

Church of the Covenant

Boston, MA



for all

December 24, 2023
Fourth Sunday of Advent: LOVE

Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ

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



Church of the Covenant

Fourth Sunday of Advent

LOVE

December 24, 2023, 10:30 am

[Zoom Link](#)

Welcome and thank you for worshipping together for this Zoom service where we will be joining each other from many different sacred spaces. After the initial time of greeting, please keep your mic muted during the service unless otherwise invited. The full service is recorded and later posted online. If you would like to share a prayer of Celebration or Concern you will be invited to place a prayer in the chat and we will share aloud.

Prelude

Wachet Auf!

J. S. Bach

Welcome & Announcements

One: Peace be with you.

Many: And also with you.

A Word from Our Advent Artist

* Call to Worship

One: As we come to the end of Advent,

Many: **We wait for Love to arrive.**

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 LOVE

*** Opening Hymn PH (blue) 12**

People, Look East

People, look east. The time is near of the crowning of the year.
Make your house fair as you are able, trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look east and sing today: Love the guest is on the way.

Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare, one more seed is planted there:
Give up your strength the seed to nourish, that in time the flower may flourish.
People, look east and sing today: Love the rose is on the way.

Birds, though you long have ceased to build, guard the nest that must be filled.
Even the hour when wings are frozen God for fledging time has chosen.
People, look east and sing today: Love the bird is on the way.

Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim, one more light the bowl shall brim,
Shining beyond the frosty weather, bright as moon and stars together.
People, look east and sing today: Love the star is on the way.

Angels, announce with shouts of mirth Christ who brings new life to earth.
Set every peak and valley humming with the news, the Lord is coming.
People, look east and sing today: Love the Lord is on the way.

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 struggle in a world of violence and oppression. The grief of the world and the power of evil seem so big. Sometimes the magic of Christmas and the hope of the Christ Child seem really far away. Come into our world with comfort and reconciliation. 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

One: Friends, when night is longest, a new light dawns. God will give us a sign. Look, the young woman is with child. She shall name her baby Emmanuel, God with us.

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!

Reading from Scripture

Gospel Reading – Luke 1:46-58

And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies you Holy God,

and my spirit rejoices in you my Savior,

for you have looked with favor on the lowliness of a servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

for you, O Mighty One, have done great things for me,

and holy is your name.

Your mercy is for those who fear you

from generation to generation.

You have shown strength with your arm;

you have scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

You have brought down the powerful from their thrones,

and lifted up the lowly;

You have filled the hungry with good things,

and sent the rich away empty.

You have helped your servant Israel,

in remembrance of your mercy,

according to the promise you made to our ancestors,

to Abraham, Sarah, Hagar and to all descendants forever.”

And Mary remained with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned to her home.

Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Holy One had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

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

Call to Offering

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

Offertory

Skating

Vince Guaraldi

*** 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

*** 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 – Rev. Rob Mark, Rev. Joshua Lawrence Lazard

Minister of Music – Tom Handel

Lector – Sarah Perreault

Advent Candle Lighter – Christine James

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 our Digital Minister in the chat.

CHRISTMAS EVE TONIGHT! Don't forget to bring your own crèche figures, although extras will be available at the back of the sanctuary, and bells for singing the last verse of *Joy to World*. Don't forget to take your crèche figures home with you! For those worshipping online, please gather those items before the service starts at 5:00 pm.

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!! We welcome all children, youth, and families—those we know already and those who are here for the first time. On regular Sundays, we offer Christian education through Godly Play for ages 3-9 and youth classes for ages 10-13 and 14+, and a nursery for the littlest ones. 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: 5:00 pm: hybrid service of Lessons & Carols
- Sunday, December 31: Christmas Hymn Sing
- Sunday, January 7: Epiphany, Reflection on the Word

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. We are meeting on Wednesday, December 27.

WEDNESDAY EVENING PRAYERS 6:00-6:30 pm. Note that there will be no evening prayers on Wednesday, December 27. We will meet next on January 3. 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).

UPCOMING STAFF VACATION SCHEDULES. All staff, except for Parish Administrator Nancy Stockford, will take the week of December 26-December 31 off, with Rob and Kate taking December 31 off. If there are pastoral emergencies during that week, please be in touch with our Deacons, or Joshua if needed, and for building emergencies please be in touch with Bill.

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!

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](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.



Church of the Covenant

Boston Massachusetts

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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*