First Sunday of Christmas
Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ
ZOOM LINK (click here)
Welcome & Announcements

One: Peace be with you.
Many: And also with you.

Prelude

Lullaby Carol
Polish Carol arr. Gazda and Clark
Anita Gram & Barbara Englesberg – Violins

Call to Worship

“The Work of Christmas” Howard Thurman

One: When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and princes are home, when the shepherds are back with their flock,
Many: The work of Christmas begins:
One: To find the lost, to heal the broken,
Many: To feed the hungry, to release the prisoner,
One: To rebuild the nations, to bring peace among all, to make music in the heart.
Many: Today is the day the work of Christmas begins.

Opening Hymn: PH (blue) 41 O Come, All Ye Faithful

Prayer for Grounding in God’s Grace

One: Christmas Child, as we wait now for you, steal softly into our lives:
Many: Still our clamorous busyness with the quiet of your coming.
One: Christmas Child, as we look now for you, steal softly into our minds:
Many: Transfigure our dull thinking with the colors of your seeing.
One: Christmas Child, as we long now for you, steal softly into our hearts:
Many: Enrich our meager loving with the warmth of your being.
One: Christmas Child, as at Bethlehem’s stable,
Many: Steal softly in among us now to heal and blanket us with your Presence.
One: Let us now continue our prayer to God in silence...

Listening to God in Silent Prayer

Assurance of God’s Grace
One: Friends, the time has come. Emmanuel is now. Hear the glad tidings of great joy: God is with us. And in God’s presence there is forgiveness, second-chances, and reconciliation. Therefore, let us celebrate together:
Many: In Jesus Christ, we are set free and made whole.
Alleluia, Amen!

Sung Response  

Go Tell it on the Mountain

Readings from Scripture

Hebrew Bible Reading: Isaiah 52:7-10
How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,
who brings good news,
who announces salvation,
who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’
Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices,
   together they sing for joy;
for in plain sight they see
   the return of the Holy One to Zion.
Break forth together into singing,
   you ruins of Jerusalem;
for the Beloved has comforted her people,
   she has redeemed Jerusalem.
The Holy One has bared a holy arm before the eyes of all the nations;
and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.
Gospel Reading: Matthew 2:13-23

Now after they had left, an angel of God appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by God through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my child.”

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise ones, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise ones. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

“A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.”

When Herod died, an angel of God suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child’s life are dead.” Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, “He will be called a Nazorean.”

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

Festive Christmas Carol Sing Along

It Came Upon A Midnight Clear
Lo How a Rose
Angels We Have Heard on High
Away in a Manager
We Three Kings
Hark the Herald Angels Sing
In the Bleak Midwinter
Silent Night
Call to Offering
Online Giving Option: http://www.cotcbos.org/give.html
Click on Give Now, then choose Pledges or Gifts-General.

Offertory
Angels We Have Heard on High
arr. Gazda and Clark
Anita Gram & Barbara Englesberg – Violins

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

Prayer of Dedication

Celebrations and Concerns
One: God, in your grace,
Many: Receive our prayer.

Pastoral Prayer

Closing Hymn: PH (blue) 40  Joy to the World

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.

Participating in Worship:
Worship Leader – Rev. Rob Mark
Minister of Music – Tom Handel
Violin – Anita Gram, Barbara Englesberg  Cantors – Betsy & Tim Groves
CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS AND 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 or pastor, or chat with a member of staff online. Be most welcome!

UPCOMING WORSHIP: Please join us each Sunday at 10:30am as we come together in community to pray, sing, share celebrations and concerns, and hear God’s still-speaking Word proclaimed. Zoom Link for each Sunday.
- Sunday, December 26, First Sunday of Christmas, ZOOM
- Sunday, January 2, Second Sunday of Christmas, ZOOM
- Sunday, January 9, Epiphany Sunday, ZOOM (with CYCE in person outside)

COVID SAFETY: In light of Omicron, it is highly likely we will remain on Zoom only for the month of January for worship. We will keep all posted as we go along. If you have not yet, please get your booster in order to be fully vaccinated.

NO PLACE AT THE INN? A CHALLENGING WINTER: For many reasons, this will be a challenging winter. One way we can help those experiencing homelessness in downtown Boston is to support our partners Women’s Lunch Place, who have an ongoing wish list for items, found here: https://womenslunchplace.org/in-kind-donations.

WEDNESDAY EVENING EPIPHANY PRAYERS 6-6:30pm: Our next weekly evening prayers will be near Epiphany, Weds. January 5, 2022, on Zoom.

OUR TIFFANY WINDOWS WEBINAR: Jan. 13, 6pm: Historic New England is sponsoring a webinar on Thursday, January 13, 2022, from 6-7 PM, where Roberto Rosa will be presenting his preservation work on Covenant’s priceless Tiffany windows. We expect that this will not only be informative to a much larger preservation audience, but will generate interest in supporting the ongoing Renew the Light Campaign. Please attend this online event as it promises to be fascinating. Register here for the webinar.

CLIMATE JUBILEE BOOK DISCUSSION: Join us on Sunday January 30, 5pm on Zoom for a book discussion on Katherine Hayhoe’s new book Saving Us: A Climate Scientist’s Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World. This could make a great CHRISTMAS GIFT to someone you’d like to invite into this discussion, or for yourself! Please though, we ask you to avoid buying from Amazon.com and instead use this link to find a local bookstore if you feel safe going to in person, or a less eco-impactful company than Amazon to purchase from.
BIBLE STUDY TIME CHANGE: The weekly Friday morning Bible Study will begin the New Year as the Wednesday Morning Bible Study, gathering on Zoom at 9:15 each week, beginning January 5. We’ve bid farewell to the Apostle Paul and his early church friends and will say hello to Hosea and the other ‘minor prophets.’ If you’d like more information or want to be on the list to get regular reminders and Zoom info, contact Nancy Ammerman, ntammerman@gmail.com.

CHILDREN’S AND YOUTH PROGRAMMING: Thanks to everyone who helped put together Sunday’s pageant and all-ages service! Our next CYCE gathering will be on Epiphany Sunday, January 9. If you’re interested in getting involved with CYCE, please email Rev. Kate.

20s-30s-40s GROUP AT COVENANT: We have an active young adult group that meets regularly to create community, even while we can’t be together physically, including weekly prayer calls, brunches (sometimes online!), fellowship and support. If you would like to be added to our email list, contact Rev. Joshua at joshua.lazard@cotcbos.org.

ANNUAL REPORT SUBMISSION DEADLINE: Our Annual Meeting will be Sunday, February 6, 2022 following worship, and the deadline for reports to be submitted to our Parish Administrator Kate is Tuesday, January 4, 2022 – please email reports to kate.carlisle@cotcbos.org.

POSTING FULL SERVICE RECORDINGS/ PRAYERS ONLINE: Due to techno-challenges we have decided we will be posting the entire service that is livestreamed online on our Worship Recordings Page. Please let us know if you have any questions. Thanks.

UPCOMING STAFF VACATION SCHEDULES: Sunday Dec. 26, Tom and Joshua will be off. All staff will take the week of Dec. 27-Jan 1 off, with Rob and Kate taking Jan. 2 off. If there are pastoral emergencies during that week, please be in touch with our Deacons, or Rob if needed, and building emergencies please be in touch with Bill.


WEEKLY CALENDAR Click here to view the weekly calendar of events.

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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 and inquirers 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 Lazard, *Associate Pastor*
- Thomas Handel, *Minister of Music*
- Bill Brown, *Building Manager*
- Rev. Kate Carlisle, *CYCE Coordinator / Parish Administrator*
- Nancy Stockford, *Financial Secretary*
- Fred Lopes, *Sunday Sexton*
- Alan Lane, *Food Cupboard Coordinator*

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