

Church of the Covenant

Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ



December 15, 2024

Third Sunday in Advent: JOY

All-Ages Worship, Instant Christmas Pageant



Church of the Covenant
All-Ages Sunday Worship
Third Sunday in Advent: JOY
Instant Christmas Pageant
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. We will not be passing the microphone during Celebrations & Concerns today. If you have a particular prayer request, please write it in the Red Book or the Zoom chat.

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

Prelude

Skating

Vince Guaraldi

Welcome & Announcements

One: Peace be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

*** Call to Worship**

One: Today we’re going to tell a story you might have heard before.

Many: **It’s still Advent, and we’re still waiting.**

One: While we prepare our hearts for Christmas, we tell and re-tell about the time God-with-us showed up in the world as a baby.

Many: **With Mary and Joseph, we say “yes” to God’s invitation.**

One: With the innkeepers and animals, we make room for the ones who have no place to sleep.

Many: **With the shepherds, we’re a little bit afraid.**

One: With the angels, we sing “Glory to God in the highest!”

Many: **With all creation, we wait in hope, peace, and joy.**
We wait for Love to arrive.

Lighting the Advent Candle: Stories of JOY

* **Opening Hymn** PH (blue) 14

Savior of the Nations, Come

Savior of the nations, come; Virgin's Son, here make Your home.
Marvel now, O heaven and earth, That the Lord chose such a birth.

From the Godhead forth You came, And return unto the same,
Captive leading death and hell. High the song of triumph swell!

You, the chosen Holy One, Have o'er sin the victory won.
Boundless shall Your kingdom be; When shall we its glories see?

Brightly does Your manger shine, Glorious is its light divine.
Let not sin o'er-cloud this light; Ever be our faith thus bright.

Prayer for Grounding in God's Grace

One: In this season of Advent, we are called to wait. But waiting is hard. We expect things right away. Life is overwhelming. We are very busy, and there is so much to do! Let us take a moment to pray to the Eternal One.

Many: Slow us down, O God. Help us listen to the good news of this season. Help us to be patient with one another, and ourselves. Help us to be open to Jesus coming into the world in surprising ways. Help us to be open to Joy that changes the world.

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

Listening to God in Silent Prayer

Assurance of God's Grace

One: Out of eternity, Jesus was born in an unlikely time and place. Into every place, Jesus comes again, right on time. In a busy, scared, despairing world, Jesus is Emmanuel, God-with-us, here and now. 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

Hebrew Bible Reading – Isaiah 12:2-5

“You are my deliverer, O God!

I trust you and am no longer afraid of you—

You are my strength and my refuge.

You are my deliverer.”

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

And on that Day you will say:

“Give thanks to Adonai, invoke God’s holy Name!

Make known among all the people what Adonai has done.

Proclaim that God’s Name is exalted.

Sing praises to Adonai, for God has triumphed.

Let this be know throughout the world!”

New Testament Reading – Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

One: God is still speaking, the word of God,

Many: **Thanks be to God.**

Sung Response PH (blue) 576

Gloria, Gloria

Gloria, Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Gloria, Gloria, alleluia, alleluia!

Instant Christmas Pageant

This pageant is adapted from “Andover Newton Christmas Pageant Extravaganza” by Prof. Adam Hearlson, lovingly ripped off by Rev. Adam Isbitsky, with permission.

Folks of all ages are invited to find a costume, prop, or accessory at the back of the Sanctuary, taking on any of the roles in the Christmas story. Please come forward when called by the narrators.

Sung Response during Pageant PH (blue) 29

Go, Tell It on the Mountain

Refrain: Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere;
Go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!

Verse 1: While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,
Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light.

Verse 2: The shepherds feared and trembled when lo! above the earth,
Rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's birth.

Verse 3: Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born,
And God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn.

Moment for Mission – Christmas Joy/Christmas Fund Special Offering

Call to Offering

Online Giving Option: www.cotcbos.org/give

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

Offertory

From Heaven Above to Earth I Come

William Albright

*** 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

* Communion Hymn

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.

I'm gonna eat at the welcome table,

I'm gonna eat at the welcome table, some of these days.

* 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 and earth, 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.

Sharing of the Bread and Cup

Post Communion Prayer

*** Closing Hymn PH (blue) 40**

Joy to the World

Joy to the world, the Lord is come: Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room, And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing, And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the world, the Savior reigns: Let us our songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow, Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found, Far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace, And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness, And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love, And wonders, wonders, of His love.

*** 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

Worship Leaders – Children & youth of COTC, CYCE teachers, Rev. Kate Carlisle, Rev. Joshua Lawrence Lazard, Rev. Rob Mark

Minister of Music – Tom Handel

Advent Candle Lighters – Chris Gilrein, Trisha Thompson, Margaret Gilrein

Moment for Mission – Christine James

Covenant Choir

Communion Servers – Kathryn Barry, Anne Crane

Ushers – Trisha Thompson, Denice Thornhill

Digital Minister – Diane Lauber

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.

WELCOME CHILDREN & YOUTH!! Welcome to all children, youth, and families—those we know already and those who are here for the first time. Today all children are especially invited to participate in the Instant Christmas Pageant. 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.

FESTIVE ALL-CHURCH POTLUCK TODAY! Please stay after worship for a festive, plant-based potluck downstairs in Bates Hall today. All are welcome, whether you brought food or not!

ALL-CHURCH READ TODAY. 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 today.

PARENTS' DAY OUT NEXT SUNDAY. Next **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.

NEW MEMBER'S JOINING NEXT WEEK. 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 join those who are joining the church during worship on **Sunday, December 22**. Contact Rev. Rob if you are interested or have any questions: pastor@cotcbos.org.

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](#).

- Friday, December 20: Winter Solstice Evensong, 4:00 pm, Arthur Fiedler Dock (in person only)
- Saturday, December 21: Ecumenical Blue Christmas Service, 6:00 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

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](#) (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](#) (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.

“...THE
GLORY OF
GOD SHONE
AROUND THEM...”

LUKE 2:9



Donate to The Christmas Fund

Your care and compassion will make a tangible difference in the lives of our ministers, church workers, and their families in need.



www.christmasfund.org



The Pension Boards
United Church of Christ, Inc.

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. A weekend discount is also available for longer periods: \$10 for up to eleven (11) hours. Parking voucher available at this link: <https://tinyurl.com/cotcsundayparking>

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*