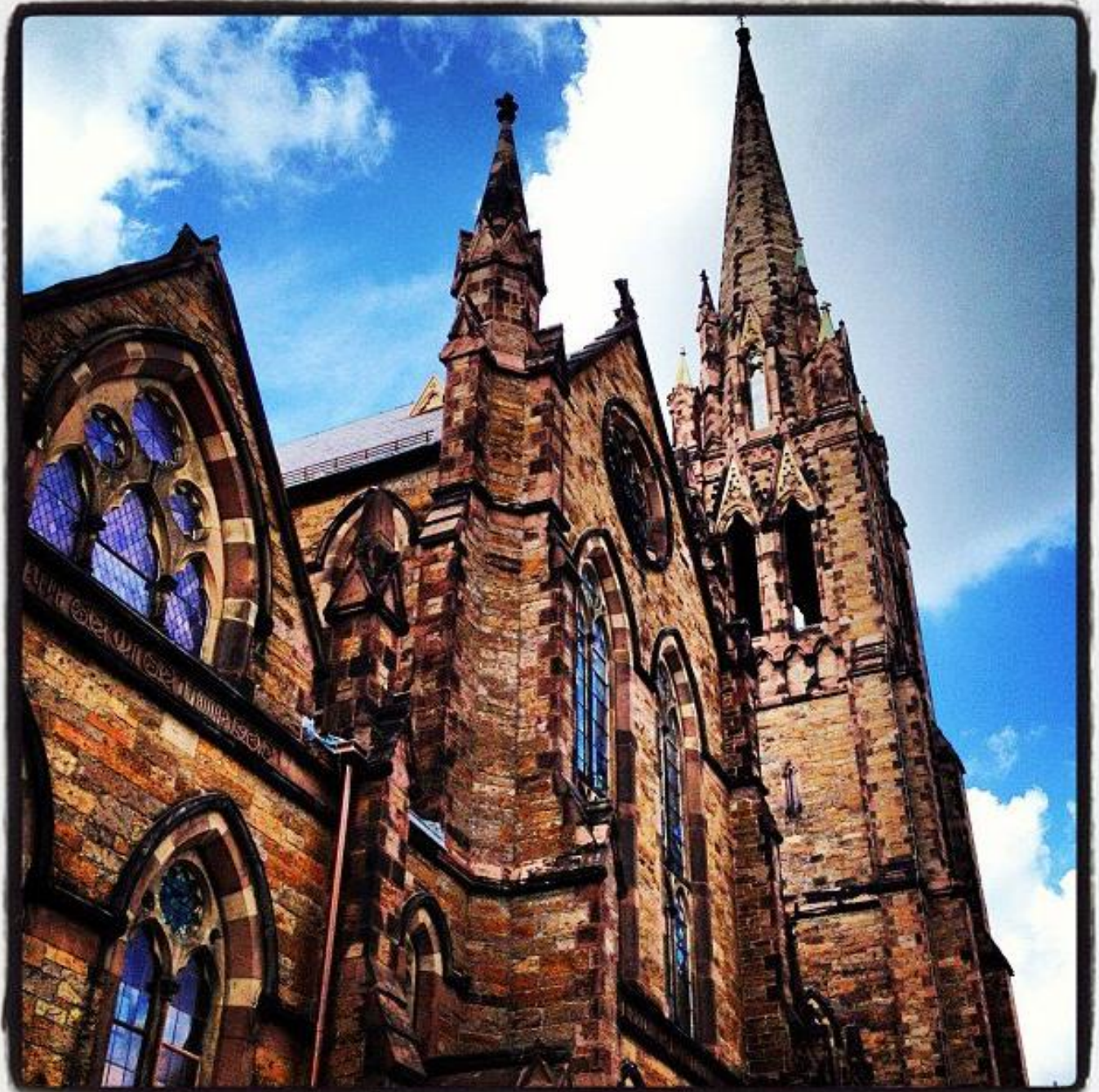


Church of the Covenant

Boston, MA



24th Sunday after Pentecost
November 12, 2023

Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ
[ZOOM LINK \(click here\)](#)



Church of the Covenant

The 24th Sunday after Pentecost

November 12, 2023, 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 above link. Please keep your mic muted during the service.

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

Prelude

Autumn Leaves

adapted from Bill Evans

Welcome & Announcements

One: Peace be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

* Call to Worship

(adapted from Psalm 27)

One: God is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? God is the joy and the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?

Many: **When the wicked came to eat of my flesh, they stumbled and fell.**

One: Even when an army encircles around me, my heart shall not fear; though war may rise against me, in this I will be confident:

Many: **One thing have I desired of God and I will pursue this: that I may dwell in God's house all the days of my life.**

One: Wait on God and be of good courage, and God shall strengthen your heart. Wait, I say, on God.

* Kindling the Christ Light

One: The light of Christ,

Many: **Thanks be to God!**

* **Opening Hymn** NCH (black) 439

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

A mighty fortress is our God,
a bulwark never failing;
Our present help amid the flood
of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
does seek to work us woe
with craft and power great,
and armed with cruel hate,
on earth without an equal.

Did we in our own strength confide,
our striving would be losing,
But there is one who takes our side,
the One of God's own choosing.
You ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus sets us free!
With mighty power to save,
victorious o'er the grave,
Christ will prevail triumphant.

And though this world with devils filled
should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear for God has willed
the truth to triumph through us.
The powers of evil grim,
we tremble not for them;
their rage we can endure,
for lo, their doom is sure:
one little word shall fell them.

That word beyond all earthly powers
forever is abiding;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours,
for Christ is with us siding.
Let goods and kindred go,
this mortal life also;
the body they may kill;
God's truth shall triumph still;
God's reign endures forever.

Prayer for Grounding in God's Grace

Many: God of the Past, Present, and Future, there never seems to be enough time to do all the things that are demanded of us. Schedules become crowded. We live by the clock. We think we are ready for all events that will come our way. But we are rarely ready for you. We would like you to come to us at a planned time so that we can fit you into our busy lives. Forgive us, Lord, for trying to make you a scheduled event. Forgive us as we do not create enough time to care for the planet and its inhabitants which have been bestowed upon us. We have moved you to a time on our weekly calendars. Yet you are the eternal God who has always loved us and been ready to receive us. Guide us in knowing, with you as our foundation, that we can handle anything that comes our way. With you as our focus, all things pale in comparison. Let us look at the priorities in our lives and see where we have placed service to you.

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

Listening to God in Silent Prayer

Assurance of God's Grace

One: Being ever assured that God accompanies us and stands with us even with our backs to the future, let us all be reminded:

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.

Reading from Scripture

Hebrew Bible Reading – 2 Kings 7:1-20, *The Message* translation

Elisha said, “Listen! God’s word! The famine’s over. This time tomorrow food will be plentiful—a handful of meal for a shekel; two handfuls of grain for a shekel. The market at the city gate will be buzzing.”

The attendant on whom the king leaned for support said to the Holy Man, “You expect us to believe that? Trapdoors opening in the sky and food tumbling out?”

“You’ll watch it with your own eyes,” he said, “but *you* will not eat so much as a mouthful!”

It happened that four lepers were sitting just outside the city gate. They said to one another, “What are we doing sitting here at death’s door? If we enter the famine-struck city we’ll die; if we stay here we’ll die. So let’s take our chances in the camp of Aram and throw ourselves on their mercy. If they receive us we’ll live, if they kill us we’ll die. We’ve got nothing to lose.”

So after the sun went down they got up and went to the camp of Aram. When they got to the edge of the camp, surprise! Not a man in the camp! The Master had made the army of Aram hear the sound of horses and a mighty army on the march. They told one another, “The king of Israel hired the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Egypt to attack us!” Panicked, they ran for their lives through the darkness, abandoning tents, horses, donkeys—the whole camp just as it was—running for dear life. These four lepers entered the camp and went into a tent. First they ate and drank. Then they grabbed silver, gold, and clothing, and went off and hid it. They came back, entered another tent, and looted it, again hiding their plunder.

Finally they said to one another, “We shouldn’t be doing this! This is a day of good news and we’re making it into a private party! If we wait around until morning we’ll get caught and punished. Come on! Let’s go tell the news to the king’s palace!” So they went and called out at the city gate, telling what had happened: “We went to the camp of Aram and, surprise!—the place was deserted. Not a soul, not a sound! Horses and donkeys left tethered and tents abandoned just as they were.”

The gatekeepers got the word to the royal palace, giving them the whole story. Roused in the middle of the night, the king told his servants, “Let me tell you what Aram has done. They knew that we were starving, so they left camp and have hid in the field, thinking, ‘When they come out of the city, we’ll capture them alive and take the city.’” One of his advisors answered, “Let some men go and take five of the horses left behind. The worst that can happen is no worse than what could happen to the whole city. Let’s send them and find out what’s happened.” They took two chariots with horses. The king sent them after the army of Aram with the orders, “Scout them out; find out what happened.” They went after them all the way to the Jordan. The whole way was strewn with clothes and equipment that Aram had dumped in their panicked flight. The scouts came back and reported to the king.

The people then looted the camp of Aram. Food prices dropped overnight—a handful of meal for a shekel; two handfuls of grain for a shekel—God’s word to the letter! The king ordered his attendant, the one he leaned on for support, to be in charge of the city gate. The people, turned into a mob, poured through the gate, trampling him to death. It was exactly what the Holy Man had said when the king had come to see him.

Every word of the Holy Man to the king—“A handful of meal for a shekel, two handfuls of grain for a shekel this time tomorrow in the gate of Samaria,” with the attendant’s sarcastic reply to the Holy Man, “You expect us to believe that? Trapdoors opening in the sky and food tumbling out?” followed by the response, “You’ll watch it with your own eyes, but you won’t eat so much as a mouthful”—proved true. The final stroke came when the people trampled the man to death at the city gate.

New Testament Reading – 2 Corinthians 4:7-9, 16-18

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed...

So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For our slight, momentary affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen, for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

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

Sung Response

Over My Head

Sermon

“Backs to the Future”

Moment for Generosity

Call to Offering

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

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

Offertory

I'm Gonna Tell God All Of My Troubles

arr. Jacqueline B. Hairston

Anita Gram, violin

* 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

Celebrations and Concerns

One: God, in your grace,

Many: **Receive our prayer.**

Pastoral Prayer

* Closing Hymn NCH (black) 609

Now Is the Time Approaching

Now is the time approaching,

by prophets long foretold,

when all shall dwell together,

secure and manifold.

Let war be learned no longer,

let strife and tumult cease,

all earth a blessed garden

that God shall tend in peace.

Let all that now divides us
remove and pass away,
like mists of early morning
before the blaze of day.
Let all that now unites us
more sweet and lasting prove,
a closer bond of union,
in blessed lands of love.

O long-expected dawning,
come with your cheering ray!
Yet shall the promise beckon
and lead us not astray.
O sweet anticipation!
It cheers the watchers on
to pray, and hope, and labor
till Christ's new realm is come.

*** 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 – Mark Huston

Worship Leader – Rev. Rob Mark

Violinist – Anita Gram

Covenant Choir

Moment for Generosity – Holly Humphreys

Ushers – Holly Humphreys, Linda Pursley

Digital Minister – Trudi Veldman

Audio Visual Tech Team – Venkatesh Balasubramanian, Abhishek John

Sunday Sexton – Jesús Vargas

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING TODAY AFTER WORSHIP. A

congregational meeting has been called for **today, November 12**, following the worship service in the sanctuary to vote on the following motion: *To change the By-Laws Article VI section 1, Article VII section 1 and Article X section 4 to reflect: that the Covenant Council will have 6-7 members in 3 classes of 2-3 members and that the Board of Deacons will have 6-10 members in 3 classes of 2-4 members.*

ADULT ED ABOUT MALAWI WITH TRUDI VELDMAN TODAY! After the congregational meeting **today, November 12**, please stay in the sanctuary to hear Trudi Veldman speak about her recent trip to Malawi with Villages in Partnership.

LIFE ALIVE BRUNCH TODAY! Our 20s3040s group will meet for brunch today after the Adult Ed class. See Rev. Joshua with any questions.

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.



WELCOME CHILDREN & YOUTH!!

We offer Christian education through Godly Play for ages 3-9 and youth classes for ages 10-13 and 14+. We welcome all children, youth, and families—those we know already and those who are here for the first time. We meet downstairs in Bates Hall. 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!

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, November 19, Blessing of the Animals, Dedication of Pledges, Communion, All Ages Service
- Sunday, November 26, Reflection on the Word, Holding Sacred Space
- Sunday, December 3, First Sunday of Advent, Rev. Joshua Lawrence Lazard preaching, Advent Wreath Making Post Worship
- Sunday, December 10, Second Sunday of Advent, Rev. Rob Mark preaching

CLIMATE JUBILEE ALL-CHURCH READ. Please join us for another All-Church Read book discussion at an Adult Ed offering after church on **Sunday, November 19**. The book is *In Deep Waters: Spiritual Care for Young People in a Climate Crisis*. The author is Talitha Aho, who ministers in California to a younger generation. She shares how the climate crisis impacts that generation and the importance of offering ecologically informed spiritual care. She shares practical ways to care for and respect God's world, drawing on science, Scripture, and her expertise. The book is available through the Boston Public Library (as an e-book) or at <https://www.fortresspress.com/store/product/9781506469782/In-Deep-Waters>.

HOLDING SACRED SPACE. As a follow-up to our wonderful church retreat, we welcome you to join us in Bates Hall following worship on **November 26** and/or **December 10** to continue any conversations, insights, and visions you may have.

CHOIR INVITATION. We would love new members of the choir! If you are interested, speak to Minister of Music Tom Handel or email thomasghandel@gmail.com.

BIBLE STUDY WEDNESDAY MORNINGS. Our weekly Bible Study meets on Wednesdays 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.

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).

UPCOMING COVENANT TENANT-PARTNER CONCERT IN COTC SANCTUARY. *Coro Allegro (Boston's LGBTQ+ and allied classical chorus) presents a concert on **Saturday, November 19**, at 3:00 pm. The theme is "IDENTITY: Reclaimed," including three works that explore the reclamation of individual identity in times of violent struggle, culture war, or political oppression. See coroallegro.org for more information.

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](#) (cotcbos.org/worship-recordings).

WEEKLY CALENDAR. Click [here](http://cotcbos.org/calendar-of-events) (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 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

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. 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*

Venkatesh Balasubramanian, *Digital Communications & Audio Visual Tech Manager*

CHURCH OFFICERS

Liz Vizza, *President of the Corporation*

Trudi Veldman, *Clerk of the Council*

Anita Gram, *Moderator of Board of Deacons*

Faith Perry, *Treasurer*