



Sunday, March 14, 2010

Lent 4



Insight In the Wilderness

Christ Covenant MCC

109 Hibernia Avenue, Decatur, Georgia 30030

404 373 2933

www.christcovenantmcc.org

Welcome to Christ Covenant



I'm delighted that you've chosen to join us this morning.

You are always welcome at Christ Covenant; we hope you'll return again. Whether you have worshipped at this church for years or this is your first time, you are welcome here!

Whether you come from a church background, a religious background other than Christianity, or no religious background at all, you are welcome here. If you've come to worship God, to find a sense of peace, to find friends and a sense of community, or simply because you are curious, regardless of your motivation, you are welcome here.

Christ Covenant is a progressive, inclusive church, influenced by liberation, feminist, and traditional Christian theologies. As a beautifully diverse congregation, we value each person's spiritual path and practices. We journey with one another across lines that often divide.

Our church is experiencing new beginnings and we hope that, if you are new to our community - or returning after some time away, you will be a part of this new day of hope and expectation. The months ahead will be filled with new programs to explore our faith, with new leadership, fresh experiences of worship, and, hopefully, with all sorts of growth and renewed vitality.

We seek to grow in spirit, caring for one another, reaching out to the needs of the world, and living abundant lives. Christ Covenant has our roots in the LGBT Christian community; however, we are a church for all! Our desire is to grow into the whole image of God, reflective of all God's people.

Again, welcome! Because you are here - bringing your journey, your faith, your struggles - our worship is a fuller, richer experience.

If you have questions about worship, about our church, or need any assistance, we hope that you will let us know - either by seeing someone in leadership today or by contacting the church office (404 373 2933 or office@christcovenantmcc.org) during the week.

I pray that the love of God, the kindness and grace of God's people, and the beauty of the church's worship will be shown forth to you today.

With Blessing,



Rev. Elder Glenna T. Shepherd
Pastor

Third Sunday of Lent

11:00 AM WORSHIP

✝ At this sign,
please rise in body
or spirit.

BOLD TYPE

Indicates words to
be read aloud by
the congregation.

Our readings are
taken from the
Hebrew and
Christian scriptures
and from other
sacred or relevant
texts.

Attendance Records:

Please help us
keep in touch with
you by filling out
the attendance
records in the blue
pad located at the
end of each pew.

PRELUDE

Michael Monroe

WORDS OF WELCOME

Rev Elder Glenna Shepherd

THE LIFE AND WORK OF THE COMMUNITY GREETING EACH OTHER

Rev Jane Acuff

RINGING OF THE CHIMES

✝ **CALL TO WORSHIP**

Rev Elder Glenna Shepherd

One: O God, how long shall I cry for help? Will you not listen?

Many: Help us, we pray, to know when to sit still and to know when to move.

One: We are beat up and put down.

Many: We feel like victims.

One: Holy One, help us remember your loving embrace, and your desire for us;
help us return to you.

Many: How we long for your hospitality and the safety of your ways.

One: Go with us as we journey home to you!

✝ **PROCESSIONAL HYMN #417** *This Is a Day of New Beginnings*

THE FIRST READING

Psalm 32

Valerie Anderson

Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Happy are those to whom God imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. While I kept silent, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. Day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.

Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to God," and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them. You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance.

I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding, whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not stay near you. Many are the torments of the troubled, but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in God. Be glad and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Rev Jane Acuff

Beloved friends, in this season of repentance and healing, we accept God's invitation to be ever-mindful of the needs of others.

One: God, we ask for your companionship as we sojourn in the wilderness seeking nourishment, wisdom, and healing.

Many: God, hear our prayer.

One: We ask not just for ourselves but for our fellow travelers: our families, our enemies, and our friends.

Many: God, hear our prayer.

One: Sharpen our senses that we might better hear the cries of our neighbor and offer the comfort that is in our power to offer.

Many: God, hear our prayer.

One: We offer these prayers on behalf of those here today:

Prayers are read

One: Artist of souls, you sculpted a people for yourself out of the rocks of wilderness and fasting. Help us as we take up your invitation to prayer and simplicity, that the discipline of these forty days may sharpen our hunger for the feast of your holy friendship and whet our thirst for the living water you offer through Christ. Amen.

WE JOIN TOGETHER IN PRAYER.

Our prayer altar is located just inside the narthex. You may write your prayers there and light a candle to illumine your prayers.

Our clergy team includes these written prayers in their weekly meetings.

PASTORAL CARE STATEMENT

Please call the church office if you have a pastoral need. We offer responsive Pastoral Care; please let us know how we can help.

PRAYER HYMN

You Are My Hiding Place

①
You are my hid - ing place. You al - ways
fill my heart with songs of de - liv - er - ance, when - ev - er I am a -
②
fraid, I will trust in you, I will trust in
you. Let the weak say, "I am strong in the
strength of the Lord." *Repeat ending* | *Song ending*
Lord. I will trust in you."

THE SECOND READING

The Return of the Prodigal Son by Henri J.M. Nouwen

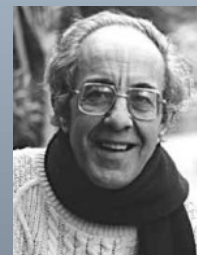
Sharon Price

Leaving home is much more than a historical event bound to time and place. It is a denial of the spiritual reality that I belong to God with every part of my being, that God holds me safe in an eternal embrace, that I am indeed carved in the palms of God's hands and hidden in their shadows. Leaving home means ignoring the truth that God has "fashioned me in secret, molded me in the depths of the earth and knitted me together in my mother's womb." Leaving home is living as though I do not yet have a home and must look far and wide to find one.

Yet over and over again I have left home. I have fled the hands of blessing and run off to faraway places searching for love! Somehow I have become deaf to the voice that calls me the *Beloved*, have left the only place where I can hear that voice, and have gone off desperately hoping that I would find somewhere else what I could no longer find at home.

But there are many other voices, voices that are loud, full of promises and very seductive. These voices say, "Go out and prove that you are worth something." Soon after Jesus had heard the voice calling him the *Beloved*, he was led to the desert to hear those other voices. They told him to prove that he was worth love in being successful, popular, and powerful. Those same voices are not unfamiliar to me. They are always there and, always, they reach into those inner places where I question my own goodness and doubt my self-worth. They suggest that I am not going to be loved without my having earned it through determined efforts and hard work. They want me to prove to myself and others that I am worth being loved, and they keep pushing me to do everything possible to gain acceptance. They deny loudly that love is a totally free gift. I leave home every time I lose faith in the voice that calls me the *Beloved* and follow the voices that offer a great variety of ways to win the love I so much desire.

THE AUTHOR



In *Return of the Prodigal Son*, Henri Nouwen describes love and forgiveness as unconditional. Though this is not a novel idea, Nouwen's approach is arguably unique, as he approaches this theme from the angles of the younger son, the elder son, and the father. Each captures the unconditional quality of love and forgiveness in their own way.

+ **THE GRADUAL** *Ancient Words*

*Holy words long preserved for our walk in this world;
They resound with God's own heart,
O, let the ancient words impart;*

*Words of life, words of hope, give us strength, help us cope;
In this world where'er we roam,
Ancient words will guide us home.*

Refrain:

*Ancient words, ever true,
changing me, and changing you;
We have come with open hearts,
O let the ancient words impart.
(repeat refrain)*

+ **THE GOSPEL LESSON**

Luke 15:1-3; 11-32

Gail Hayes

(from The Message, a paraphrase by Eugene Peterson)

One: A reading from the Gospel according to Luke. Listen for the word of God.

By this time a lot of men and women of doubtful reputation were hanging around Jesus, listening intently. The Pharisees and religion scholars were not pleased, not at all pleased. They growled, "He takes in sinners and eats meals with them, treating them like old friends." Their grumbling triggered this story.

"There was once a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, 'Father, I want right now what is coming to me.'

"So, the father divided the property between them. It wasn't long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined and dissipated, he wasted everything he had. After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine all through that country and he began to hurt. He signed on with a citizen there who assigned him to his fields to slop the pigs. He was so hungry he would have eaten the corncobs in the pig slop, but no one would give him any.

"That brought him to his senses. He said 'All those farmhands working for my father sit down to three meals a day, and here I am starving to death. I'm going back to my father. I'll say to him, Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son. Take me on as a hired hand.' He got right up and went home to his father.

"When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him. The son started his speech: 'Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son ever again.'

"But the father wasn't listening. He was calling to the servants, 'Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then get a grain-fed heifer and roast it. We're going to feast! We're going to have a wonderful time! My son is here - given up for dead and now alive! Given up for lost and now found!' And they began to have a wonderful time.

"All this time his older son was out in the field. When the day's work was done he came in. As he approached the house, he heard the music and dancing. Calling over one of the houseboys, he asked what was going on. He told him, 'Your brother came home. Your father has ordered a feast - barbecued beef! - because he has him home safe and sound.'

"The older brother stalked off in an angry sulk and refused to join in. His father came out and tried to talk to him, but he wouldn't listen. The son said, 'Look how many years I've stayed here serving you, never giving you one moment of grief, but have you ever thrown a party for me and my friends? Then this son of yours who has thrown away your money on whores shows up and you go all out with a feast!'

"His father said, "Son, you don't understand. You're with me all the time, and everything that is mine is yours - but this is a wonderful time, and we had to celebrate. This brother of yours was dead, and he's alive! He was lost, and now he is found!'"

One: This is the word of God.

All: Glory to you Creator, Christ, and Eternal Spirit.

Growing churches are giving churches and giving churches are growing churches.

As our church develops programs and reaches out to our community, please consider tithing or giving regularly and generously. The blessings of giving will enrich your life and prosper God's work in this place!

ATTENDANCE AND OFFERING

We value open communication about the stewardship of our financial resources.

For the week ending:
March 7, 2010

Worship Attendance
Total: 119

Tithes and Offerings
Total: \$3588.80

Weekly Budget
Needs: \$3736.68

+ THE GOSPEL RESPONSE *Jesus, Remember Me*

Je - sus, re - mem - ber me when you come in-to your glo - ry,
Je - sus, re - mem - ber me when you come in-to your glo - ry.

THE SERMON *INSIGHT in the Wilderness*
Reverend Elder Glenna Shepherd

Sermon Hymn#202 *O God, How We Have Wandered*

THE CONFESSIONS OF OUR HEARTS *Valerie Anderson*

One: We acknowledge our need to confess what we have done and what we have left undone.

Confession in silence

All: Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy, blot out our transgressions. Create in us a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within us.

One: As God's forgiven and restored people, please offer the peace of God to one another.

PASSING OF THE PEACE
Peace be with you.
And also with you.

TITHES AND OFFERINGS

Call to Offering
Offertory

Rev Elder Glenna Shepherd
Michael Monroe

+ DOXOLOGY

*Lend your joy to all our giving, let it light our pilgrim way;
From the night of anxious keeping, loose us into generous day.
Open wide our hands in sharing as we heed Christ's ageless call,
Healing, teaching, and reclaiming, honoring you by loving all.*

COMMUNION

All are welcome at communion. You may kneel or stand to receive.

Your server will offer you the elements and say a brief prayer of blessing.

If you prefer to serve yourself, please open your hands and the server will place a wafer in your hand.

The wine is alcohol-free so that all may receive.

CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

The Great Thanksgiving

Rev Jane Acuff

- One: God is with you.
Many: **And also with you.**
One: Open your hearts.
Many: **We open our hearts to God.**
One: Let us give thanks to our God.
Many: **In joy we give our thanks and praise!**
One: ...And so, with your people on earth and all the company of Heaven, we praise your name in this unending hymn:

The Sanctus

All:

Come and fill our hearts with your peace; You a - lone O God are ho - ly.

Come and fill our hearts with your peace; Ho - ly, ho - ly are you, God.

The Story

Rev Glenna Shepherd

Prayer of Consecration

- One: Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine.

Make them to be for us nourishment for our souls, even the body and life of Jesus, that we may be for the world the body of Christ.

By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world.

Through Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and for ever.

Invitation to the Meal

Sharon Price

Sharing the Elements

COMMUNION SONGS

♩ = 72

Na-da te tur-be na-da te_es-pan-te; quien a Dios tie - ne na-da le fal-ta.

Na-da te tur - be, na-da te_es-pan-te: só - lo Dios ba - sta.

English Text: *Nothing can trouble; nothing can frighten;
Those who seek God shall never go wanting.
Nothing can trouble; nothing can frighten:
God alone fills us.*

Let Us Break Bread Together #330

There Is a Balm #553

Be Still My Soul #488

For The Beauty of the Earth #28 (stanzas 1 & 4)

Prayer of Thanksgiving Valerie Anderson

+ RECESSIONAL HYMN #423 ***Great Is Your Faithfulness***

+ BENEDICTION Rev Glenna Shepherd

+ POSTLUDE Michael Monroe



Chimes in Print

Keep in touch with what's happening here at CCMCC—Visit www.christcovenantmcc.org

To begin receiving *The Chimes*, our weekly email containing news and an inspirational message, just include your email address on the registration pad or send an email to: office@christcovenantmcc.org.

March is Women's History Month THIS WEEK'S EVENTS

Sunday, March 14

9:30	Sunday School 12-Step Spirituality	Sunday School Room
10:15	Fellowship Breakfast All are welcome!!	Davis Hall
11:00	Community Worship	Sanctuary

Monday, March 15

7:00 NO Yoga this evening

Tuesday, March 16

7:00 Centering Prayer Prayer Room

Wednesday, March 17

6:30 My Sister's Shoes Davis Hall

Thursday, March 18

7:00 Guitar Lessons with Dana and Michele Clark Sunday School Room

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH

17 -May 2 12-Step Spirituality Sunday School Class
 My Sister's Shoes
 18 Guitar Lessons with Dana and Michele Clark
 27 All Church Work Day - Sign up today in the Narthex!
 28 Palm Sunday
 30 Seder

April

1 Maundy Thursday Foot Washing
 2 Tenebrae
 4 Easter Celebration
 14 Living the Questions with Rev. Dr. Sally Purvis
 15 Guitar Lessons with Dana and Michele Clark
 24 Membership Class
 29 Guitar Lessons with Dana and Michele Clark

May

8, 15, 22, 29 Belly Dancing Class in Davis Hall

PASSOVER SEDER

Invitation to the Passover Seder, Tuesday, March 30, 2010, 6:30 pm, Davis Hall

Whether you know it as Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist, have you ever wondered why we reenact this special meal every Sunday?

Most scholars believe the meal Jesus ate with his disciples before his execution was the Jewish Passover Seder. We are pleased to celebrate the Seder on Tuesday night of Holy Week. We will use the Passover Haggadah and be led by Judy Wells, partner of Rev Dr. Sally Purvis. Because we are limited by the size of Davis Hall, **we will only be able to accept reservations for 50 people.** Children five years and older are encouraged to attend! Registration begins today; a table is set up in the Narthex.

What is Passover?

Passover is a Jewish holy day and festival commemorating the Hebrew's escape from bondage in Egypt. Pesach begins on the 15th day of the month of Nisan, which is the first month of the Hebrew calendar's festival year. The Bible tells that YHWH inflicted ten plagues upon the Egyptians before Pharaoh would release his Hebrew slaves. The tenth plague was the killing of all the firstborn, including the Pharaoh's son. The Hebrews were instructed to mark the doorposts of their homes with the blood of a spring lamb, and, upon seeing this, the spirit of the Lord passed over these homes. It is said that when Pharaoh freed the Hebrews, they left in such a hurry that they could not wait for bread to rise. In commemoration, during the entire seven-day festival of Passover, no leavened bread is eaten. Matzoh, which is unleavened bread (flat and un-risen), is the primary symbol of the holiday. The Biblical commandments concerning the Passover (The Feast of Unleavened Bread), stress the importance of remembering. We find in Exodus 13:3, for example, "Remember this day, in which you came out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, for by strength the hand of the Lord brought you out from this place." When we gather on the second night of Passover for Seder, we will recount the Exodus from Egypt with stories and symbols. "The Seder is a unique opportunity for religious sharing with family, friends, and guests; for enhancing the meaning of Judaism and rejoicing in its beauty; and for a personal experience of the mysterious unfolding of the Jewish people's story, the wonder of redemption, past, present, and future."

(according to "A Passover Haggadah", edited by Herbert Bronstein)

Lent 2010

LENTEN WORSHIP

Lent 4	March 14	11am	Insight <i>IN THE WILDERNESS</i>
Lent 5	March 21	11am	A Way <i>IN THE WILDERNESS</i>
Lent 6	Palm Sunday March 28	11am	Mirage <i>IN THE WILDERNESS</i>

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT AND OUTREACH - WEDNESDAYS

March 17	My Sister's Shoes
March 24	Sandwiches and Socks

HOLY WEEK

Passover	Mar 30	7pm	Seder
Maundy Thursday	April 1	7pm	Foot Washing
Good Friday	April 2	7pm	Tenebrae

... In the Wilderness

All Church Work Day!
Saturday, March 27
Sign up in the Narthex today!

8:30am - breakfast
9:30am - work begins

Sunday School 9:30 AM
12-Step Spirituality

February 14—May 2

Choir! Choir! Choir!
Beginning tomorrow, Monday, March 15, 7pm
Choir Practice: Every Monday through Easter!

CHRIST COVENANT STAFF AND LEADERSHIP

Pastor

Rev Elder Glenna T Shepherd

RevShepherd@christcovenantmcc.org

Associate Pastor for Congregational Life

Rev Jane Acuff

RevAcuff@christcovenantmcc.org

Associate Pastor for Spiritual Development

Rev Kathy Burton

RevBurton@christcovenantmcc.org

Church Administrator

Angela Womack

Angela@christcovenantmcc.org

Coordinator of Music Ministries

Michael Monroe

Michael@christcovenantmcc.org

Coordinator of Children's Ministries

Allyson Shaffer

Allyson@christcovenantmcc.org

Technologies

Don Harris

Don@christcovenantmcc.org

Pastor Emeritus—Rev Dr Sally Purvis

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Beth Boersma

Barbara Bugg

Tonya Burkett

John Hartland

Carolyn Marshall

Rev Glenna Shepherd

BOD@christcovenantmcc.org

LAY DELEGATE

Allyson Shaffer

COUNCIL OF MINISTRIES

Team Resource Leader:	Sheri Smith TeamResource@christcovenantmcc.org
Connections Team	Barbara Bugg, Facilitator Connections@christcovenantmcc.org
Facilities Team	Barb Devlin, Sheri Coleman, Co-Facilitators Facilities@christcovenantmcc.org
Hospitality Team	Beth Anderson, Facilitator Hospitality@christcovenantmcc.org
Membership Development Team	Sharon Price, Cathy Giarrusso, Co-Facilitators
Social Action Team	Dionne Garcia-Romero, Facilitator SocialAction@christcovenantmcc.org
Spiritual Development Team	Reverend Kathy Burton, Facilitator
Worship Team	Reverend Glenna Shepherd, Facilitator