Church of the Covenant

Boston, MA

Second Sunday in Advent: PEACE

December 7, 2025

Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ

Church of the Covenant
Second Sunday in Advent: PEACE
December 7, 2025 10:30 am Zoom Link

Welcome and thank you for worshipping together for this "hybrid" service where some will be 67 Newbury Street, and some in the sanctuary of places far and near. For those joining online, we begin on Zoom at the above link. Please keep your mic muted during the service.
**You are invited to rise in body or spirit.*

Prelude *Variations on Savior of the Nations, Come* Hugo Distler

Welcome & Announcements

One: Peace be with you.
Many: And also with you.

Experiencing God

*** Call to Worship**

One: A voice calls—too much clutter, too much chaos. Prepare the way!
Many: Deck the halls, clean your room, light the candles, do justice.
One: Prepare the way!
Many: Sweep up hatred, make way for neighbor, welcome stranger.
One: Prepare the way!
Many: Make space within for peace to be born.
One: Christ is coming. Freedom is coming. Evil—you have been warned!
Many: Prepare the way!

*** Opening Hymn** PH (blue) 3 *Comfort, Comfort You My People*

Comfort, comfort you my people, tell of peace, thus says our God.
Comfort those who sit in darkness, bowed beneath oppression's load.
Speak you to Jerusalem of the peace that waits for them;
Tell them that their sins I cover, and their warfare now is over.

For the herald's voice is calling in the desert far and near,
Bidding us to make repentance since the kingdom now is here.
O that warning cry obey! Now prepare for God a way;
Let the valleys rise in meeting and the hills bow down in greeting.

Make you straight what long was crooked, make the rougher places plain;
Let your hearts be true and humble, as befits God's holy reign.
For the glory of the Lord now o'er earth is shed abroad;
And all flesh shall see the token that God's word is never broken.

Prayer for Grounding in God's Grace

Many: **Creator God—**
Not a day goes by when you do not invite us to be peacemakers and advocates,
Listeners and good Samaritans.
Not a day goes by when we are not asked to be a friend to a stranger
And a neighbor to those in need.
Not a day goes by when we are not asked to be the people you call us to be,
And yet, day after day, we lose sight of your hope for this world.
Forgive us for walking a different path,
And grant us the strength to prepare a new way—
***Your* way—here and now, we pray.**

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

Listening to God in Silent Prayer

Assurance of God's Grace

One: Friends, hear this good news—comfort, comfort we God's people. We belong to God. In this belonging, a way is prepared for us. In this relationship of unconditional love, every disenfranchised valley is lifted up, every mountain and hill of adversity is made low, the uneven ground of inequality becomes level, and the rough places of fear are made plain and peaceful.
Therefore, let us celebrate together…

Many: **In Jesus Christ we are set free and made whole.**
Alleluia! Amen.

Lighting the Advent Candle of PEACE

One: The light of Christ,
Many: Thanks be to God!

*** Sung Response** NCH (black) 369 (verse 1) *Keep Your Lamps Trimmed and Burning*

Keep your lamps trimmed and burning, keep your lamps trimmed and burning,
Keep your lamps trimmed and burning, for this work's almost done.

Readings from Scripture

Hebrew Bible Reading – Isaiah 11:1-10

Then a shoot will come out from the stump of Jesse;
from Jesse's roots, a branch will blossom:
The spirit of God will rest on you—
a spirit of wisdom and understanding,
a spirit of counsel and strength,
a spirit of knowledge and reverence for God.
You will delight in following God, and you won't judge by appearances,
or make decisions by hearsay.
You will treat poor people with fairness
and will uphold the rights of the land's downtrodden.
With a single word you will strike down tyrants;
with your decrees you will put an end to evil ones.
Justice will be the belt around this your waist—
faithfulness will gird you up.

Then the wolf will dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard will lie down with the young goat;
the calf and the lion cub will graze together,
and a little child will lead them.
The cow will feed with the bear;
their young will lie down together.
The lion will eat hay like the ox.
The baby will play next to the den of the cobra,
and the toddler will dance over the viper's nest.
There will be no harm, no destruction anywhere in my holy mountain;
for as water fills the sea,
so the land will be filled with the knowledge of God.

Responsive Psalm – Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

One: Give rulers your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to a ruler's child.

**Many: May they judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice.**

One: May the mountains yield prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness.

**Many: May rulers defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor.**

One: May they live while the sun endures, and as long as the moon,
throughout all generations.

**Many: May they be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like
showers that water the earth.**

One: In their days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the
moon is no more.

**Many: Blessed be the HOLY ONE, the God of All the People, who
alone does wondrous things.**

One: Blessed be God's glorious name forever; may God's glory fill the
whole earth. Amen and Amen.

Gospel Reading – Matthew 3:1-12

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea,
proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is the
one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying
out in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord, make the paths straight.'"

Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist,
and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all
Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were
baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to
them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?
Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We
have Abraham and Sarah as our ancestors'; for I tell you, God is able from
these stones to raise up children to them. Even now the ax is lying at the root
of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and
thrown into the fire. I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is
more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

One: God is still speaking, the word of God,
Many: Thanks be to God.

Sung Response NCH (black) 369 (refrain) *Keep Your Lamps Trimmed and Burning*
Siblings, don't grow weary, siblings, don't grow weary,
Children, don't grow weary, for this work's almost done.

Sermon "How to End the ICE Age"

Call to Offering
Online Giving Option: http://www.cotcbos.org/give.html
Click on Give Now, then choose Pledges or Gifts-General

Offertory *Peace Like a River* arr. Fiona Lander

*** 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. x2

*** The Great Thanksgiving**

One: May God be with you!
Many: And also with you.
One: People of Advent, 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 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 Prayer of Jesus** (in unison)

Our God in heaven, holy is your name. Your reign come; your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil, for yours are the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

*** Responsive Breaking of the Bread**

One: During the week that our Lord was anointed by a woman,
and on the night he was betrayed by a friend,
he took bread and after giving thanks for it,
he broke it and gave it to the disciples, saying,

Many: "Take. Eat. This is my body, given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."

One: After the meal, in the same way, he took the cup, saying,

Many: "This is the cup of the common vine of the earth, a sign of the new covenant. As often as you drink of it, remember me."

One: These are the gifts of God for the people of God.

Sharing of the Bread & Cup

Post Communion Prayer

*** Closing Hymn** NCH (black) 109 *With Joy Draw Water*

With joy draw water from the spring; salvation's living well.
The Holy One is in your midst; glad praises sing and tell!

A shoot has sprung from Jesse's tree; of God the chosen One.
A branch of knowledge and of truth; a gift of love has come!

With love the poor will be received; the proud will turn aside;
And faithfulness will be a path, and righteousness the guide!

The wolf shall lie down with the lamb; the calf and lion play.
God's peace shall dwell within the land; a child shall show the way!

With joy draw water from the spring; salvation's living well.
The Holy One is in your midst; glad praises sing and tell!

*** Charge & Benediction**

*** Exchange of the Peace**

(Please exchange greetings of Christ's peace and repair.)

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.

Many: And also with you.

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Worship Participants

Preacher – Rev. Rob Mark
Minister of Music – Tom Handel
Liturgist – Rev. Joshua Lawrence Lazard
Lector – Faith Perry
Advent Candle Lighter – Linghua (Ciara) Zhang
Violinist – Anita Gram
Covenant Choir
Communion Servers – Mocky Day, Debbie Howland
Ushers – Anne Crane, Trisha Thompson
Digital Minister – Sandra May
Audio Visual Tech Team
Sexton – Jesús Vargas

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 welcome 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.

WELCOME CHILDREN & YOUTH!! Welcome to all children, youth, and families—those we know already and those who are here for the first time. 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. 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.

SACRED RECKONINGS SPIRITUAL EDUCATION SESSION. Join us TODAY after worship (in person in Bates Hall and online on Zoom) as our Sacred Reckonings Team offers as Spiritual Education session focused on the Ten Demandments. Please join us for a meaningful conversation.

COMMON ART AT OPEN NEWBURY. Today Newbury Street is closed for a one-time Open Newbury Holiday Stroll. In the afternoon our friends at common art (a project of common cathedral) will have a table displaying and selling pieces from artists affiliated with common art. Please stop by and support them if you can!

UPCOMING SUNDAY WORSHIP. Please join us each Sunday at 10:30 am as we come together in community to pray, sing, share celebrations and concerns, and hear God's still-speaking Word proclaimed in these hybrid (in person and on Zoom) services.

- December 14: Third Sunday in Advent, Rev. Joshua Lazard preaching, All-Church Potluck in Bates Hall After Worship
- December 21: Fourth Sunday in Advent, All-Ages Instant Christmas Pageant, Winter Solstice Celebration (in person only) at Arthur Fiedler Dock at 4:00 pm, Blue Christmas Service at Emmanuel Church at 6:00 pm
- December 24: Christmas Eve Candlelight Service of Lessons & Carols at 6:00 pm
- December 28: Christmas Carol Hymn Sing

SPECIAL OFFERING NEXT WEEK. We will be collecting the annual Christmas Joy/Christmas Fund offerings on **December 14**. Our two denominations, the Presbyterian Church USA and the United Church of Christ, use these offerings to provide grace, hope, and joy through financial relief to current and retired pastors, lay church leaders, and their families. The PCUSA offering additionally supports leadership development in communities of color.

ALL-CHURCH POTLUCK ON DECEMBER 14. Please join us for a meal and informal conversation after worship in Bates Hall next **Sunday, December 14**. Please bring a plant-based dish if you are able and come even if you can't bring any food!

QUEER BIBLE STUDY. Join us on **Monday, December 8, at 7:30 pm**, via Zoom, for the new Queer Bible Study co-hosted by several congregations in the Presbytery of Boston and New England GLOW. This month's theme is "Magnifinominon"! Readings: Luke 1:46-55, "Queerying Mary, Queerying Christmas" by Rev. Dr. Angela Yarber, "Mary Queer of Heaven" by Elle Dowd. Email Rev. Kate (*kate.carlisle@cotcbos.org*) for the Zoom link. Adults and older youth are welcome. If you don't get a chance to read the articles, please join us anyway!

OUR NEXT ALL-CHURCH READ. During the recent Solar Justice Sunday on November 23, Rev. Rob mentioned Bill McKibben's book *Here Comes the Sun*. Bill talks about the Solar Revolution and the spirituality of knowing that God will take care of us—the sun warming us every day. For the Christmas holidays—buy yourself the book or put it on your list. Or buy it as a gift for a family member or friend. We will find a time to share our reactions early in the New Year.

BIBLE STUDY WEDNESDAYS. Bible Study meets weekly on Wednesday mornings at 9:45 on Zoom. Having delved into the origin stories of Genesis, we are reading the book of Exodus, exploring how the Hebrew people became a nation and what their experience with God has to tell us about our own lives. If you would like more information or want to be on the list to get regular reminders and Zoom details, contact Jack Ammerman at *jwacooks@gmail.com*.

WEDNESDAY EVENING PRAYERS 6:00-6:30 PM. 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 (link also on *http://www.cotcbos.org*).

VIDEO CAMERAS/POSTING FULL SERVICE RECORDINGS. To best serve our diverse community and new worshippers, we livestream and record each service, including Celebrations & 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 (*cotcbos.org/worship-recordings*).

WEEKLY CALENDAR. Click here (cotcbos.org/calendar-of-events) to view the weekly calendar of events.

WEEK TWO:
BLUEBIRD OF PEACE

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 sticker.

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 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 restrooms. Please ask an usher to help you locate these resources.

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*. Note that your information goes only to our pastors and you will not be added to any email lists.

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!

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 marginalized, 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 as integral to our community. We maintain vital 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 our Commonwealth and both denominations to join couples of any sexual orientation in fully legal and holy marriage.

Covenant's sanctuary resides on the ancestral and unceded lands and waterways of the Massachusett people. We lament the pain of displacement, honor the ongoing work of repair, and give thanks for all past, present and future stewards of this sacred place.

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*
Venkatesh Balasubramanian, *Music Composition Fellow 2025-2026*
Soyoung Cho, *Childcare Provider*

CHURCH OFFICERS
Brian Bigler, *President of the Corporation*
Trudi Veldman, *Clerk of the Council*
Anita Gram, *Moderator of the Board of Deacons*
Faith Perry, *Treasurer*