

Church of the Covenant

Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ



April 21, 2024
Earth & Sheep Sunday
The Fourth Sunday of Easter



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April 21, 2024, 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. Please keep your mic muted during the service.

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

Prelude

Rhosymedre

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Welcome & Announcements

One: Peace be with you.

Many: And also with you.

One: Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Many: Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

*** Call to Worship**

East: For the rising of the sun, energy source for all of creation,

Many: We give to God our thanks and praise.

North: For the precious polar ice caps, and habitats of hope,

Many: We pledge to God our stewardship.

South: For the communities of the Global South and their inspired sustenance,

Many: We pray the Spirit's empowerment.

West: For the gift of the setting of the sun, revealing the wonders of a star-studded cosmos,

Many: We pray, that awake may we watch with Christ, and asleep we may rest in peace.

*** Kindling the Christ Light**

One: The light of Christ

Many: Thanks be to God!

*** Opening Hymn** NCH (black) 17 (*vs. 1-4*)

To You, O God, All Creatures Sing

To you, O God, all creatures sing,
And all creation, everything
Sings your praises, alleluia!
Your burning sun with golden beam,
Your silver moon with softer gleam
Sing your praises, alleluia,
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Your wind that blows the tempest by,
Your clouds that sail across the sky
Sing your praises, alleluia!
Your morning rises with a song,
And lights of evening sing along,
Sing your praises, alleluia,
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Your flowing waters, crystal clear,
Make melodies for you to hear,
Sing your praises, alleluia!
Your fire, bountiful and bright,
Remembering your warmth and light,
Sings your praises, alleluia,
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

To you, O God, day after day,
Your planet earth in every way,
Sings your praises, alleluia!
As savory fruit and fragrant flower
Show forth your glory and your power,
Singing praises, alleluia,
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Prayer for Grounding in God's Grace

Many: **Shepherding God of Nature, we are a people who are prone to wander our own ways. When we forget your ways, forgive us and help us remember. When we fail to listen for your voice, forgive us and help us listen more deeply. When we hide our faces in fear and trembling of our world, carry us on your shoulders and bring us back to your flock of hope and healing.**

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

Listening to God in Silent Prayer

Assurance of God's Grace: Psalm 23

GOD, you are my shepherd—
I want nothing more.
You let me lie down
in green meadows;
you lead me beside restful waters:
you refresh my soul.
You guide me to lush pastures
for the sake of your Name.
Even if I'm surrounded
by shadows of Death,
I fear no danger,
for you are with me.
Your rod and your staff—
they give me courage.
You spread a table for me
in the presence of my enemies,
and you anoint my head with oil—
my cup overflows!
Only goodness and love
will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell
in your house, GOD,
for days without end.

Inclusive Bible, alt.

The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down
in green pastures:
he leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul:
he leadeth me in the paths of
righteousness for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the
valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil:
for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff
they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me
in the presence of mine enemies:
thou anointest my head with oil;
my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy
shall follow me
all the days of my life:
and I will dwell
in the house of the LORD
forever.

King James Version

Gospel Reading – John 10:11-17

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down their life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as God knows me and I know God. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason God loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again.

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

Many: **Thanks be to God.**

Sung Response

Easter Celtic Alleluia

Meditation & Soliloquy

* **Hymn** NCH 247 (black)

My Shepherd Is the Living God

My shepherd is the living God, I therefore nothing need;
In pastures fair, near pleasant streams you settle me to feed.
You bring my wandering spirit back when I forsake your ways,
And lead me for your mercy's sake in paths of truth and grace.

When I walk through the shades of death, your presence is my stay;
A word of your supporting breath drives all my fears away.
Your hand, in sight of all my foes, does still my table spread;
My cup with blessings overflows, your oil anoints my head.

The sure provisions of my God attend me all my days;
O may your house be my abode, and all my works be praise.
There would I find a settled rest, while others come and go—
No more a stranger or a guest, but like a child at home.

Call to Offering

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

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

Offertory

Sheep May Safely Graze

J. S. Bach

* Communion Doxology

Tune: *Old Hundredth*

Though what we have in truth is small,
God's grace shall be enough for all.
So as we bless and break this bread,
Each heart be filled, each mouth be fed.

* Prayer of Dedication

Celebrations & Concerns

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

Pastoral Prayer

Celebration of Holy Communion

Invitation to the Table

* Communion Summons

I'm Gonna Eat at the Welcome Table

I'm gonna eat at the welcome table,
I'm gonna eat at the welcome table, some of these days.
I'm gonna eat at the welcome table,
I'm gonna eat at the welcome table, some of these days.

* The Great Thanksgiving

One: May God be with you!

Many: **And also with you.**

One: Sheep of the Empty Tomb, let us lift up our hearts!

Many: **We open our hearts to the Spirit who fills us with hope.**

One: Let us give thanks to God our light.

Many: **It is right for us to offer our thanks and praise to God.**

One: It is right for us to thank and praise you God...

...And so, with your people and birds here on earth, with all the ancestors, and all the saints and the great company of heaven, we glorify your name, praising you together:

Many: Holy, holy, holy One, God of heaven and earth. All creation is full of your love and grace. Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of peace. Hosanna in the highest!

One: Holy are you, O God...

*** The Casa del Sol Prayer of Jesus** *(in unison)*

Ground of all being, Mother of life, Father of the universe, Your name is sacred, beyond speaking. May we know your presence, may your longings be our longings in heart and in action. May there be food for the human family today and for the whole earth community. Forgive us the falseness of what we have done as we forgive those who are untrue to us. Do not forsake us in our time of conflict but lead us into new beginnings. For the light of life, the vitality of life, and the glory of life are yours now and forever. Amen.

Breaking of the Bread

Sharing of the Bread & Cup

Post Communion Prayer

*** 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

Worship Leader – Rev. Rob Mark

Soliloquy – Guy Herman

Minister of Music – Tom Handel

Lector – Christine James

Covenant Choir

Usher – Denice Thornhill

Communion Servers – Anne Crane, Debbie Howland

Digital Minister – Trudi Veldman

Audio Visual Tech Team – Venkatesh Balasubramanian, Abhishek John, Jon Schwarz

Sexton – Jesús Vargas





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!

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.

CLIMATE JUBILEE ALL-CHURCH READ ADULT ED. TODAY. After worship today, please join the Climate Jubilee Team in discussing *Under the Sky We Make: How to Be Human in a Warming World*, by Kimberly A. Nicholas. Everyone is welcome, whether you have read the book or not.

BIRD WALK ON APRIL 24! The bird walk originally scheduled for Holy Week (as part of Bird Power Lent) was postponed due to weather. It has been rescheduled for **Wednesday, April 24, at 5:30 pm**, at the Arnold Arboretum. A knowledgeable birder will be leading us. Bring binoculars if you have them. Meet in front of the Hunnewell Visitor Center at Arborway Gate. Please contact Nancy Stockford (nancy.stockford@cotcbos.org) with any questions.

EARTH DAY BOSTON. Lots happening! <https://www.earthdayboston.org/>

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.



WANT TO JOIN COTC? We'd love to welcome you as our newest member. Did you know we have three forms of membership at Church of the Covenant? Speak to pastors Rob or Joshua at any point, or email our Parish Administrator Nancy if you'd like to know more: nancy.stockford@cotcbos.org.

UPCOMING WORSHIP. Please join us each Sunday at 10:30 am and during the 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 services (in-person and Zoom options). [Zoom Link for each service.](#)

- Wednesday, April 24: 5:30 pm, Bird Power Bird Walk, at the Arnold Arboretum (in-person only)
- Sunday, April 28: Rev. Rob Mark preaching, Commissioning of Rev. Rob for his Extended Reflection Leave, Deacons Meeting After Worship
- Sunday, May 5: Rev. Joshua Lawrence Lazard preaching, Sacred Reckonings Adult Ed. Part 3

TREE GIVEAWAY. The Climate Jubilee Team will be handing out tree seedlings outside the church on Newbury Street on **Saturday, April 27, from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm.** Please let Betty Southwick (bettrysouthwick@gmail.com) know if you are interested in helping out.

OPEN SANCTUARY REOPENS ON MAY 10. Starting on **May 10**, the Covenant sanctuary will be open to visitors on Fridays, Saturdays, and Mondays from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm and on Sundays from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm. Last year, more than 13,000 visitors came through our doors from throughout the world to worship, seek shelter, and witness the beauty of our sanctuary. If you are interested in helping out this year, please contact Simone DeVito (simone.t.devito@gmail.com).

COVENANT CABARET! Saturday, June 1, starting at 7:00 pm. Come join us for this lively event with tasty refreshments and fun entertainment (music, poetry, storytelling, standup comedy, and whatever else YOU want to offer). More information to come. In the meantime, please **save the date.** The Cabaret is a fundraiser to support our sibling relationship with the Church of the Poor in Dulce Nombre de Jesús, Nicaragua.

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING: IT'S NOT TOO LATE! With all the excitement about the backpack project, our opportunity to join with lots of other churches in One Great Hour of Sharing may have gotten lost. But it is not too late! This special offering provides funding for disaster assistance, hunger relief, and sustainable development around the world. OGHS funding goes to provide food, clean water, basic sanitation, training, and development opportunities. You may give online (at <http://www.tinyurl.com/cotcgive>) or send a check marked for OGHS to the church. The Mission and Advocacy Committee thanks you for your generosity!

UPCOMING EXTENDED REFLECTION LEAVE FOR REV. ROB: From May 1-September 12, Rob will be away on three months' Extended Reflection/Study Leave followed by four weeks of vacation and two weeks' unpaid leave. As sent out at the beginning of this year, Rob has shaped his leave around his ongoing love of the deep mystical roots of Celtic Christian spirituality: *The Sophia of Anam Cara: The Wisdom of Soul Connections*. Rob plans to use this leave to create space to breathe, be, and love more. He hopes this time will allow him and at times his family to pray for the life of our world and take stock of the enormous shifts that have happened and are happening in our world, the Church, and in their lives over these past six years—trusting that these months away may help him refocus, reflect, and refresh in the spirit of Sabbath and Jubilee. In order to continue the critical work of the gospel of Christ's love in these days where justice, peace, and liberation continue to be assaulted on so many fronts, some intentional reflection time comes as a timely balm. We are overjoyed that Rev. Joshua will shift from half-time Associate Pastor to full-time Lead Pastor during this reflection leave, ensuring us a smooth transition and pastoral continuity. This leave is not only a great opportunity for Rob and his family to find spiritual refreshment and grounding, it is also a gift for our entire congregation. We are invited to see this short “season” in the life of COTC not as reduced ministry, but as refreshed ministry. Before May 1, please feel free to be in touch with Rob (rob.mark@cotcbos.org) with any questions.

WELCOME CHILDREN & YOUTH!! We offer Christian education through Godly Play for ages 3-9, youth classes for ages 10-13 and 14+, and a nursery for the littlest 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. We share CYCE info regularly via email, so please email Rev. Kate at kate.carlisle@cotcbos.org if you want to receive updates!

WEDNESDAY EVENING PRAYERS 6:00-6:30 pm. NOTE: NO EVENING PRAYERS ON APRIL 28 DUE TO BIRD WALK. 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](https://www.cotcbos.org) (link on <http://www.cotcbos.org>).

BIBLE STUDY WEDNESDAYS WILL RESUME IN MAY. Our weekly Bible Study typically meets on Wednesday mornings at 9:45 on Zoom. Due to travel schedules, Bible Study will be taking a break during the month of April. The next meeting will be on May 1. We are studying the Gospel of Mark. 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.

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](http://cotcbos.org/worship-recordings) (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.

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 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, *Sexton*

Alan Lane, *Food Cupboard Coordinator*

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

CHURCH OFFICERS

Kathryn Barry, *President of the Corporation*

Trudi Veldman, *Clerk of the Council*

Jon Schwarz, *Moderator of the Board of Deacons*

Faith Perry, *Treasurer*