Church of the Covenant
Boston, MA

Third Sunday in Advent: JOY
Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ
ZOOM LINK (click here)
Welcome and thank you for worshipping together for this “hybrid” service where some will be in the sanctuary of their homes, and some in the sanctuary at 67 Newbury Street. For those joining online, we will plan to begin on Zoom. Service is recorded and later posted online.

Welcome & Announcements
   One: Peace be with you!
   Many: And also with you!

Prelude  
   Lo, How a Rose e'er Blooming  arr. James Woodman

*Call To Worship
   Adapted from Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

   One: We are seeking—
   Many: deeper faith,
         a place to belong,
         the feeling that God is here in this world.

   One: We are seeking—
   Many: joy that overflows,
         the movement of the Spirit,
         a hand to hold, when alone in the chaos.

   One: We are seeking—
   Many: the freedom to be,
         the courage to love,
         the conviction to act in the face of injustice.

   One: We are seeking, but here and now,
   Many: We are found.

   One: Take a deep breath. These are your sanctuaries.
   Many: God is here. We are found. Amen.

Lighting the Advent Candle: Stories of JOY

* Hymn:  
   Canticle of the Turning
1 My soul cries out with a joyful shout that the
God of my heart is great, and my spirit sings of the
work great things in me, and your mercy will last from the
stone will be left on stone. Let the king beware for your
member who holds us fast: God's mercy must de-

2 Though I am small, my God, my all, you
depths of the past to the end of the age to be.
justice tears every tyrant from his throne.
liv er us from the conqueror's crushing grasp.

3 From the halls of power to the fortress tower, not a

4 Though the nations rage from age to age, we re-

You fixed your sight on your servant's plight, and my

Your very name puts the proud to shame, and to

The hungry poor shall weep no more, for the

This saving word that our forebears heard is the

weakness 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 never earn; there are tables spread; every
promise which holds us bound, till the spear and rod can be
Many: God of safe spaces, we wish we were more like Mary, who in the face of great change, went and sought help. She did not wait for help to find her; she walked to the shelter she needed. Too often we wait silently for the world to change around us instead of speaking up for the things we need. Forgive us for failing to care for ourselves the way you would care for us. Give us the courage to be more like Mary. God of brave places, we wish we were more like Elizabeth, who greeted Mary with laughter and contagious joy. How many people have crossed our doorstep and how many times have we failed to see them? Give us the courage of Mary, and the grace of Elizabeth. Gratefully we pray.

One: Let us now open ourselves to God in silent prayer…
Listening to God in Silent Prayer

Assurance of God’s Grace

One: Family of faith, even if we miss the person standing on our doorstep, even if we fail to care for ourselves the way God would care for us, even if we forget and ignore, turn away and shut down, God still loves us. There is nothing we can do to lose God’s love. 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, in excelsis Deo!

Gloria, Gloria, alleluia, alleluia!

Readings from Scripture

Hebrew Bible Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-17


In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my God comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by God.”

And Mary said,
“My soul sings of you, O God.
My spirit delights in your Presence.
You have cherished my womanhood.
You have honored earth’s body.
All will know the sacredness of birth.
All will know the gift of life.
Your grace is to those who are open.
Your mercy to the humble in heart.
The dreams of the proud crumble.
The plans of the powerful fail.
You feed the hungry with goodness.
You deny the rich their greed.
The hopes of the poor are precious.
The birth pangs of creation are heard.
You have been faithful to the human family.
You are the seed of new beginnings.
My soul sings of you, O God.
My spirit delights in your presence.”

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

Sung Response: PH (blue) 576
Gloria, Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, Gloria, alleluia, alleluia!

The Angelus
One:    The Angel of the Lord
        declared unto Mary.
        And she conceived of the
        Holy Spirit.
Many:   Hail Mary, full of grace,
        The Lord is with you;
        Blessed are you among
        women,
        And blessed is the fruit of
        your womb, Jesus.
        Holy Mary, Mother of
        God,
        Pray for us sinners,
        Now and at the hour of our death. Amen.
One:    Behold the servant of the Lord.
Many:   Be it done unto me according to your word.
One:    And the Word was made Flesh.
Many:   And dwelt among us.
One:    Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.
Many:   That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.
**Sermon**

*Hymn: PH (blue) 48  
1) Lo, how a rose e'er blooming  
   from tender stem hath sprung;  
   of Jesse's lineage coming,  
   by faithful prophets sung;  
   It came, a floweret bright,  
   amid the cold of winter  
   when half spent was the night.

2) Isaiah 'twas foretold it,  
   the rose I have in mind;  
   with Mary we behold it,  
   the virgin mother kind.  
   To show God's love aright  
   she bore for us a Savior  
   when half spent was the night.

New Members Welcoming: Ron Lacey & Abhishek John

Call to Offering  
Online Giving Option: [http://www.cotcbos.org/give.html](http://www.cotcbos.org/give.html)  
*Click on Give Now, then choose Pledges or Gifts-General.*

Offertory  
Coventry Carol  
anon. 16th. c

*Doxology*  
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*

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

*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 Today’s Worship

Preacher – Rev. Rob Mark
Minister of Music – Tom Handel
Advent Candle Lighting – Ron Lacey
Liturgist – Betty Southwick
Lector – Donald Denniston
Cantors – Betsy and Tim Groves
Video Techs – Derek Holbrook, Jon Schwarz
Digital Minister – Rev. Kate Carlisle
Door Stewards – Jesus Vargas, Anne Crane

Comment by the artist: I’ve read the Magnificat many times, but only recently have I started reading it for what it is: a protest song. Listen to the tone: “[God] has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly.” It’s a song of vindication against oppressive powers. Some ancient manuscripts attribute this song to Elizabeth, not Mary. Of course, an older woman would be able to exegete the times from both communal history and lived experience. But it’s also true that the gift of prophecy is no respecter of age. They each have different proximities to the Messiah: one’s offspring will prepare the way, and another’s will be the way. Both are able to sing the song because both are oppressed, which brings me to the inspiration for this portrait: Ahed Tamimi. An activist from childhood, Tamimi became a symbol of Palestinian resistance. Because of her recognizability, her family sent her to live with relatives in Ramallah, where she’d not have to face the threat of checkpoints. At the age of sixteen, she was arrested for slapping a police officer to protect her disabled cousin. The reference for this painting was a photo taken of her as she was being detained by Israeli forces for trying to intervene in her mother’s arrest. This visual expresses the mood of the Magnificat in a new way for me: a young girl under occupation, sent away for her own safety, responding to not only her own oppression, but to that of her community. She believes that righteousness is on
her side, but she’s still in anguish. The *Gaudete* (joy) colors of Advent surround her, but with that joy is remarkable pain. As for the key, it’s there, but very tenuous. Can you even see it? Freedom is both here and not yet.

**WELCOME & PEACE BE WITH YOU IN THESE DAYS!** We are delighted to welcome you to our community of faith here at Church of the Covenant! Thank you for joining us in worship. If you have any questions about who we are as a community of faith, please reach out to an usher or pastor in person, or Zoom chat with a member of staff online. Be most welcome!

**CHRISTMAS JOY/CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING TODAY 12/12/21!:** Church of the Covenant will join our two denominations in collecting the Christmas Joy (PCUSA) and Christmas Fund (UCC) offering today. This special offering provides support and assistance—in both denominations—to current and retired church workers in financial difficulty. The Christmas Joy offering also contributes to developing future church leaders at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. This offering will be collected during worship today. You may also send in a check to Financial Secretary, Church of the Covenant, 67 Newbury Street, Boston, MA 02116; with “Christmas Joy” in the memo line, or donate online: cotcbos.org/give.html, click on "Give Now", and choose "Christmas Joy/Fund" line. Thank you!

**CELEBRATING OUR NEWEST MEMBERS:** Today we celebrate Ron Lacey and Abhishek John as new members in our congregation! **Ron** has lived in Boston since 1999 and works at one of the libraries at Harvard. He enjoys studying languages, theology, history, and theatre. He is vegetarian and lives with three Cats. He has volunteered for many years with various organizations that serve the homeless (including MANNA), and also with Perkins School for the Blind as a narrator in the Recording Studio. He is currently enrolled in United Theological Seminary’s MDiv, concentrating in Theology and the Arts – and can be found on the stage performing in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, running at Chelsea Theatre Works now through December 17: [Details](cotcbos.org/give.html).
Abhishek moved to Boston from India this summer to begin his PhD at Boston University School of Theology. He comes with a wide range of ecumenical church experience from being baptized as an infant in the Methodist Church, attending Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian and Pentecostal churches and in ministerial leadership at one point in the Syrian Orthodox tradition. When not writing, reading and studying, you might find Abhishek involved in our 20s30s40s group, or, like Ron, interested in issues around homelessness, economic and climate justice here in Boston.
We are so blessed to welcome them both as new members of our congregation! If you would like to become a new member of this church, please speak to Rev. Rob, Trudi, or Faith.

UPCOMING WORSHIP ON SUNDAYS: 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.]

- December 12, ADVENT 3, Hybrid Service, Rev. Rob preaching
- December 19, ADVENT 4, All-ages Christmas Pageant (ZOOM)
- December 21, 7:30 pm, Blue Christmas/Longest Night Ecumenical Service at Emmanuel Church
- December 24, Christmas Eve Service, 6 pm

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.
CHRISTMAS MEMORIAL POINSETTIAS: This holiday season you can honor your loved ones through beautiful flowers in our sanctuary. To learn more and order, fill out the order form online (you can use the QR code to the right). These dedications will appear in our bulletin on December 19 and Christmas Eve. Please submit your completed form no later than Tuesday, December 14.

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.

WEDNESDAY EVENING ADVENT PRAYERS ON ZOOM: Join us this Wednesday 6:00-6:30pm for our weekly evening prayers, on Zoom.

BIBLE STUDY - FRIDAYS 11AM ZOOM: You are invited to join the Friday morning Bible Study group on a new adventure as we dive into new ideas about the apostle Paul. Zoom Link Here. join by phone: (646) 558 8656, Meeting ID: 104 478 666, Password: 581626

CHILDREN’S AND YOUTH PROGRAMMING: Our Advent all-ages worship is next Sunday, December 19! If your kids or youth would like to take part in any way, please email Rev. Kate as soon as possible.

20s-30s-40s GROUP AT COVENANT BRUNCHES: Join us after worship December 19th, and email Rev. Joshua if you can come or want to find more about our young adult ministry.

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