Fourth Sunday in Advent: LOVE
Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ
ZOOM LINK (click here)
Church of the Covenant
Fourth Sunday in Advent: LOVE
December 19, 2021 10:30 am  Zoom Link

Welcome!!! Unless sharing, please keep your mic on “mute”, but your voice and heart liberated to fully join in with the songs and liturgies as we worship God while on Zoom. Please note this service is recorded and later posted on our church website.

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

Prelude  Carol of the Beasts                Pete Seeger
Joseph Jewett – guitar and voice

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

One: God’s love is like an open door.
Many: God’s love is the streetlight that guides us home.
One: God’s love is a warm bed to fall into.
God’s love is a table with room for you.
Many: God’s love is a crackling fireplace.
God’s love is the sun that streams through the windows.
One: God’s love is the roof over our heads
and the floor beneath our feet.
Many: God’s love is a home for you and me, for neighbors and strangers, for family and friends, for enemies and partners.
One: God’s love is a home for all.

Lighting the Advent Candle: Stories of LOVE

* 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 next that must be filled.  
Even the hour when wings are frozen  
God for fledgling 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

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

Many: Expansive God, we know that the church is your house, and your house has room for everyone. Yet, too often, instead of setting the table for our neighbors, we block the door. Instead of welcoming all, we judge others by our own standards. Instead of sharing our second coat, we hide it in the attic, holding on to fear instead of letting go with love. Remind us that your home is a home for all, that truth requires hard work, that truth requires uncomfortable
justice. Help us to be bold enough to see it and brave enough to live it.

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, we are at home with God – forgiven, claimed, and loved. The door is always open for us. 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: Isaiah 12:2-6
Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the Lord God is my strength and my might; God has become my salvation. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the Lord, call on God’s name; make known God’s deeds among the nations; proclaim that God’s name is exalted. Sing praises to the Lord, who has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth. Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 1:18-23
This is how the birth of Jesus came about:
Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph was faithful to the law and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But an angel of God appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son,
and you are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people.” All
this took place to fulfill what God had said through the prophet, “The
virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel
(which means “God is with us”)."

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

Pageant

Good News: Breaking at 10

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

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

Pageant – COTC CYCE (in order of appearance): Joseph Jewett, Ellice Miller, Hannah Waters, Rowen Mark, Sam Jewett, Joanna Bitner, Kenny Bitner
Minister of Music – Tom Handel
Advent Candle Lighting – Diane Lauber
Liturgists – Rev. Rob Mark, Rev. Joshua Lazard, Rev. Kate Carlisle
Inspired by Luke 1:46b-55 (Mary’s Song) | Paper lace with watercolor
Pageant Script – “Good News: Breaking at 10,” courtesy of the UMC NY Annual Conference, adapted by Rev. Kate Carlisle for COTC.

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!

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.
  o December 19, ADVENT 4, All-ages Christmas Pageant on ZOOM
  o Tuesday, December 21, 7:30 pm, Blue Christmas/Longest Night Ecumenical Service at Emmanuel Church
  o Friday, December 24, Christmas Eve Service, 6 pm, Hybrid
  o Sunday, December 26, First Sunday of Christmas, ZOOM

20s-30s-40s GROUP AT COVENANT ZOOM BRUNCH 12/19: Join us after worship this Sunday, December 19th, for a Zoom brunch and email Rev. Joshua if you can come in order to get your Grubhub gift card or want to find more about our young adult ministry.

BLUE CHRISTMAS (LONGEST NIGHT SOLSTICE) SERVICE: Tuesday, December 21, 7:30pm, in-person and livestream. This has been a hard year. Christmas sometimes holds a lot of pain for many. Join us for this important annual ecumenical service we share with our closest neighbors in faith, Emmanuel Church, as we pay attention to the blues many of us feel this year, and pray for God’s illumination. The livestream is available at this link.
COVENANT’S CHRISTMAS EVE 6PM OFFERING “Refugees Welcome”: Every year we celebrate Christmas by lovingly telling the story of the baby Jesus and his parents—who were refugees. As a sign of solidarity with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, and in light of the dire Afghan refugee crisis, our Christmas Eve offering this year will go to support an Afghan family of six who had to flee their home and have relocated to the Boston area this month. Friends of Covenant, including former General Presbyter of the Boston Presbytery, Rev. Wayne Parrish, & Rob’s beloved Aunt Daryl Mark & Uncle David Nelson, are part of a group working called “Crossroads Connection: Facilitating Afghan Resettlement” to provide housing, clothes, food, etc. for this family, and it is our privilege in this Christmas season to contribute to this effort. Please give generously. If you come in person to worship, you can leave your gift in the plate as you come in or leave. A more reliable way to give (in case you can’t come in person, or we end up having to further limit worshippers in the sanctuary due to COVID), is to give online: https://www.cotcbos.org/give.html (click on DONATE button, then in drop down menu, choose “Christmas Eve”). You can give this way anytime between now and Christmas! Thank you.

CHRISTMAS EVE BUILD YOUR OWN CRECHE ON CHRISTMAS EVE: One of the beloved traditions at COTC every Christmas year that we sorely miss is “building of the crèche” as we walk forward bringing the various characters of the nativity scene to the manger. Sadly, in order to keep physically distant (yet spiritually near!) we need to forgo this for a second year in a row. However, for those of you who plan to join this service online following the YouTube livestream, we invite you all to build your own crèche as we go through the service. If you have a nativity scene, you are welcome to use that. If not, consider gathering various items that might stand in for Mary, shepherds, animals, angels, Joseph, and baby Jesus (teddies, pictures, toys, etc.). Or, if this isn’t something that are up for – fear not – this is fully optional, and you can enjoy seeing the one we will use at 67 Newbury.

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 ADVENT PRAYERS ON ZOOM: Join us this Wednesday 6:00-6:30pm for our final weekly evening prayers of the season, on Zoom. We will resume again on Weds. Jan. 5.

OUR TIFFANY WINDOWS WEBINAR: Jan. 13, 6pm: Our Building Committee regularly reaches out to the Boston larger historic preservation community. 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 the kids, youth, families, and CYCE teachers who helped put together today’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.

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.

CONTINUED GENEROUS GIVING: In these uncertain times, as we continue to press on in our gospel calling to follow in the justice and love of Jesus, we continue to rely on and give great thanks for your generosity. Here are a few ways you can continue to financially support the church and its ministries:

1. Directly on our website: http://www.cotcbos.org/give.html
2. Download free app: GivePlus (GIVE+ by Vanco Services, LLC) in the App Store, Google Play, or at https://giveplushelp.vancopayments.com, then type in our zip code 02116 to find Church of the Covenant
   *Both online options allow you to make a one-time or a recurring gift*
3. If you are uncomfortable with online giving, yes, you can still mail checks!

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

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

- In Memory of Reine & Elsa Abele by Anne Crane & Sarah Perrault
- In Memory of Reine Abele by Rev. Rob Mark
- In Memory of Frank Backbone by Rev. Rob Mark & Becky Evans
- In Memory of Robert Esposito by Stanley G. Dingwell
- In Memory of our parents: Harry & Stella Forsdick, and Anne Baker/Gold, Abraham Baker, & Herman Gold by Harry Forsdick & Marsha Baker
- In Memory of Ted Goodfleisch by Barbara Darling
- In Memory of Ted Goodfleisch by COTC Staff
- In Memory of parents Stanley & Emma Kimber and sister Karen Kimber by Evelyn Kimber
• In Honor of Grammys Jean, Jane and Margery by the Evans & Mark families
• In Honor of Rev. Rob Mark by Mom and Dad
• In Memory of Louis & Elizabeth Pursley by Linda & Nathan Pursley
• In Memory of Brian Reardon by COTC Staff
• In Memory of Christine Lucas Roddy by Anita & Holly
• In Memory of Richard Schmidt by Faith Perry & Lucy Williams
• In Memory of Richard Sipe and recently lost members by Byron Sipe
• In Memory of Keith Stokes Snyder II by Kathryn Barry
• In Honor of Lea C. Winterburg by Sonya & Yury Winterberg
• In Honor of the Wright Family by Sharon Wright
• In Memory of our parents by Jack & Nancy Ammerman
• In Memory of loved ones by Sally Pomeroy
• In Memory of my parents by Trudi Veldman
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