

Church of the Covenant



The Fifth Sunday in Lent

The Way of Curiosity: *Banned Subjects*

International Transgender Day of Visibility

Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ



Church of the Covenant

The Fifth Sunday of Lent: March 26, 2023, 10:30 am

The Way of Curiosity: *Banned Subjects*

International Transgender Day of Visibility

[ZOOM LINK: tinyurl.com/cotcworship](https://tinyurl.com/cotcworship)

Welcome and thank you for worshipping together for this “hybrid” service where some will be in the sanctuary of their homes, and some in the sanctuary at 67 Newbury Street. For those joining online, 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**

*Praeludium in C*

Dietrich Buxtehude

## Welcome & Announcements

One: Peace be with you.

**Many: And also with you.**

## \* Call To Worship

*Adapted from a prayer by Rev. Sarah A. Speed | A Sanctified Art*

One: Scripture is full of questions...

**Many: Where are you?**

One: Am I my sibling's keeper?

**Many: Whom shall I send?**

One: Who do you say that I am?

**Many: Who sinned?**

One: How many times shall I forgive?

**Many: If God is for us, who can be against us?**

One: Scripture is full of questions,  
so just like those in our scriptures, may we bring our full curiosity  
and wonder into this space.

**Many: Let us stay quizzical as we ask and seek after our wild God.**

## Kindling the Christ Light

**\* Opening Hymn:**

*Praise the Source of Faith & Learning*  
Hymn Tune: HYFRYDOL

Praise the source of faith and learning that has sparked and stoked the mind  
with a passion for discerning how the world has been designed.  
Let the sense of wonder flowing from the wonders we survey  
keep our faith forever growing and renew our need to pray.

God of wisdom, we acknowledge that our science and our art  
and the breadth of human knowledge only partial truth impart.  
Far beyond our calculation lies a depth we cannot sound  
where the purpose for creation and the pulse of life are found.

May our faith redeem the blunder of believing that our thought  
has displaced the grounds for wonder which the ancient prophets taught.  
May our learning curb the error which unthinking faith can breed  
lest we justify some terror with an antiquated creed.

As two currents in a river fight each other's undertow  
Till converging they deliver one coherent steady flow,  
Blend, O God, our faith and learning till they carve a single course,  
Till they join as one, returning praise and thanks to you, their Source.

**Prayer for Grounding in God's Grace – A Litany for Curiosity**

One: Ever Creative, Artist God,  
**Many: This Lent we ask for a spirit of sacred curiosity.**  
One: As we journey with Jesus along paths less traveled,  
**Many: May our hearts be filled with wonder.**  
One: As we feed our intrigue with inquiry,  
**Many: May we be surprised by truths yet to discover.**  
One: As we delve deep into new terrain,  
**Many: May our holy exploration be enchanted.**  
One: As we lovingly turn over stones in the search,  
**Many: May our fingernails get filled with divine dirt that directs us.**



One: As we cultivate questions that inspire or unsettle,  
**Many: May we be filled with courage to dig deeper.**  
One: As we center more on the asking than the answering,  
**Many: May our wondering, marveling and daydreaming be graced.**  
One: And in our seeking, knocking, and asking,  
**Many: May doors be opened and the winds of new insight blow in blessing.**  
One: In the embrace of our Great Seeking Spirit we pray and now open ourselves further in silence...

## Listening to God in Silent Prayer

### Assurance of God's Grace

One: Friends, in our questions, in our seeking, in our doubting, in our striving, in our living, in our loving – we are completely enveloped in the restorative love that flows from our Creative God. Know this. Trust this. Take joy in this, as we all celebrate together:

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

**\* Sung Response:** *Amen Bawo* Stephen Cuthbert Molefe, South Africa

Amen, we praise your name, O God!

Amen, we praise your name, O God!

Amen, bawo, Amen, bawo, Amen, we praise your name, O God!

## Readings from Scripture

**Hebrew Bible Reading** – Song of Songs 8:2

“If I met you outside, I would kiss you, and none would despise me.”

**New Testament Reading** – Acts 17:1-9, 16-28

After Paul and Silas had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue. And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days argued with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and to rise from the dead and saying, “This is the Messiah, Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you.” Some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. But the religious among them

became jealous, and with the help of some ruffians in the marketplaces they formed a mob and set the city in an uproar. While they were searching for Paul and Silas to bring them out to the assembly, they attacked Jason's house. When they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some siblings before the city authorities, shouting, "These people who have been turning the world upside down have come here also, and Jason has entertained them as guests. They are all acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another ruler named Jesus." The people and the city officials were disturbed when they heard this, and after they had taken bail from Jason and the others, they let them go.

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he argued in the synagogue with the religious and the devout persons and also in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. Also some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers debated with him. Some said, "What does this pretentious babbler want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities." (This was because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.) So they took him and brought him to the Areopagus and asked him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? It sounds rather strange to us, so we would like to know what it means." Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new.

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely spiritual you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, the one who is God of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is served by human hands, as though needing anything, since this God gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor God made all peoples to inhabit the whole earth, and allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps fumble about for God and find God—though indeed God is not far from each one of us. For 'In God we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we, too, are God's offspring.'

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

**Sung Response:** *Amen Bawo*

**Preaching Panel Q&A**

“Holy Questions”

**Call to Offering**

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

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

**Offertory**

*Praeludium in C (conclusion)*

Buxtehude

**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**

**Farewell Blessing & Commissioning for Fred Lopes, Sunday Sexton**

**Celebrations and Concerns**

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

**Pastoral Prayer**

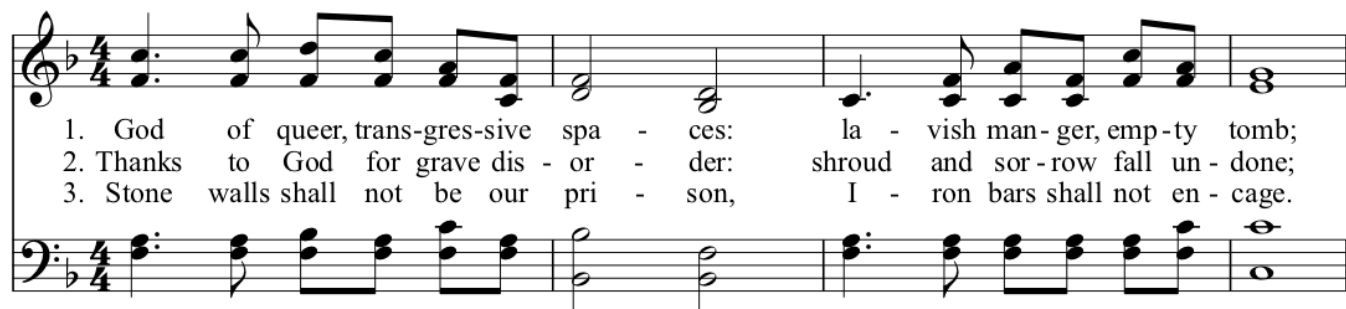
**\* Closing Hymn:**

*God of Queer, Transgressive Spaces (next page)*

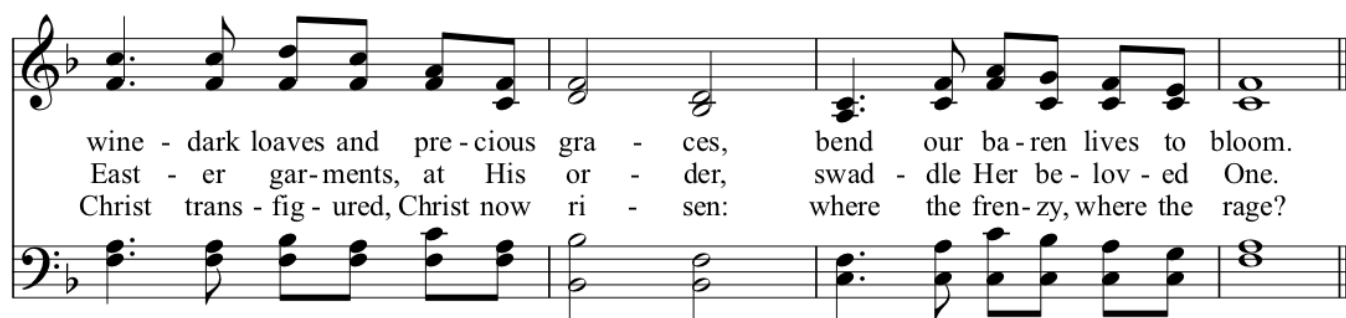
# God of Queer, Transgressive Spaces

Edward Moran, 2007; alt. 2019

CONVERSE  
Charles C. Converse 1868



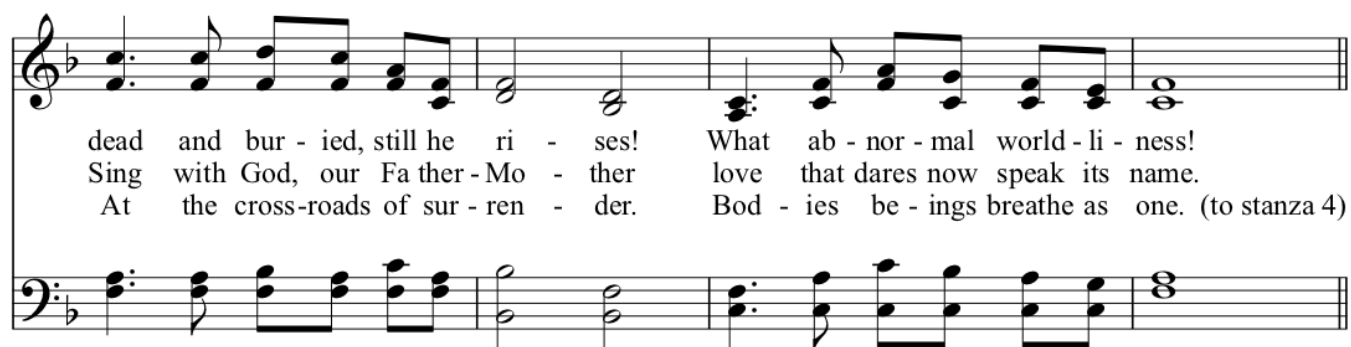
1. God of queer, trans-gres-sive spa - ces: la - vish man-ger, emp-ty tomb;  
2. Thanks to God for grave dis - or - der: shroud and sor-row fall un - done;  
3. Stone walls shall not be our pri - son, I - ron bars shall not en - cage.



wine - dark loaves and pre - cious gra - ces, bend our ba-ren lives to bloom.  
East - er gar-ments, at His or - der, swad - dle Her be - lov - ed One.  
Christ trans - fig - ured, Christ now ri - sen: where the fren-zy, where the rage?



God's own de - vi-ance is Je - sus: born of vir- gin, Word made flesh;  
Broth - ers bind ye to each oth - er, sis - ters, too, and have no shame.  
Shed - ding clouds of flesh and gen - der, gar - ments shin-ing like the sun.



dead and bur - ied, still he ri - ses! What ab - nor - mal world - li - ness!  
Sing with God, our Fa-ther - Mo - ther love that dares now speak its name.  
At the cross-roads of sur - ren - der. Bod - ies be - ings breathe as one. (to stanza 4)

4. With our un-bound God con - fess - ing: turn all frac-ture in - to praise,  
ben - e - dic-tion in - to bles - sing, fab - u - lous and full of days.

## \* 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

**Worship Leaders** – Rev. Kate Carlisle, Rev. Rob Mark, Prof. Barbara Darling, Rev. Joshua Lazard

**Lector** – TBD

**Ushers** – TBD

**Audio-Visual Tech Team** – Jon Schwarz, Abhishek John

**Covenant Choir**

**Cover Art:** *Wet Stones*, by Carmelle Beaugelin, A Sanctified Art. Inspired by Exodus 17:1-7. Conté crayon, charcoal, acrylic, gold gild on paper.

**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.



**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 our website at [cotcbos.org](http://cotcbos.org).



**ALL CHURCH POTLUCK!** Join us after worship today on **Sunday, March 26**, in Bates Hall for an all-church potluck!

**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, March 26, Lent 5: Banned Subjects – Preaching Panel w/ Q&A
- Sunday, April 2, All Ages Palm Sunday Service, Communion
- Maundy Thursday, April 6, 7:30pm @ Emmanuel Church, 15 Newbury St.
- Good Friday, April 7, 7:00pm, Seven Last Words Tenebrae, COTC

**GET CURIOUS & SUBMIT YOUR QUESTIONS! DEADLINE Friday 6pm!**

For Lent 5, **Sunday, March 26**, in place of the sermon we will have a special “preaching panel” that will take YOUR QUESTIONS. In the spirit of curiosity, any questions about faith, life, Lent, God or any seemingly “banned subject” are invited! Whimsical or deep. We'd love to begin collating questions in advance – please click here: <https://forms.gle/em4DV5PPtHjWwTYn6> (you can also ask questions that day “from the floor”). Thanks!

**PALM SUNDAY ALL AGES WORSHIP.** Join us next **Sunday, April 2**, for our all ages, intergenerational, multisensory Service of Palms and Passions. Beginning with a procession with palms, we will journey with Jesus through the stories of Holy Week, share Communion, and prepare our hearts for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter. Kids and youth of all ages are invited to share in leadership roles – email [kate.carlisle@cotcbos.org](mailto:kate.carlisle@cotcbos.org) ASAP if you are interested!

**NICA COMPANIONS ADULT ED.** Get a taste of the recent delegation to our sibling church in Nicaragua. Join the delegates, after church on **Sunday, April 2**, as they bring alive their experience - including some of the sights, tastes, and sounds.

**LENT 2023: The Way of Curiosity:** *Creatively opening ourselves to deeper truths through bolder questions.* Join us this Lent (Feb. 22-April 9) as we journey through the wilderness with Jesus, cultivating more joyful curiosity around topics related to our daily living in search of deeper truths. Together we will consider: Embodied Practices, Make Believe, Simple Living, Active Art & Banned Subjects. Let's get inquisitive & imagine a world where *more (beauty, joy, vision, love, God)* is possible.



**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](mailto:joshua.lazard@cotcbos.org).

**BIBLE STUDY WEDNESDAYS.** Join our Bible Study group 9:15am Wednesdays to explore the Gospel of Matthew. You are welcome to join this group of comics and scholars, cynics and believers, in a warm online embrace, having fun debating the meaning and relevance of the Bible, then and now. If you'd like more information, contact Jan Gough at [revjangough@gmail.com](mailto:revjangough@gmail.com).

**LENT EVENING PRAYERS 6-6:30pm.** Join us this Wednesday, March 29, and Wednesdays through Lent, for our weekly evening prayers with intentional liturgy, contemplative song, psalms & sharing of prayers with our siblings from Newton Presbyterian [on Zoom](#).

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

**WEEKLY CALENDAR** Click [here](#) to view the weekly calendar of events.

## *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 New Visitor's Card and place it in the offering plate, or email us at [churchofthecovenant@cotcbos.org](mailto: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](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 marginalized, to enjoy seats at God's table. This congregation seeks to demonstrate that vision by welcoming individuals and families of all races, gender identities, ages, physical/mental abilities, and 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*