

# Church of the Covenant

## Boston, MA



on earth.

**December 10, 2023**  
**Second Sunday of Advent: PEACE**

*Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ*

[\*\*ZOOM LINK \(click here\)\*\*](#)



**Church of the Covenant**  
**Second Sunday of Advent**  
**PEACE**

December 10, 2023, 10:30 am

[Zoom Link](#)

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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 above link. Please keep your mic muted during the service.

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

**Prelude**

*Peace, Piece*

Bill Evans

**Welcome & Announcements**

One: Peace be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

**\* Call to Worship**

Isaiah 40:1-11

One: Comfort, O comfort my people,  
says your God.

Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and cry to her

that she has served her term,  
that her penalty is paid,  
that she has received from God's hand  
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:

Many: **“In the wilderness prepare the way of the HOLY ONE,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.**

**Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.**

**Then the glory of GOD shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”**

One: A voice says, "Cry out!"  
 And I said, "What shall I cry?"  
 All people are grass,  
 their constancy is like the flower of the field.  
 The grass withers, the flower fades,  
 when the breath of the HOLY ONE blows upon it;  
 surely the people are grass.  
 The grass withers, the flower fades;  
 but the word of our God will stand forever.

Many: **Get you up to a high mountain,  
 O Zion, herald of good tidings;  
 lift up your voice with strength,  
 O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,  
 lift it up, do not fear;  
 say to the cities of Judah,  
 "Here is your God!"  
 See, GOD comes with might,  
 and her arm rules;  
 her reward is with her,  
 with recompense before her.  
 She will feed her flock like a shepherd;  
 she will gather the lambs in her arms,  
 and carry them in her bosom,  
 and gently lead the mother sheep.**

## **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**

*Prayer by Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | [sanctifiedart.org](http://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!

## Readings from Scripture

**Gospel Reading** – Mark 13:24-37

Jesus said, "In those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Child of Humanity coming in clouds' with great power and glory."

**Gospel Reading** – Luke 1:24-45

After those days Zechariah's wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she remained in seclusion. She said, "This is what God has done for me after looking favorably on me and taking away the disgrace I have endured among my people."

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Holy One is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Child of the Most High, and God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The

Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Child of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.” Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my God comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leapt for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Holy One.”

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

## Taizé Chant

*Come and Fill Our Hearts with Your Peace*

♩ = 66

Con - fi - te - mi - ni Do - mi - no quo - ni - am bo - nus.  
Come and fill our hearts with your peace. You a - lone, O Lord, are ho - ly.

Con - fi - te - mi - ni Do - mi - no, al - le - lu - ia!  
Come and fill our hearts with your peace, al - le - lu - ia!

## Sermon

“Phase Out or Peace Out?”

## Taizé Chant

My peace I leave you, my peace I give you:  
trou - ble not your hearts. My peace I leave you, my  
peace I give you: Be not a - fraid. My

**Moment for Mission:** Christmas Joy/Christmas Fund Special Offering

## Call to Offering

Online Giving Option: <http://www.cotcbos.org/give.html>

*Click on Give Now, then choose Pledges or Gifts-General.*

## Offertory

*Dona Nobis Pacem*

arr. Hal Hopson

## \* Doxology

*Tune: Old Hundredth*

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.

## \* Prayer of Dedication

## Concerns & Celebrations

## Pastoral Prayer

### \* Closing Hymn PH (blue) 5 (verses 1 & 3)

*Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence*

Let all mortal flesh keep silence,  
And with fear and trembling stand;  
Ponder nothing earthly minded,  
For with blessing in His hand,  
Christ our God to earth descendeth,  
Our full homage to demand.

Rank on rank the host of heaven  
Spreads its vanguard on the way,  
As the Light of Light descendeth  
From the realms of endless day,  
That the powers of hell may vanish  
As the darkness clears away.

### \* Charge and Benediction

One: We are looking for God in our world.

**Many: May we see what God wants us to see.**

One: We are looking for God in our lives.

**Many: May we be who God wants us to be.**

One: And may God our Shepherd, Awakener, and Protector,

**Many: Bless us through these Advent days. Amen.**

### \* 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.**

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## **Worship Participants**

**Preacher** – Rev. Rob Mark

**Minister of Music** – Tom Handel

**Liturgist** – Tim Groves

**Lector** – Dan Evans

**Advent Candle Lighters** – Jack & Nancy Ammerman

**Covenant Choir**

**Ushers** – Anne Crane, Denice Thornhill

**Digital Minister** – Diane Lauber

**Audio Visual Tech Team** – Venkatesh Balasubramanian, Derek Holbrook

**Sunday Sexton** – Jesús Vargas

**Cover Art** – EJ Huston

**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](https://www.cotcbos.org).



**CHRISTMAS JOY/CHRISTMAS FUND SPECIAL OFFERING.** Today the Christmas Joy/Christmas Fund offering will be collected. Our two denominations, the Presbyterian Church USA and the United Church of Christ, both 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 also supports leadership development in communities of color. You can place cash or a check in the envelope in your bulletin, mail a check to the church, or donate online at <https://www.cotcbos.org/give.html>. Your Mission and Advocacy Committee hopes you will give generously!

**HOLDING SACRED SPACE.** As a follow-up to our wonderful church retreat, we welcome you to join us in Bates Hall (in the room past the piano) following worship today **December 10** to continue any conversations, insights, and visions you may have.

**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](http://ejheart.com).

**ALL-AGES ADVENT WORSHIP WITH INSTANT PAGEANT NEXT WEEK!** Everyone is invited to our Advent All-Ages Worship on **Sunday, December 17**. The young ones in our congregation will lead, inviting people of all ages into the familiar Christmas story as we put on our annual Instant Christmas Pageant! No lines or rehearsals needed, but we need plenty of folks willing to wear costumes and participate! Families with kids and youth will meet in the nursery, and other adults are welcome to grab a costume before worship in the back of the sanctuary. No advance preparation is required, though families who know they will be here are encouraged to let Rev. Kate know: [kate.carlisle@cotcbos.org](mailto:kate.carlisle@cotcbos.org).

**UPCOMING 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 services (in-person and Zoom options). [Zoom Link for each service](#).

- Sunday, December 17, All-Ages Worship, Instant Christmas Pageant
- Sunday, December 24: 10:30 am: Zoom-only worship; 5:00 pm: hybrid service of Lessons & Carols
- Sunday, December 31: Christmas Hymn Sing

**KAY CARLETON MEMORIAL SERVICE.** We will remember our beloved "angel" Kay Carleton and celebrate her life at a memorial service in the Covenant sanctuary on **Saturday, December 16, at 1:00 pm**. There will be an opportunity to participate virtually, with details available closer to December 16 on the website at <http://www.cotcbos.org/this-sunday-online>.

**LIFE ALIVE BRUNCH.** Our Life Alive young adult group will meet after worship on **Sunday, December 17**, to eat brunch and share fellowship together. If you have any questions or would like to join us, please email Rev. Joshua at [joshua.lazard@cotcbos.org](mailto:joshua.lazard@cotcbos.org).

**WINTER SOLSTICE EVENSONG.** **Thursday, December 21, 4:00 pm**, Arthur Fiedler Dock, Esplanade. Join us snow, rain, sleet, or shine! We will gather outside in the blessed cold of nature and the warmth of community to observe together the sacred setting of the sun with holy words and silence. Invite a friend!

**BLUE CHRISTMAS/LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE.** **Thursday, December 21, 7:30 pm**, Emmanuel Church, 15 Newbury Street. For many, this time of year is hard. Join us to face and lift the loneliness, longing, and roughness of this season to God in community and worship.

**CHRISTIANS IN PALESTINE.** **Tuesday, December 12, 5:00 pm.** Join the Massachusetts Council of Church's invitation to join in prayerful solidarity with Palestinian Christians at Hellenic College (in Jamaica Plain) for vespers at 5:00 pm followed by a panel discussion at 6:30 pm. RSVP here: <https://huffingtoninstitute.hchc.edu/event/the-christians-of-palestine/>.

**CEASEFIRE SOLIDARITY.** **Saturday December 16, 10:00 am-12 noon**, we are invited to join a teach-in and vigil hosted at St. Paul's Cathedral off the Common about how as Christians we can help build power towards an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, remembering that for many this year, Christmas is being cancelled. For more information, email Rev. Rob: [pastor@cotcbos.org](mailto:pastor@cotcbos.org).

**FREE COVID TESTS.** As the winter viral-spreading season is once again upon us, we want to help you stay healthy and safe. To this end, we have received free COVID rapid tests from the Commonwealth that we want to distribute to all in our community and beyond to help reduce the spread this year. For all of Advent, as long as our supply remains, we will have a table at the back of the sanctuary with free COVID tests. Please take a few for your household and share with neighbors and friends, with a special focus on anyone who might find it hard to obtain tests.

**WELCOME CHILDREN & YOUTH!!** We welcome 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. We meet downstairs in Bates Hall. 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](mailto:kate.carlisle@cotcbos.org) if you want to receive updates!

**BIBLE STUDY WEDNESDAY MORNINGS.** Our weekly Bible Study meets on Wednesdays at 9:45 am on Zoom. We are studying the book of Isaiah. If you'd like more information or want to be on the list to get regular reminders and Zoom info, contact Jan Gough at [revjangough@gmail.com](mailto:revjangough@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 on [cotcbos.org](http://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 and 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](http://cotcbos.org/worship-recordings)).

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



*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!*





*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](http://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](mailto: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 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. for the first (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 rest rooms. 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](http://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 outcasts, 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, and we strive to include them in our ministry. We maintain 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 the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the United Church of Christ and the Presbyterian Church USA to join couples of all sexual orientations in fully legal and holy marriage.

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, *Sunday Sexton*  
Alan Lane, *Food Cupboard Coordinator*  
Kelsie Lawhorn, *Child Care Provider*  
Venkatesh Balasubramanian, *Digital Communications & Audio Visual Tech Manager*

**CHURCH OFFICERS**

Liz Vizza, *President of the Corporation*  
Trudi Veldman, *Clerk of the Council*  
Anita Gram, *Moderator of Board of Deacons*  
Faith Perry, *Treasurer*