

Church of the Covenant

Boston, MA



December 17, 2023
Third Sunday of Advent: JOY
All-Ages Worship, Instant Christmas Pageant

Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ

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



Church of the Covenant
Third Sunday of Advent
JOY

All-Ages Worship
Instant Christmas Pageant
December 17, 2023, 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 above link. Please keep your mic muted during the service.

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

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

One: Peace be with you.

Many: And also with you.

*** Call to Worship**

From *A Wee Worship Book* | Wild Goose Worship Group

One: Among the poor, among the proud,
among the persecuted, among the privileged,

Many: **Christ is coming to make all things new.**

One: In the private house, in the public place,
in the wedding feast, in the judgment hall,

Many: **Christ is coming to make all things new.**

One: With a gentle touch, with an angry word,
with a clear conscience, with a burning love,

Many: **Christ is coming to make all things new.**

One: That the kingdom might come, that the world might believe,
that the powerful might stumble, that the hidden might be seen,

Many: **Christ is coming to make all things new.**

One: Within us, without us, behind us, before us,
in this place, in every place, for this time, for all time,

Many: **Christ is coming to make all things new.**

Lighting the Advent Candle: Stories of JOY

* Opening Hymn

JESUS CHRIST: ADVENT

100 My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout Canticle of the Turning

1 My soul cries out with a joy - ful shout that the
 2 Though I am small, my God, my all, you
 3 From the halls of power to the for - tress tower, not a
 4 Though the na - tions rage from age to age, we re -

God of my heart is great, and my spir - it sings of the
 work great things in me, and your mer - cy will last from the
 stone will be left on stone. Let the king be - ware for your
 mem - ber who holds us fast: God's mer - cy must de -

won - drous things that you bring to the ones who wait.
 depths of the past to the end of the age to be.
 jus - tice tears ev - ery ty - rant from his throne.
 liv - er us from the con - quer - or's crush - ing grasp.

You fixed your sight on your ser - vant's plight, and my
 Your ver - y name puts the proud to shame, and to
 The hun - gry poor shall weep no more, for the
 This sav - ing word that our fore - bears heard is the

weak - ness you did not spurn, so from east to west shall my
 those who would for you yearn, you will show your might, put the
 food they can nev - er earn; there are ta - bles spread; ev - ery
 prom - ise which holds us bound, till the spear and rod can be

By employing an energetic Irish folk song for its melody, this ballad-like paraphrase of the *Magnificat*, Mary's song at her meeting with her relative Elizabeth (Luke 1:46-55), recaptures both the wonder and the faith of the young woman who first recognized what God was doing.

JESUS CHRIST: ADVENT



Prayer for Grounding in God's Grace

Many: God of all time and space, we need you here and now. All creation cries out for justice and healing. Your children long for peace. The sadness in the world seems so big, and evil seems so strong. Sometimes the magic of Christmas and the hope of the Christ Child seem really far away. Come into our world with comfort and reconciliation. Send joy that buoys the heaviest hearts. Let us be reborn in Love.

One: Let us now listen to God in silent prayer...

Listening to God in Silent Prayer

Assurance of God's Grace

by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

One: We could play hard and fast,
not let anything touch us at all,
keep composure,
have all the answers.
Or we could crack ourselves open
and let everything in.
We could feel everything,
every touch, every marvel.
We could stand gaping
at the beauty of the world,
mouths wide open (because sometimes
a mouth wide open is the very best gratitude).
We could laugh so loudly
that the whole restaurant looks,
and err on the side of goofy
whenever possible.
We could put our defenses down.
We could grow soft.
We could choose awe.
We could take her by the arm.
We could let her lead us all the way to joy.
Friends, with awe and joy we proclaim Emmanuel!

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

New Testament Reading – 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.

May the God of peace sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

New Testament Reading – Matthew 1:18-23

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.”

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

Many: **Thanks be to God.**

Sung Response

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 in 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.

Call to Offering

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

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

Offertory

Joy to the World

arr. John Rutter

* 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

Concerns & Celebrations

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 Covenant, let us lift up our hearts!

Many: We open our hearts to God 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 the One who loves us.

One: It is right for us to thank and praise you God...
...And so, with your people here on earth, with all the ancestors,
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**

(from *A New Zealand Prayer Book*)

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver, Source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven: The hallowing of your name echo through the universe! The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world! Your heavenly will be done by all created beings! Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth. With the bread we need for today, feed us. In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and testing, strengthen us. From trials too great to endure, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us. For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. Amen.

*** Breaking of the Bread and Sharing of the Cup**

You are invited to come forward to receive the bread and cup and then return to your seat where we will be invited to eat and drink together.

Post Communion Prayer

*** Closing Hymn NCH (black) 107**

Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn

Awake! Awake, and greet the new morn, for angels herald its dawning,
Sing out your joy, for Jesus is born, behold! The Child of our longing.
Come as a baby weak and poor, to bring all hearts together,
To open wide the heavenly door, and lives now inside us forever.

To us, to all in sorrow and fear, Emmanuel comes a-singing,
Whose humble song is quiet and near, yet fills the earth with its ringing.
Music to heal the broken soul and hymns of loving kindness,
The thunder of the anthems roll to shatter all hate and injustice.

In deepest night Christ's coming shall be, when all the world is despairing,
As morning light so quiet and free, so warm and gentle and caring.
One without voice breaks forth in song, a lame one leaps in wonder,
The weak are raised above the strong, and weapons are broken asunder.

Rejoice, rejoice, take heart in the night, though cold the winter and cheerless,
The rising sun shall crown you with light, be strong and loving and fearless;
Love be our song and love our prayer and love, our endless story,
May God fill every day we share, and bring us at last into glory.

*** Charge and 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 – Kathy & Alicia Bull

Guitar – Joseph Jewett

Violin – Evans Naquin

Covenant Choir

Ushers – Anne Crane, Denice Thornhill

Communion Servers – Tim Groves, Debbie Howland, Sally Pomeroy

Digital Minister – Trudi Veldman

Audio Visual Tech Team – Venkatesh Balasubramanian, Jon Schwarz

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.



LIFE ALIVE BRUNCH. Our Life Alive young adult group will meet after worship today, **Sunday, December 17**, to eat brunch and share fellowship together. If you have any questions or would like to join us, please see Rev. Joshua.

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.

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.

WELCOME CHILDREN & YOUTH!! We welcome all children, youth, and families—those we know already and those who are here for the first time. We especially encourage kids and youth of all ages to remain in worship today for our all-ages worship, though the nursery remains open. 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 if you want to receive updates!

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

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.

ANNUAL REPORTS ARE DUE JANUARY 15, 2024! Please submit your 2023 annual reports for committees and staff members to our Parish Administrator, Nancy Stockford, at nancy.stockford@cotcbos.org. Please create each report in a Word document using Garamond 11-point font with the title (committee or staff member name) centered at the top. Each report's author(s) should be provided at the bottom. Deadline: no later than noon on Monday, January 15, 2024. Thank you!

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.

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).

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).

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

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA MEMORIALS

The following congregants have generously donated our sanctuary poinsettias in memory and honor of chosen loved ones identified below:



- **In Memory of my parents Jeannette and Anthony Gratto** by Christine Gratto
- **In Memory of Neva, John R., John W., and Carolyn Humphreys** by Anita Gram & Holly Humphreys
- **In Memory of Marge and Bernard Gram** by Anita Gram & Holly Humphreys
- **In Memory of Phil, Barbara, and Sonia Mink** by Sierra Mink
- **In Memory of Adrienne Cupples** by John Cupples
- **In Memory of The Wright Family - Joyce, Earl, Pam** by Sharon Wright
- **In Memory of Kay Olm** by Debbie Howland
- **In Honor of Rev. Rob Mark & Becky Evans** by Roger & Dottie Mark
- **In Memory of Abe and Mies Veldman** by Trudi Veldman
- **In Memory of Newell Hendricks** by Barbara Englesberg, Clara Hendricks, and Jake Carman
- **In Memory of Ted Goodfleisch** by Barbara Darling
- **In Memory of Peter Benn** by Marsha Baker & Harry Forsdick
- **In Memory of Marcia Perry** by Faith Perry & Lucy Williams
- **In Memory of Bobby Dusek** by Faith Perry & Lucy Williams
- **In Memory of Grammy's Jean, Jane, Marge, Mark, and McKay** by the Evans and Mark Families
- **In Memory of Anthony and Margaret Gratto** by Sandra Gratto May
- **In Memory of Richard Sipe and recently lost family members** by Byron Sipe
- **In Memory of Deanne Clark (Denniston)** by Donald E. Denniston & Dean K. Denniston, Jr.
- **In Memory of Bob** by Stan Dingwell

*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. 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, email us at info@cotcbos.org, or visit this QR code:



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 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

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*