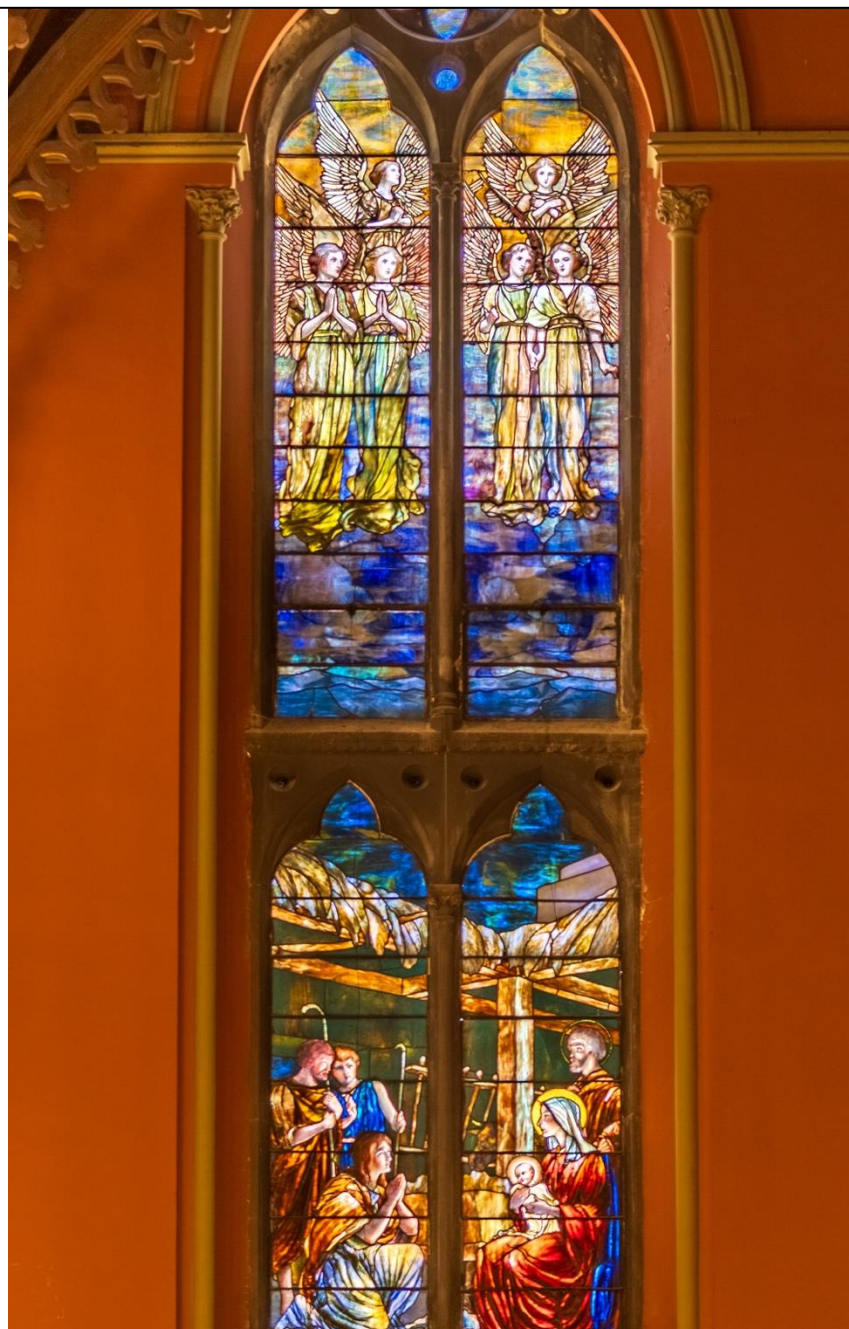


Church of the Covenant

Boston, MA



First Sunday of Christmas: December 29, 2024

Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ

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



Church of the Covenant

First Sunday of Christmas

December 29, 2024, 10:30 am

ZOOM LINK: tinyurl.com/cotcworship

Merry Christmas!! Welcome and thank you for worshipping together for this Zoom service where we will be joining each other from many different sacred spaces. Please keep your mic muted during the service. The full service is recorded and later posted online. Please find a Christmas candle to light.

Welcome & Announcements

One: Peace be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

Prelude

How Lovely Shines the Morning Star (vs. 1) Dietrich Buxtehude

Call to Worship

One: Starlight and song have once again summoned us home to the stable.

Many: **And so, with the non-human animals of the field, and the humble and the high, we have come to gaze on the face of God.**

One: Story, scripture and song have once again drawn us home to God's table.

Many: **And here, through words worn smooth with telling, and gifts given life through sharing, may we once again see and know you, Emmanuel—God with us and within us.**

Opening Hymn

O Come, All Ye Faithful

Unison Prayer for Grounding in God's Grace

(Kenneth I. Morse)

Many: **We were heavy with sorrow, but joy interrupted.**

We were deep in the night, but a star appeared.

We were silent with sadness, but the heavens rang.

And the splendor shone around them

When the time had fully come.

We were hardened by conflict, but love intervened.

We were frightened by shadows, but light took them away.

We were haunted by fears, but a child brought us hope.

And she laid him in a manger
When the time had fully come.
We were dismal and defeated, but faith set us on fire.
We were weary and complaining, but our hearts discovered
praise.
We were doubtful and confused, but a door to life was opened.
And the guiding star went before them
When the time had fully come.

Shared 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 are forgiveness, second chances, and reconciliation. Therefore, let us celebrate together:

Many: **In Jesus Christ we are set free and made whole. Alleluia!
Amen.**

Kindling the Christmas Light

Carol Response

Hark the Herald Angels Sing

Readings from Scripture

Hebrew Bible Reading – Psalm 98 (adapted by Nan C. Merrill)

One: O sing to the Beloved a new song, for Love has done marvelous things!

Many: **By the strength of your Indwelling Presence, we, too, are called to great things; we are set free through Love's forgiveness and truth.**

One: Yes, your steadfast Love and faithfulness are ever-present gifts in our lives.

Many: **All the ends of the earth have seen the glory of Love's Eternal Flame.**

One: Make a joyful noise to the Beloved, all the earth; break forth into grateful song and sing praises.

- Many:** Yes, sing songs of praise extolling Love's way; lift up your hearts with gratitude and joy!
- One:** Let the voices of all people blend in harmony, in union let the people magnify the Beloved!
- Many:** Let the sea laugh, and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it.
- One:** Let the waters clap their hands; let the hills ring out with joy before the Beloved, who radiates Love to all the earth.
- Many:** For Love reigns over the world with truth and justice bringing order and balance to all of Creation.

Carol Response

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

Gospel Reading – Luke 2:1-20 (*The Message* translation)

About that time Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Empire. This was the first census when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone had to travel to their own ancestral hometown to be accounted for. So Joseph went from the Galilean town of Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David's town, for the census. As a descendant of David, he had to go there. He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the hostel.

There were shepherders camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah, Kyrie. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises: "Glory to God in the heavenly heights, and on earth peace among those whom God favors!"

As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherders talked it over. “Let’s get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us.” They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the shepherders were impressed.

Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself. The shepherders returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they’d been told!

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

Many: **Thanks be to God.**

Carol Response

Away in a Manger

Call to Offering

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

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

Offertory

How Lovely Shines the Morning Star (vs. 2)

Dietrich Buxtehude

Carol

We Three Kings

Celebrations & Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

Charge & Benediction

Closing Carol

Joy to the World

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

Minister of Music – Tom Handel

Worship Leader – Barbara Darling

Lector – Nancy Stockford

Digital Minister – Trudi Veldman

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.

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.



WELCOME CHILDREN & YOUTH!! Welcome to 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, 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.

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.](#)

- Sunday, January 5: Epiphany, All-Ages, Holy Communion
- Sunday, January 12: Rev. Rob Mark preaching
- Sunday, January 19: Rev. Joshua Lawrence Lazard preaching

WORSHIP IN BATES HALL IN 2025! Due to repair of the chandelier in the sanctuary, we will hold in-person worship downstairs in Bates Hall starting the first Sunday in January until early February.

DEACONS END OF LIFE PLANNING SESSION JANUARY 12. Start 2025 off on the right prepared foot! Join us in Bates Hall and on Zoom following worship on Sunday, January 12, as our Deacons lead us by creating an hour of space for each of us to start the new year off right by doing some sacred End of Life planning work together. This will be mostly a working space for each of us to begin or continue the important and faithful work of planning for our own and our loved ones' full seasons of life. As a guide, COTC Deacons and Pastors have prepared helpful resources at: <https://tinyurl.com/cotcdeaconseol>.

ANNUAL REPORTS ARE DUE JANUARY 13, 2025! Please submit your 2024 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 13, 2025. Thank you!

BIBLE STUDY WEDNESDAYS. Note that Bible Study is on a break and will reconvene on January 8. 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 jvacooks@gmail.com.

WEDNESDAY EVENING PRAYERS 6:00-6:30 pm. Note that Evening Prayers is taking on hiatus and will return on January 8. 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](https://www.cotcbos.org) (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. Recordings of each service are available on our [Worship Recordings Page](https://www.cotcbos.org/worship-recordings) ([cotcbos.org/worship-recordings](https://www.cotcbos.org/worship-recordings)).

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

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*