

Church of the Covenant

Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ



on earth.

Sunday Worship
December 8, 2024
Second Sunday in Advent: PEACE



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December 8, 2024, 10:30 am [Zoom Link](#)

Welcome and thank you for worshipping together for this “hybrid” service where some will be in the sanctuary at 67 Newbury Street, and some in the sanctuary of places far and near. For those joining online, we begin on Zoom at the link above. Please keep your mic muted during the service.

**You are invited to rise in body or spirit.*

Prelude

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

Johannes Brahms

Welcome & Announcements

One: Peace be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

*** Call to Worship**

by Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

One: John the Baptist said, “Prepare the way.”

So family of faith, how do we prepare our *minds* for worship?

Many: **We silence the inner critic.**

We let go of busy thoughts.

We make space for God to speak.

One: How do we prepare our *hearts* for worship?

Many: **We bless all emotions.**

We feel what we feel.

We open ourselves up to be moved.

One: How do we prepare our *bodies* for worship?

Many: **We take in the scent, sight, and feel of this space.**

We breathe in God’s mercy. We exhale God’s love.

One: How do we prepare our *souls* for worship?

Many: **We bring our full selves into this space.**

We wear our hearts on our sleeves.

We trust that even now, God is here.

One: Family of faith, what we practice in worship, we must live out in our daily lives. So prepare the way. Let us worship Holy God.

Lighting the Advent Candle: Stories of PEACE

* 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

by Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

One: Holy God,
We wish that peace was something we could buy.
We wish that peace could be ordered in a subscription service, found
on a map, downloaded in an app, or voted for in a ballot.
We wish that peace was as easy as a one-time choice when we were
feeling our best. However, what we have found is that peace
involves everyday decisions over and over, whether or not we are
feeling our best.

Many: **So today we confess, in front of this community of faith, that
we need your help in this Advent season.
Prepare the way for greater peace, and teach us how to be a
part of it.**

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.**

* **Sung Response** PH (blue) 576

Gloria, Gloria

Gloria, Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Gloria, Gloria, alleluia, alleluia!

Scripture Readings

New Testament Reading – James 3:13-18

Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. And a harvest of justice is sown in peace for those who make peace.

Gospel Reading – Luke 3:1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make God’s paths straight.
Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth;
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin 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 Abraham and Sarah. Even now the axe 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.”

And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?” In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.” Even tax-collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?” He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?” He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people. But Herod the ruler, who had been rebuked by him because of Herodias, his brother’s wife, and because of all the evil things that Herod had done, added to them all by shutting up John in prison.

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

Sung Response PH (blue) 576
Gloria, Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, Gloria, alleluia, alleluia!

Gloria, Gloria

Sermon

“The Wages of Peace”

Call to Offering

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

Offertory

Dona Nobis Pacem

arr. Hal Hopson

*** Doxology**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God all creatures here below,
Praise God for all that love has done,
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One.

Tune: Old Hundredth

*** Prayer of Dedication**

Celebrations & Concerns

One: God, in your grace,
Many: **Receive our prayer.**

Pastoral Prayer

* Closing Hymn

I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

(please sing "all" instead of "men" at the end of each verse)

BIRTH

98 I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

And he will be their peace — Micah 5:5 NIV

1. I heard the bells on Christ - mas day Their
2. I thought how, as the day had come, The
3. And in de - spair I bowed my head: "There
4. Then pealed the bells more loud on and deep: "God
5. Till, ring - ing, sing - ing loud on its way, The

old fa - mil - iar car - ols play, And wild and sweet the
bel - fies of all Chris - ten - dom Had rolled a - long th'un -
is no peace on earth," I said, "For hate is strong, and
is not dead, nor doth He sleep; The wrong shall fail, the
world re - volved from night to day A voice, a chime, a

words re - peat Of peace on earth, good will to men.
bro - ken song Of peace on earth, good will to men.
mocks the song Of peace on earth, good will to men."
right pre - vail, With peace on earth, good will to men."
chant sub - lime, Of peace on earth, good will to men.

WORDS: Henry W. Longfellow, 1807-1882
MUSIC: John Calkin, 1827-1905

WALTHAM
8.8.8.8.(L.M.)

* Charge & Benediction

* Exchange of the Peace

(Please exchange greetings of Christ's peace and reconciliation)

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.

Many: And also with you.

Worship Participants

Preacher – Rev. Rob Mark

Minister of Music – Tom Handel

Liturgist – Betty Southwick

Lector – Jon Schwarz

Advent Candle Lighter – Donald Denniston

Covenant Choir

Usher – Holly Humphreys

Digital Minister – Trudi Veldman

Audio Visual Tech Team – Venkatesh Balasubramanian, Jon Schwarz

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 welcomed 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.

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.



COVER ART. EJ Huston (she/they) is a Seattle-based artist and licensed mental health counselor. Their collage and digital work addresses themes of love, liberation, queerness, decolonization, and disability justice. Instagram: @ejheart. Website: ejheart.com.

CYCE THIS WEEK LOCATION CHANGE/NO ACCESS TO BATES HALL! Due to some urgent building maintenance, Bates Hall is not accessible to anyone today. CYCE will welcome young ones for nursery care and activities upstairs in the Williams Library. Let Rev. Kate know (kate.carlisle@cotcbos.org) if you have questions, or find an usher to point the way. Thanks for your flexibility!

MISSIONAL PLAN VISIONING AFTER WORSHIP TODAY. Join us for our final all-church 2025-2030 Missional Plan Visioning session after worship today, in the sanctuary and online. Following this session, we trust a finalized missional plan will be brought to the congregation for approval at the annual meeting on February 2, 2025.

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.

UPCOMING WORSHIP. Please join us each Sunday at 10:30 am and during the special services listed below as we come together in community to pray, sing, share celebrations and concerns, and hear God's still-speaking Word proclaimed in these hybrid services (in-person and Zoom options). [Zoom Link for each service.](#)

- Sunday, December 15: Third Sunday in Advent-JOY, All-Ages, Instant Christmas Pageant, Holy Communion, Festive All-Church Potluck After Worship, Climate Jubilee All-Church Read After Potluck
- Friday, December 20: Winter Solstice Evensong, 4:00 pm, Arthur Fiedler Dock
- Saturday, December 21: Ecumenical Blue Christmas Service, 7:30 pm, Emmanuel Episcopal Church, 15 Newbury Street
- Sunday, December 22: Fourth Sunday in Advent-LOVE, Rev. Rob Mark preaching, Reception of New Members
- Wednesday, December 24: Christmas Eve, 6:00 pm, Lessons & Carols
- Sunday, December 29: ZOOM ONLY, Christmas Carol Sing

ALL-CHURCH READ NEXT WEEK. Please join a hybrid discussion of the book *Jesus for Farmers and Fishers: Justice for All Those Marginalized by Our Food System* by Gary Paul Nabhan, after the festive all-church potluck next **Sunday, December 15.**

NEW MEMBER'S JOINING SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22. If you are new to our community, or have been around a good while and have not yet become a member, we would love you to consider it! There is still time to get this ball rolling so you can join those who are joining the church during worship on **Sunday, December 22**, on the fourth Sunday in Advent where we focus on LOVE. Contact Rev. Rob if you are interested or have any questions: pastor@cotcbos.org.

PARENTS' DAY OUT DECEMBER 22. On **Sunday, December 22**, following worship, CYCE is holding a Parents' Day Out for families. This is a chance for parents and guardians to spend a couple of hours after worship at your leisure—whether you want to go for a quiet walk, go shopping, or get brunch as a group. We'll have lunch and activities planned for kids in the nursery and Bates Hall. If you'd like to participate in this, or if you have questions, email Rev. Kate at kate.carlisle@cotcbos.org. Please RSVP no later than Thursday, December 19.

BIBLE STUDY WEDNESDAYS. Our weekly Bible Study meets on Wednesday mornings at 9:45 on Zoom. We are studying the book of Acts, exploring the movement of the Christian community throughout the Jewish, Greek, and Roman worlds. 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](https://www.cotcbos.org) (link 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](http://cotcbos.org/worship-recordings) (cotcbos.org/worship-recordings).

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

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 voucher.

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 after going outside the sanctuary 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.



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 Massachusetts 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*

Alan Lane, *Food Cupboard Coordinator*

Venkatesh Balasubramanian, *Digital Communications & Audio Visual Tech Manager*

Soyoung Cho, *Childcare Provider*

CHURCH OFFICERS

Kathryn Barry, *President of the Corporation*

Trudi Veldman, *Clerk of the Council*

Jon Schwarz, *Moderator of the Board of Deacons*

Faith Perry, *Treasurer*