

**THE CELEBRATION AND BLESSING OF THE COVENANT OF  
CAROLE L. AND DEBORAH S.**

*The Congregation gathers outside the church and is led to the chancel by the clergy, Carole and Deborah.*

PROCESSIONAL

Simple Gifts

played by Tim H.

*'Tis the gift to be simple, tis the gift to be free,  
'tis the gift to come down where we ought to be;  
and when we find ourselves in the place just right,  
'twill be in the valley of love and delight.  
When true simplicity is gained,  
to bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed,  
To turn, turn, will be our delight,  
till by turning, turning we come round right.*

Words: Shaker song, 18<sup>th</sup> cent.  
Music: Simple Gifts, Shaker melody

PROCLAMATION

*Remain standing.*

Ed Bacon

Celebrant:

Beloved People of God: We have come together in the presence of God to witness and bless the covenant of love and fidelity which Carole and Deborah have made with each other.

The union of two persons in heart, body and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy, for help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and that their love may be a blessing to all whom they encounter and a source of strength to the community.

This solemn event is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and with the commitment to seek God's will for their lives.

DECLARATION AND CONSENT

*Seated.*

Ed Bacon

Carole & Deborah:

Ed, we come before you and our Lord in the presence of our family and friends, believing that we belong to each other and together we belong to God. We ask for God's blessing and the blessing of the church on our life together.

Celebrant:

Carole, you have come to affirm your covenant of love and fidelity with Deborah. Will you live together in a committed relationship of true love, faithfulness, respect, and generosity of spirit?

Carole:

I will.

Celebrant:

Deborah, you have come to affirm your covenant of love and fidelity with Carole. Will you live together in a committed relationship of true love, faithfulness, respect, and generosity of spirit?

Deborah:

I will.

MINISTRY OF THE WORD *Remain seated.*

Scott R.

Minister:

The Lord be with you.

People:

And also with you.

Minister:

Let us pray.  
O gracious and ever living God, you have created us in your image: Look mercifully upon these women who come to you seeking your blessing, and assist them with your grace, that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may honor and keep the promises of commitment they make to you and to each other; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen*

OLD TESTAMENT READING *Remain seated.*

Peter O.

A reading from the Song of Solomon, chapter 2, verses 10b to 13.

Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

Minister: The Word of the Lord.  
People: Thanks be to God.

NEW TESTAMENT READING *Remain seated.*

Gregory O.

A reading from First Corinthians, chapter 13, verses 1 to 7 and 13.

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful, it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in all truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things...And now faith, hope and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Minister: The Word of the Lord.  
People: Thanks be to God.

Come Away to the Skies

played by Tim H.

*Come away to the skies, my beloved arise,  
and rejoice in the day thou was born;  
on this festival day, come exulting away,  
and with singing to Zion return.*

Words: Anon., The Southern Harmony, 1835 alt.  
Music: Middlebury, melody from The Southern Harmony,  
harm. Jack W. Burnham (b.1946)

THE GOSPEL *Standing.*

Scott R.

Minister: The Holy Gospel of our Savior, Jesus Christ, according to Matthew (Matthew 7:7-12).  
People: Glory to you, Lord Christ.

Ask and it will be given you; search and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for fish will give a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him? In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.

Minister: The Gospel of the Lord.  
People: Praise to you, Lord Christ.

HOMILY *Seated.*

Scott R.

THE COVENANT *Remain seated.*

Carole and Deborah

THE BLESSING OF THE RINGS

Ed Bacon

Celebrant: Bless O Lord, these rings as the outward and visible sign of the covenant by which these two people are bound together; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Celebrant: Now that Carole and Deborah have stated publicly their promises to one another and the rings have been blessed, I proclaim that they are united to one another in a holy covenant in the Name of God - Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer. Those whom God has joined together let no one put asunder.

People: Amen.

PRAYERS *Kneeling.*

Ed Bacon

Celebrant: Eternal God, creator and preserver of all life, author of salvation, source of mercy, and giver of all grace: Look with favor upon the world you have made, and for which your son Jesus gave his life. Spread that favor over this church, its leaders and these two people whose Covenant you bless. *Amen.*

Give them the wisdom and devotion in the ordering of their common life, that each may be to the other a strength in need, a counselor in perplexity, a comfort in sorrow, and a companion in joy. *Amen.*

Grant that their wills may be so knit together in your will, and their spirits in your spirit, that they may grow in love and peace with you and one another all the days of their lives. *Amen.*

Make their continuing life together a sign of Christ's love, that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal anger, and joy conquer despair. *Amen.*

Give them such fulfillment of their mutual affection that they may reach out in love and concern for others. *Amen.*

Grant that all persons here who witness the blessing of this Covenant may find their lives strengthened and their loyalties confirmed. *Amen.*

Grant that the bonds of our common humanity, by which all people are united to one another, and the living to the dead, may be so transformed by your mercy and your grace, that your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven; where O God, with your son and the Holy Spirit, you live and reign in perfect unity, now and forever. *Amen.*

THE BLESSING OF THE COVENANT

Ed Bacon

Celebrant: Most gracious God, we give you thanks for your tender love in sending Jesus Christ to come among us, to be born of a human mother, and to make the way of the cross to be the way of life. By the power of your Holy Spirit, pour out the abundance of your blessing upon these women. Defend them from every enemy. Lead them into all peace. Let their love for each other be a seal upon their hearts, a mantle about their shoulders, and a crown upon their foreheads. Bless them in their work and in their companionship; in their sleeping and in their waking; in their joys and in their sorrows; in their life and in their death. Finally, in your mercy, bring them to that table where your saints feast forever in your heavenly home; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

THE PEACE

*Remain seated.*

Ed Bacon

Celebrant: The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
 People: And also with you.

GREETINGS

Ed Bacon

HOLY COMMUNION

OFFERTORY MUSIC

Hilariter

played by Tim Howard

*The whole bright world rejoices now, Hilariter, hilariter;  
 The birds do sing on every bough Alleluya, alleluya.  
 Then shout beneath the racing skies, Hilariter, hilariter;  
 To him who rose that we might rise, Alleluya, alleluya.  
 And all you living things make praise, Hilariter, hilariter;  
 He guideth you on all your ways, Alleluya, alleluya.  
 He, Father, Son and Holy Ghost-Hilariter, hilariter!*

*Our God most high, our joy and boast, Alleluya, alleluya.*

German, 1623

THE OFFERTORY GIFTS WILL BE PRESENTED BY

Carolyn O.  
Christina C.

GREAT THANKSGIVING *Standing.*

Ed Bacon

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.  
People: And with thy spirit.  
Celebrant: Lift up your hearts.  
People: We lift them up unto the Lord.  
Celebrant: Let us give thanks unto our Lord God.  
People: It is meet and right so to do.

Celebrant: It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty that we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto thee, O Lord, holy Father, almighty, everliving God.

Therefore, with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious name, evermore praising thee and saying,

People: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts:  
Heaven and earth are full of thy glory.  
Glory be to thee, O Lord Most High.  
Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

CONSECRATION *Kneeling.*

Celebrant: All glory be to thee, Almighty God, our heavenly Father, for that thou, of thy tender mercy, didst give thine only son, Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption; who made, therefore, by his one oblation of himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world; and did institute, and in his holy Gospel, command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that his precious death and sacrifice, until his coming again.

For in the night in which he was betrayed, he took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take, eat, this is my Body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Likewise, after supper, he took the cup; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "This is my Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins. Do this, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me."

Wherefore, O Lord and heavenly Father, according to the institution of thy dearly beloved Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, we, thy humble servants, do celebrate and make here before thy divine Majesty, with these thy holy gifts, which we now offer unto thee, the memorial thy Son hath commanded us to make; having in remembrance his blessed passion and precious death, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension; rendering unto thee most humble and hearty thanks for the innumerable benefits procured unto us by the same.

And we humbly beseech thee, O merciful Father, to hear us; and, of thy almighty goodness, vouchsafe to bless and sanctify, with thy Word and Holy Spirit, these thy gifts and creatures of bread and wine; that we, receiving them according to thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, may be partakers of his most blessed Body and Blood.

And we earnestly desire thy fatherly goodness mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; most humbly beseeching thee to grant that, by the merits and death of thy Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, we, and all thy whole Church, may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of his passion.

And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, our selves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy and living sacrifice unto thee; humbly beseeching thee that we, and all others who shall be partakers of this Holy Communion, may worthily receive the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son Jesus Christ, be filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction, and made one body with him, that he may dwell in us and we in him.



THE RECESSIONAL

Toccata (from Symphony V)

Charles Marie Widor (1844-1937)

*The Congregation as a group follows the clergy, Carole and Deborah out of the church.*