serving you whom we adore.

Kindling the Christ Light

Prayer for Grounding in God's Grace

Many: Far too often, O God, we desire to look wise in the eyes of the world. We have not spoken truth with our hearts. We have said and done hurtful things to our friends. We have forgotten our true identity, wandering into ways that are not yours. We have lost the path of true worship, focusing on form and words rather than deeds. We have forgotten what true discipleship is. And because of this, you have a quarrel with us. Forgive us and be with us as we strive to live into becoming the people you have created and called us to be: people of justice and love and truth and humility, and yes, even in ways that others may deem foolish. May we be fools for the way of Christ, embracing our true identity, even in the face of the world's scorn and derision.

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

Listening to God in Silent Prayer

Assurance of God's Grace

One: God has called us and blesses us when we live God's ways and not the way of capitalism, materialism and the ways that disallow human flourishing. God's love embraces us even when we fall short of what God desires for our lives and actions. Know that the God of human

flourishing loves and forgives us with a fierce tenderness. And in so knowing, may our lives and souls be transformed.

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

*** Sung Response (NCH 2)**

Glory, Glory

Glory, glory, hallelujah, since I laid my burdens down (x 2)

Readings from Scripture

Old Testament/Hebrew Bible Reading – Micah 6:1-8

Hear what the God of Hosts says: Rise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the God of Hosts, and you enduring foundations of the earth; for Yahweh has a controversy with Israel, and will contend with Israel. “O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me! For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of slavery; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised, what Balaam son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shi-tim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the God of Your Salvation.”

“With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

The God of Hosts has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the God of Hosts require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

New Testament Reading – 1 Corinthians 1:18-21, 25-3, *The Message translation*

The Message that points to Christ on the Cross seems like sheer silliness to those hellbent on destruction, but for those on the way of salvation it makes perfect sense. This is the way God works, and most powerfully as it turns out. It's written,

“I'll turn conventional wisdom on its head,
I'll expose so-called experts as shams.”

So where can you find someone truly wise, truly educated, truly intelligent in this day and age? Hasn't God exposed it all as pretentious nonsense? Since the world in all its fancy wisdom never had a clue when it came to knowing God, God in his wisdom took delight in using what the world considered stupid—*preaching*, of all things!—to bring those who trust him into the way of salvation. Human wisdom is so cheap, so impotent, next to the seeming absurdity of God. Human strength can't begin to compete with God's "weakness." Take a good look, friends, at who you were when you got called into this life. I don't see many of "the brightest and the best" among you, not many influential, not many from high-society families. Isn't it obvious that God deliberately chose men and women that the culture overlooks and exploits and abuses, chose these "nobodies" to expose the hollow pretensions of the "somebodies"? That makes it quite clear that none of you can get by with blowing your own horn before God. Everything that we have—right thinking and right living, a clean slate and a fresh start—comes from God by way of Jesus Christ. That's why we have the saying, "If you're going to blow a horn, blow a trumpet for God."

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

Sermon

"Liberated Fools"

Sung Response NCH (black) 2

Glory, Glory

I feel better, so much better, since I laid my burdens down (x 2)

Call to Offering

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

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

Offertory

La Paz

Estribillo

La Paz, la paz es fruto de la justicia (*Peace, peace, the fruit of justice*)

El don de Dios que debemos aceptar (*the gift of God that we must accept*)

Verso 1 (sung by leaders)

Unidos mano con mano queremos hacer la Paz, La Paz con nuestra conciencia con Dios y con los demas. *Estrillo*

Verso 2

Paz con la naturaleza que debemos respetar cuando en ella trabajamos por el bien de la humanidad. *Estrillo*

Verso 3

Que los hombres y mujeres se traten con igualdad que el fuerte no oprima al debil entonces vendra la Paz! *Estrillo*

English Translation:

- 1. United hand in hand we desire peace, with our own conscience with God & with others*
- 2. Peace with nature which we must respect with which we work for the welfare of humankind*
- 3. That men and women treat each other with equality that the strong may not oppress the weak, let us now approach: peace*

*** 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**

Commissioning the Delegation to Nicaragua

Celebrations and Concerns

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

Pastoral Prayer

*** Hymn (PH 575)**

O for a World

O for a world where everyone respects each other's ways,
Where love is lived and all is done with justice and with praise.

O for a world where goods are shared and misery relieved,
Where truth is spoken, children spared, equality achieved.

We welcome one world family and struggle with each choice,
That opens us to unity and gives our vision voice.

The poor are rich, the weak are strong, the foolish ones are wise,
Tell all who mourn: outcasts belong, who perishes will rise.

O for a world preparing for God's glor'ous reign of peace,
Where time and tears will be no more, and all but love will cease.

*** 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

Minister of Music – Tom Handel

Preacher – Rev. Joshua Lawrence Lazard

Liturgist – Rev. Rob Mark

Lector – Micah Walker

Ushers – Denice Thornhill, Betty Rots

Audio-Visual Tech Team – Jon Schwarz, Abhishek John

Covenant Choir

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 in the chat.

UPCOMING WORSHIP: Please join us each Sunday at 10:30am 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, January 29, Rev. Joshua preaching, Denominational Meetings
- Sunday, February 5, Rev. Rob preaching, Communion, Annual Meeting
- Sunday, February 12, Winter Walk! Worship in the streets this day.
- Sunday, February 19, Rev. Rob preaching, Communion
- Wednesday, February 22, 6:30pm, Ash Wednesday Service

IMAGINE WHAT'S NEXT. Immediately following worship today **Sunday, January 29, 2023**, newcomers to Life Alive are invited to a free pizza lunch forum with the pastors. This will be an opportunity to discuss who we are as a church and for young adults to imagine what's next in their lives. PLEASE RSVP: forms.gle/4Ykv7SNg5fG25zQm9

THE DENOMINATIONAL MEETINGS of the Central Congregational Society and the First Presbyterian Society will be held today, **January 29, 2023 at 11:50 am**, following worship (hybrid) for the purpose of electing the nominees – Linda Pursley (UCC) and Sharon Wright (PCUSA) – to serve on the Nominating Committee for two years in the class of 2024.

SOUP SALE NICA FUNDRAISER: For the past few years, the Nica Companions have held a soup sale to benefit future delegations to and from Dulce Nombre de Jesus, Nicaragua. We are once again planning to cook mouth-watering soups for your purchase. We will have order forms at Covenant's Annual Meeting on February 5. In the meantime, if you would like to show off your soup-making skills and help a good cause, please offer to make soup for the sale. Contact me, Karen Henry, at kams.henry@gmail.com or call 781-784-4165, to let her know **by today** what kind of soup you would like to offer.

ANNUAL MEETINGS: The annual meetings of the Corporation and Congregation will be held on **Sunday, February 5, 2023** following worship at 11:45am at Church of the Covenant and on zoom (hybrid meeting) for the purpose of adopting the 2023 budget, electing 2 members to the Covenant Council for a 3-year term, 1 member to the Covenant Council for a 1-year term, 4 members to the Board of Deacons for a 3-year term, and

accepting 2 members to the nominating committee as elected at the denominational meetings.

WORSHIP IN THE STREETS, [Boston's Winter Walk](#). Our worship service on Sunday, February 12 will be a bit different than usual. We will join in the 7th Annual Boston Winter Walk, as we walk 2 miles in shoulder-to-shoulder solidarity with those experiencing homelessness in our city, and re-commit ourselves to the prayerful work of housing justice. There will be 3 options: to join the walk in person at 9am; to join the walk virtually on your own; or to join in a virtual “prayer walk” at home. We are then invited to join Women’s Lunch Place for a pancake brunch back in Bates Hall! More details on how to register as part of COTC coming.

There will be 3 options: to join the walk in person at 9am / to join as a remote walker / or join in prayerful solidarity.

To join the walk in person or on your own, please register by following these steps.

PLEASE NOTE: We want to encourage ALL who are interested to participate whether you feel called to donate, fundraise or not.

Click on this <https://secure.qgiv.com/event/winterwalkboston23/team/912433/>

Click on “Join Our Team”

On this page, we encourage you to click “Women’s Lunch Place” so that the money we raise will go directly to our close partners. Then click next:

(a) “I’ll fundraise my fee” and later have an option to donate any amount. You also can feel free to donate nothing but still fully participate!

(b) A full \$100 registration fee exists only for those who feel called to donate this/ can afford this.

(c) Remote Walker (or any other category that fits you – including bringing your dog!

On the next page, the rectangle “Church of the Covenant” should be highlight already so you can then Type in your fundraising goal. This can be any amount from \$0 and up. Our goal as a church is to raise \$1000 – so anything from \$0-100 is great for this slot. And since this is only a few weeks away, you may find it hard to fundraise, consider naming an amount you feel called to give yourself. But please feel no pressure to donate here if a hardship – we mostly desire your presence! Note: you can click the box: “I don’t want a fundraising page” and this allows your name to be listed on our church page, but without a \$ figure. You can still donate separately.

Type in your details (name, contact info, how you heard about the Winter Walk, and waiver, etc.)

Click Next.

On final page, click: Complete Registration.

To join the walk in prayerful solidarity in lieu of walking 2 miles, please register here: forms.gle/hQ4nxZ5S5ieBZcJF9

For more info: <http://winterwalkboston.org> . Questions? Email Rob.

CLIMATE JUBILEE ALL CHURCH BOOK DISCUSSION: Join us on **Sunday February 19, 12pm** following worship for a hybrid book discussion on Robin Wall Kimmerer's book *Braiding Sweetgrass* (indiebound.org/book/9781571313560). We ask you to avoid buying from Amazon.com and instead [use this link](#) to find a local bookstore.

LIFE ALIVE MINISTRY. Our young adults (aka "Life Alive") enjoy a robust fellowship and community that gathers monthly for brunches and weekly for prayers. Want to join us or have questions? Email Rev. Joshua at joshua.lazard@cotcbos.org.

BIBLE STUDY WEDNESDAYS. Our weekly morning Bible Study is each Wednesday morning on Zoom at 9:15am. We are studying the Gospel of Matthew. If you'd like more information or want to be on the list to get regular reminders & Zoom info, contact Jan Gough at revjangough@gmail.com.

EPIPHANY EVENING PRAYERS 6-6:30pm. Join us for our weekly Wednesday evening prayers with intentional liturgy, contemplative song, psalms & sharing of prayers with our siblings from Newton Presbyterian *on Zoom*.

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WEEKLY CALENDAR Click here to view the weekly calendar of events.

NEW TO COTC? We're so glad you're 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 the next page!



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 New Visitor's Card and place it in the offering plate, or email us at churchofthecovenant@cotcbos.org

Parking Bargain – Worshipers 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!

Worship Recordings – We will be posting the entire service, including our sharing of celebrations and concerns, that is livestreamed online on our [Worship Recordings Page](#). Please let us know if you have any questions.

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 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 and gender identities 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 Lazard, *Associate Pastor*
Thomas Handel, *Minister of Music*
Bill Brown, *Building Manager*
Rev. Kate Carlisle, *CYCE Coordinator / Parish Administrator*
Nancy Stockford, *Financial Secretary*
Fred Lopes & Jesús Vargas, *Sunday Sextons*
Alan Lane, *Food Cupboard Coordinator*
Kelsie Lawhorn, *Childcare 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*