

COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

CINNAMINSON, NEW JERSEY







BAPTISM OF THE LORD

10:00 AM

JANUARY 7, 2024

PRELUDE "My Tribute" arr. Austin

GREETING AND OPENING PRAYER

Holy Spirit living within us, guide our hearts and minds as we welcome today all those who worship with us at Covenant Presbyterian Church. Give us discerning hearts so that everyone who crosses our threshold feels welcomed in the spirit of your love. Help us to recognize each person as an individual sent by you who will enrich our lives. And most of all, O God, let this be a place of love and acceptance of all your children; in the name of your child, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CALL TO WORSHIP

On that first day, when time began:

you gave birth to creation; light danced through the darkness; the waters of hope flowed free and clear.

On that first day at the Jordan, when redemption began:

you spoke of life for all your children, as your Child stepped into the waters of forgiveness, dancing in hope with his cousin, John.

On this first day of the week, when we begin anew:

you call us to faithfulness, as we open our hearts to you, your voice claiming us as your own. With prayer and praise, in scripture and in song, let us Worship the Living God!

HYMN

"God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens"

(See page 12)

CALL TO CONFESSION

You and I are now the ones who step forth out of the safe waters of baptism, to bring hope, to share a word of grace, to carry healing into the brokenness of the lives around us. Let us confess how we still struggle to follow in faith wherever Jesus leads us. Join me as we pray, saying,



PRAYER OF CONFESSION



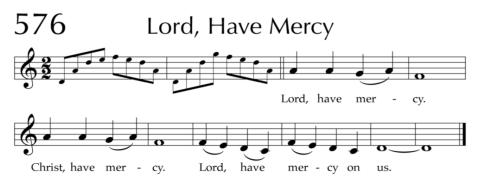
Timeless God, you cast Light into sin's dark places and call us your Beloved. Forgive us: when we still linger in the shadows; when we treat others in hurtful ways; when we speak ill of your friends.

As he knelt in the waters of Jordan, you proclaimed Jesus as your Child, pointing to him as the way to you. Forgive us: when we put ourselves ahead of him; when we think he is no longer needed; when we fail to see him in the broken of our world.

Baptized and blessed in your living waters, you would have us be your servants in our time. Forgive us: when we fail to welcome the stranger; when we refuse to forgive as we should; when we believe we are too good to kneel down and tie the shoes of the lost, the least, the last, the little.

SILENT MEDITATION

LORD HAVE MERCY (3x)



WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Touched by the waters of life, fed at the feast of grace and hope, embraced in the warmth of God's love and hopes - this is good news!

Blessed by baptism's tears, called to servanthood by the Beloved, filled with the peace of the Spirit, we are indeed God's people - redeemed, restored, refreshed to serve. Thanks be to God! Amen.

WE ARE FORGIVEN (1x)









Since God has forgiven us in Christ, let us forgive one another. The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

And also with you.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Guide us, O God, by your Word and Spirit, that in your light we may see light, in your truth find freedom, and in your will discover your peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

GENESIS 1:1-5

When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.

And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

PSALM 29

Refrain:



Ascribe to the LORD, you gods, * ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

Ascribe to the LORD the glory that is due the holy name; * worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. [Refrain]

The voice of the LORD is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders; * the LORD is upon the mighty waters.

The voice of the LORD is a powerful voice; * the voice of the LORD is a voice of splendor. [Refrain]

The voice of the LORD breaks the cedar trees; * the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon; the LORD makes Lebanon skip like a calf, * and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox. [Refrain]

The voice of the LORD splits the flames of fire; the voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; * the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

The voice of the LORD makes the oak trees writhe * and strips the forests bare.

And in the temple of the LORD * all are crying, "Glory!" [Refrain]

The LORD sits enthroned above the flood; * the LORD sits enthroned as Sovereign forevermore.

The LORD shall give strength to the chosen people; * the LORD shall give the people the blessing of peace. [Refrain]

Together, let us pray:

God of mystery and power, open our eyes to the fire of your love, and open our ears to the thunder of your justice, that we may receive your gifts of blessing and peace, to the glory of your name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MARK 1: 4-11

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And the whole Judean region and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

This is the Gospel of the Lord

Glory to you, Lord Christ.

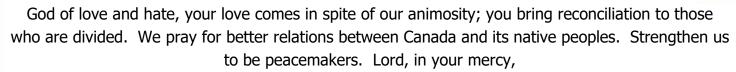
SERMON "A Quiet Beginning" Rev. Robert Higgs

PRAYER AND REFLECTION

Celebrating the coming of the One who brings the reign of God to all people, let us pray for the world God loves, the Church God calls, and all people according to their needs, saying, Lord, in your mercy, and responding, Hear our prayer.

God of light and darkness, through water and Word you shine your light into the darkness of our lives. We give thanks for this incredible gift. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.



Hear our prayer.

God of hope and fear, you walk with us through the challenges which surround us. Wash away our anxiety by your promised presence, and set us free from despair. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

God of church and world, in baptism you unify yourself with our world, and bring your reign into being. Keep us from seeing your love as a hiding place. Motivate us to infuse the world with your justice. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

God of health and illness, there is nothing that separates us from your love. Inspire us to bring your health to the sick, your encouragement to the discouraged, your promise to the dying, Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

God of life and death, all that exists is from you, and for you. Enable us to trust your baptismal promise, and serve this hurting world. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

God who shines in the darkness, receive these prayers and the prayers of our hearts, in the name of the one who is your light, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

~ written by Rick Pryce

HYMN "Baptized in Water" (See page 14)

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us, and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.

He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead: whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. and we believe one holy catholic and apostolic church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

For the peace from above, for the loving kindness of God, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the world, for the unity of the church of God, and for the well-being of all peoples, let us pray to the Lord

Lord, have mercy.

For this gathering of the faithful, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For all the baptized, for all who serve in the church, for elders and pastors, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For the rulers of the nations as we pray for Joe our President, Cory and Robert our Senators, Philip our Governor, Andy our Representative, and the Justices of the Supreme Court. Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this town of Cinnaminson, for every city and community, and for those who live in them, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For seasonable weather, and for abundant harvests for all to share, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For the good earth which God has given us, and for the wisdom and will to conserve it, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For those who travel by land, water, or air, or through outer space, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For the aged and infirm, for the widowed and orphaned, and for the sick and the suffering, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For the poor and the oppressed, for those unemployed and the destitute, for prisoners and captives, and for all who remember and care for them, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.



Lord, have mercy.

For blessings and mercies we have received and need:

Lord, have mercy.

For all your children to know the peace and joy of your supporting care, let us pray to the Lord **Lord, have mercy.**

For all who have died in the hope of the resurrection and are at rest, let us give thanks to the Lord. Eternal God, ruler of all things in heaven and earth, accept the prayers of your people, and strengthen us to do your will; through Jesus Christ. Amen.

CALL TO STEWARDSHIP

May we not hide our gifts from our Loving God, but instead offer them to the Lord with trust and hope, so all may join us on the journey to God's kingdom of grace and hope, peace and healing. The offerings for the work of the church will now be received.

OFFERTORY "Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us" by Bradbury

DOXOLOGY "Praise God from Whom All Blessings" #809

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Bathed in the waters of baptism, we are graced people. Graced people, we recognize the gifts which have been poured out upon us. Recognizing these gifts, we take them and give them back to you, God of the waters, so that others might be bathed in hope, graced with joy, gifted with your peace and love. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

SURSUM CORDA

May the Creator of heaven and earth be with you!

And also with you!

People of God, lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the One who gave his Heart to heal us.

Let us give thanks to the One who made everything and called it 'good'.

How right it is to give our thanks and praise to the One who calls us 'Beloved.'

PRAYER OF GREAT THANKSGIVING

Into the shadows of silence, you hummed the first chords of creation, Heart of Tenderness, your word crafting the sun to welcome each day, the moon and stars to guide the night. The Spirit

gathered up the dust of chaos and shaped it into vast universes, flinging them into space and time. Floating on the warm waters of Eden, cradled in your love and joy, we could have lived with you forever. But we made mud pies from death's dirt, shaping our own foolish dreams, chasing after sin, and always being caught. Prophets came, sent from your heart to call us back to you, but we could not hear them over the shouts of our desires. So, when we had no hope, you sent your Child, Jesus, the One who was willing to take on anything, and everything, which kept us from you.

With those who ran to the river's side, and those who immersed themselves in grace, with our beloved sisters and brothers in every time and place, we sing of your love:

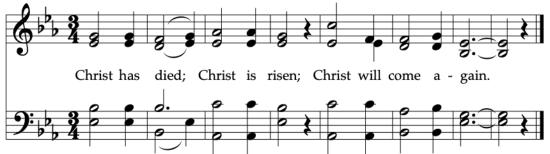
HOLY HOLY HOLY

Blessedness is your nature, Holy Imagination, and your Bright Morning Star is our Savior, Jesus Christ. When our hearts were hardened towards you, he came to soften them with your grace. Knowing we had lost our way, he came to walk at our side, unfolding the map of the kingdom and pointing out the way home. Standing with us in baptism's waters, he journeyed alone to the cross, taking our place in sin's grasp, and leading us into your heart, leaving death empty and alone.

On this day we remember our baptism, we would proclaim the life which was his, and the hope which is ours in that mystery we call faith:

CHRIST HAS DIED (2x)

563 Christ Has Died; Christ Is Risen



As your Spirit changed chaos into creation, may these simple gifts of the bread and the cup be transformed into your life and peace for us. We come to this table, your baptized and beloved children, hungry for your hope in our lives, yearning for your peace to fill us. And when we have been fed by you, we would go forth into the world to bring the homeless off lonely streets, to feed the hungry with more than clichés, to welcome the stranger as our sister, to embrace the outcast as our brother.

And when time has ended its journey, and we are gathered as your family around the Table of grace, we will join our hands and hearts together, singing to you through all eternity God in Community, Holy in One. Amen.





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

COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE

COMMUNION MUSIC

"The Healing Garden"

Carol Klose

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Loving God, we thank you that you have fed us in this Sacrament, united us with Christ, and given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet in your eternal kingdom. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

HYMN

"Our God, our Help in Ages Past"

(See page 16)

CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

Go out into the world ... be with us all. Amen.

O Lord, may you this week open up doors for us to share your love!

POSTLUDE

"My Faith Looks Up to Thee"

by Mason

MINISTERS: Bob and Christy Jeffries (Ushers), Karen Schwartz (Refreshments) Carol Ortlip (Chancel)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. BIBLE STUDY WITH BOB!

To get the new year started, Pastor Bob invites you to join an online Bible Study to be presented over **Zoom on Wednesdays at 7pm.** Sign in from home! Dress however you like!

The Zoom app is available on computer, phones and iPads and can easily downloaded from the App Store (Apple) or the Google Play App.

The sign in code for the meeting will be 897 8171 2968.

Unlike other Bible Studies you might have been part of, in this one we will be studying the great themes of the Bible which are found in almost every book.



January 3 - God January 10 - The Messiah January 17 - Holy Spirit





January 24 - Tree of Life January 31 - Eternal Life February 7 - Sacrifice and Atonement



We'll take a break starting on Ash Wednesday, February 14, as we join our neighboring churches in the celebration of Lent with soup, supper and worship.

Each meeting will feature a short video produced an organization called the Bible Project (www.bibleproject.com). The BibleProject is a nonprofit, crowdfunded organization that produces 100% free Bible videos, podcasts, articles, classes, and educational Bible resources to help make the biblical story accessible to everyone everywhere.

We will discuss the ideas presented in each video for about 30-45 minutes and end with prayer. The studies will be recorded and uploaded to our website in case you missed it.

2. MESSAGE FROM THE DEACONS

The Deacons would like to thank everyone who chose tags from the Angel Tree and bought gifts. We wrapped and delivered everything right before Christmas. It was heartwarming to see the thoughtfulness with which everyone shopped for the two families. The Covenant congregation is very generous, and able to do great things for our neighbors.

3. DAILY PRAYER

Covenant is now offering Daily Prayer videos narrated by our new Pastor, Bob! This is a wonderful way to begin each day in prayer. If you are not receiving them, please notify Bob, or Greg and you will be placed on the email list.

4. GIVING ENVELOPES

All 2024 envelopes are available. They are organized by number and located in the narthex.

5. INITIAL OFFERING: As a congregation in the Presbyterian Church (USA), we support the administrative costs of the Presbytery for Southern Jersey, the Synod of the Northeast and the General Assembly. These costs are shared equitably through <u>per capita apportionment</u> as each congregation contributes money based on the number of active members. Please prayerfully consider using your special envelope marked <u>Initial Offering</u> to help Covenant meet its giving responsibility for our connectional church. For 2024 we are requesting a contribution of <u>\$40.00</u> per member to meet the per capita costs of the presbytery, synod and general assembly. Thank you.

6. FLOWER CHART

The flower chart is posted on the bulletin board for 2024. Sign your name on a specific date in order to dedicate flowers to a loved one.

- **7. YOUR PARTICIPATION IS NEEDED!** Members are invited to participate in our services. Please contact Bonnie Cain or Greg DiBona if you are interested in reading scripture or leading our worship services. We are also in need of more volunteers to operate the camera and soundboard. Please contact the church office if you are interested.
- **8. BIBLE STUDY** The Bible Study will be located in the lounge on Mondays at 11AM. All are welcome! **9. STEWARDSHIP:** Total Income for Christmas Eve: Total Income: \$2856.00, Envelope Giving:
- \$2477. Deacons: \$106.00, Christmas: \$172.00. Total Income for 12/31: \$2135.18, Envelope Giving: #720.00, Christmas: \$520.00.





PRAYER LIST



Prayers for peace in our communities, country and world. Prayers for all those affected by war.

We also pray for those who are ill.



Please keep our Covenant families and friends in your prayers:

Treva - continued prayers for her healing and strength returning and joyful prayers that she is coming home!

Betty Graham - she is in the health care unit at The Evergreens - continued prayers that her leg will heal and that she will gain strength and begin to feel better

Julia Slater - she will have hip replacement - prayers that it will be successful and relieve her of discomfort

Dick Craft - return to strength and good health

Janette Hutchinson - healing of her knee and repair of leg injury

B.Ann and Dave DuBois - able to deal with health issues - nice to see them in church

Joan Samph - rest and able to feel better

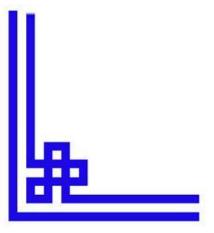
Terri and Ken Bell - comfort for Terri and strength for Ken as he cares for her

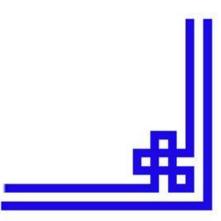
Mary Lou's friend, Tom - healing following serious fall

Greg's grandmother, Rita - recovering from fall and healing

Carol's friend, Elsie - admitted to the hospital due to feeling poorly - prayers for answers and recovery

Bruce, Dawn and Erin - prayers for Bruce that he will receive good medical attention to feel better and that they will secure an apartment very soon



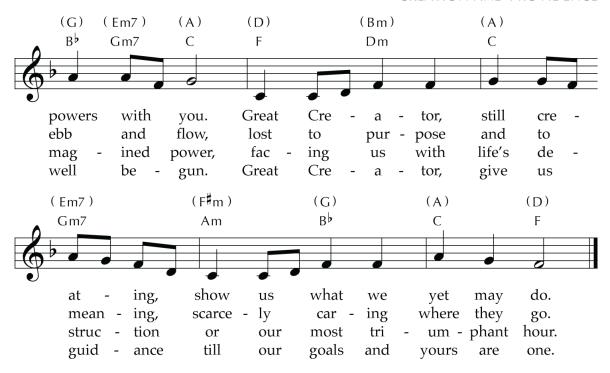


God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens



The crux of this text comes in the second stanza: if we dare to claim God-given abilities, we need also to show God-like compassion for the human needs that confront us daily. The earthy shape note tune provides a further reminder that we must not lose our heads in the clouds.

CREATION AND PROVIDENCE



482

Baptized in Water



- 1 Bap-tized in wa ter, sealed by the Spir it, cleansed by the
- 2 Bap-tized in wa ter, sealed by the Spir it, dead in the
- 3 Bap-tized in wa ter, sealed by the Spir it, marked with the



Christ King; blood of our heirs sal - va - tion, trust - ing King; tomb with Christ our one with his ris - ing, freed and for sign of Christ our King; born of the Spir - it, we are God's



faith - ful - ly prom - ise, now God's prais - es sing. we thank - ful - ly giv God's prais - es en, now we sing. chil joy - ful - ly God's prais - es dren; sing. now we

Each stanza of this compact and carefully constructed text about baptism begins with allusions to John 3:5 and Ephesians 1:13. The interplay of constant and changing lines accentuates each added image. It is set here to a Gaelic tune first transcribed in the 19th century.

Holy, Holy, Holy



687 Our God, Our Help in Ages Past



- 5 Time, like an ever rolling stream, bears all our years away; they fly forgotten, as a dream dies at the opening day.
- 6 Our God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, be thou our guard while life shall last, and our eternal home.