



GRACE COVENANT

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Service of Worship January 28, 2024 9:30am
Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

Gathering

PRELUDE "We Praise Thee with Our Minds, O Lord" CLONMEL, *Irish Melody*
Linda Dover, piano arr. Mary Ellen Kerrick

*We praise thee with our minds, O Lord, kept sharp to think thy thought;
Come, Holy Ghost, with grace outpoured, to teach what Christ hath taught.
In all our learning, may we seek that wisdom from above which comes to all:
the brave, the meek, who ask in faith and love. (Text by Hugh T. McElrath)*

WELCOME Rev. Karen Wright

INTROIT "'Come, We That Love the Lord" arr. Stan Pethel
Chancel Brass

Jim Kelly & Darryl Prater, co-directors
*Come, we that love the Lord, and let our joys be known.
Join in a song with sweet accord, and thus surround the throne.*

*CALL TO WORSHIP (by Peter K. Perry)

ONE: God comes into a world filled with uncertainties and darkness.

ALL: God seeks out the voids of belief and conviction

ONE: God embraces the wounded and broken.

ALL: God knocks down the walls of division and strife.

ONE: God is the candle shining in the darkness of our days.

ALL: God is the light of our lives.

ONE: God is the one who makes all things new.

ALL: Praise be to God, now and forevermore!

JESUS CHRIST: LIFE

181 Silence! Frenzied, Unclean Spirit

1 “Si - lence! Fren-zied, un - clean spir - it,” cried God’s
 2 Lord, the de - mons still are thriv - ing in the
 3 Si - lence, Lord, the un - clean spir - it, in our

heal - ing, Ho - ly One. “Cease your rant - ing! Flesh can’t
 gray cells of the mind: ty - rant voic - es, shrill and
 mind and in our heart. Speak your word that when we

bear it. Flee as night be - fore the sun.”
 driv - ing, twist - ed thoughts that grip and bind,
 hear it all our de - mons shall de - part.

Based on Mark 1:21–28/Luke 4:31–37, this text recalls how Jesus exorcized a demon, ponders what demons mean today, and concludes with a prayer for wholeness. It is set here to a familiar Welsh tune whose recurring three-note figures help to convey a sense of internal turmoil.

JESUS CHRIST: LIFE

At Christ's voice the de - mon trem-bled, from its vic - tim
doubts that stir the heart to pan - ic, fears dis - tort - ing,
Clear our thought and calm our feel - ing; still the frac - tured,

mad - ly rushed, while the crowd that was as -
rea - son's sight, guilt that makes our lov - ing
war - ring soul. By the pow - er of your

sem - bled stood in won - der, stunned, and hushed.
fran - tic, dreams that cloud the soul with fright.
heal - ing make us faith - ful, true, and whole.

A TIME WITH THE CHILDREN

(Children ages 4 through 1st grade may go to Awakening to Worship, our child-friendly worship time. Greeters at the back of the Sanctuary will go with children to Room 12 downstairs where parents may pick up their children following worship. Our Nursery welcomes young children, and our ushers can assist families to the nursery located in the children's wing. Worship bags are available for children who stay in worship.)

CALL TO CONFESSION

Rev. Karen Wright

PRAYER OF CONFESSION *(Together)*

God, we thank you for this extraordinary world and its reminders of resilience, grace, hope and life: for when grass shoots break through concrete, when the sun emerges after storms, for when people offer laughter in deep sadness, in these moments, we see glimpses of who you are — and we are grateful.

Yet if we reduce you to being like the cycle of nature or the best of humankind, we diminish your power to make the impossible real: to break apart the impenetrable evils of oppression, to cast out the very real fears that paralyze us, to banish the insidious demons of judgement and worthlessness.

Forgive us, God, when we do not trust you to deal with the unspeakable awfulness in our lives and world. Forgive us when we contribute to the brokenness of the world and the lives of people around us. Forgive us when we trust darkness more than we trust your light. Christ, shine your light upon us and within us, make us new again.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

ONE: May the peace of Christ be with you.

ALL: **And also with you and all others!**

*HYMN 315

**“In the Midst of New Dimensions”
*(stanzas 1, 3, & 5)***

NEW DIMENSIONS

315 In the Midst of New Dimensions

1 In the midst of new di - men - sions, in the face of
 2 Through the flood of starv - ing peo - ple, war - ring fac - tions,
 3 As we stand, a world di - vid - ed by our own self -
 4 We are man and we are wom - an, all per - sua - sions,
 5 Should the threats of dire pre - dic - tions cause us to with -

chang - ing ways, who will lead the pil - grim peo - ples
 and de - spair, who will lift the ol - ive branch - es?
 seek - ing schemes, grant that we, your glob - al vil - lage,
 old and young, each a gift in your cre - a - tion,
 draw in pain, may your blaz - ing phoe - nix spir - it

Refrain

wan - dering in their sep - arate ways?
 Who will light the flame of care?
 might en - vi - sion wid - er dreams. God of rain - bow, fi - ery pil - lar,
 each a love song to be sung.
 res - ur - rect the church a - gain.

lead - ing where the ea - gles soar, we your peo - ple, ours the jour - ney

now and ev - er, now and ev - er, now and ev - er - more.

In this simultaneously-created text and tune, the author-composer was seeking to incorporate imagery from both Native American and Hebrew spiritual traditions. Also included is the mythological phoenix, which had received a Christian interpretation as early as the first century.

Equipping

SCRIPTURE LESSON

1 Corinthians 8:1–13 (NRSVue)

Joy Slayton

Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge, but anyone who loves God is known by him.

Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “no idol in the world really exists” and that “there is no God but one.” Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods and many lords— yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. “Food will not bring us close to God.” We are no worse off if we do not eat and no better off if we do. But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? So by your knowledge the weak brother or sister for whom Christ died is destroyed. But when you thus sin against brothers and sisters and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never again eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.

ANTHEM

“Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts”

arr. Claude L. Bass

Chancel & Exaltation! Singers

Words by Bernard of Clairvaux

*Jesus, thou joy of loving hearts, thou fount of life thou light of men,
from the best bliss that earth imparts, we turn unfilled to thee again.
Thy truth unchanged hath ever stood; thou savest those who on thee call;
To them who seek thee thou art good, to them who find thee all in all.
Our restless spirits yearn for thee, where-e’r our changeful lot is cast;
glad when thy gracious smile we see, blest when our faith can hold thee fast.
O Jesus, ever with us stay, make all our moments calm and bright;
chase the dark night of sin away, shed o’er the world thy holy light.*

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Mark 1:21–28 (NRSVue)

They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet and come out of him!” And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this? A new teaching—with authority!

He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

Holy Wisdom, Holy Words
Thanks be to God!

SERMON

"Steadfast Resistance"

Rev. Karen Wright

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

A CALL TO STEWARDSHIP

OFFERING OF GIFTS AND MUSIC

"Larghetto"

by Ralph Vaughan Williams

From Six Studies in English Folksong
Bob Dover, clarinet – Linda Dover, piano

Sending

*HYMN 756

"O God of Every Nation"

LLANGLOFFAN

O God of Every Nation 756

1 O God of ev - ery na - tion, of ev - ery race and land,
 2 From search for wealth and pow - er and scorn of truth and right,
 3 Lord, strength-en those who la - bor that all may find re - lease
 4 Keep bright in us the vi - sion of days when war shall cease,

re - deem the whole cre - a - tion with your al - might - y hand.
 from trust in bombs that show - er de - struc - tion through the night,
 from fear of rat - tling sa - ber, from dread of war's in - crease;
 when ha - tred and di - vi - sion give way to love and peace,

Where hate and fear di - vide us and bit - ter threats are hurled,
 from pride of race and sta - tion and blind - ness to your way,
 when hope and cour - age fal - ter, your still small voice be heard;
 till dawns the morn - ing glo - rious when truth and jus - tice reign

in love and mer - cy guide us and heal our strife - torn world.
 de - liv - er ev - ery na - tion, e - ter - nal God, we pray.
 with faith that none can al - ter, your ser - vants un - der - gird.
 and Christ shall rule vic - to - rious o'er all the world's do - main.

If we truly believe that God cares for all people, we cannot limit our prayers and songs for peace to the welfare of our own nation, no matter how much we may love it. This challenging text is set to a stirring Welsh tune, named for a hamlet with a prominent Baptist chapel.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

Rev. Karen Wright

POSTLUDE

“Contredanse” by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Bob Dover, clarinet – Linda Dover, piano

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

GOD’S PEACE TO YOU

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