

# COVENANT CHURCH

## H O U S T O N

A Service of Worship for the  
First Sunday of Advent  
30 November 2025

This is where the hope comes in. Even though we may be suffering in our lives, there's a way out through our own actions. We don't have to sit around waiting for somebody else to come and save us. We're not victims of fate. We can make the choices, we can order our priorities so that we can reshape our lives in a positive direction through our thoughts, words, and deeds.

—*Thanissaro Bhikkhu*



Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in hope

Hope be with you!  
**And also with you!**

Ring in the hour

Silence is kept

\*Prelude

“Lo, how a Rose e’er blooming”

John Rutter  
(b. 1945)

Call to Worship

+Opening Hymn #2

“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”

Hyfrydol

**Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;  
From our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in thee.  
Israel’s strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;  
Dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.**

**Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king,  
Born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By thine own eternal spirit rule in all our hearts alone;  
By thine all-sufficient merit raise us to thy glorious throne.**

Lighting the First Advent Candle

Response: please see bulletin insert

Invitation

Scripture Lesson

Luke 1:46-50

These are our sacred stories.

**Thanks be to God.**

*\*Please hold silence and remain seated during the prelude*

*+Please stand in body or spirit*

Time for Children

+ Response:

Moonbeams

**Hope is a star that shines in the night,  
Leading us on till the morning is bright.  
When God is a child there's joy in our song.  
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,  
And none shall be afraid.**

Call to Confession

Silent Confession

Unison Confession

**After all the hours of dressing up  
and combing our hair and trying  
to show our best face to the world,  
we find ourselves bare, naked,  
haunted, and painfully, wondrously clear,  
full of visions and limitations, aware  
of the great invitation to be kind. And  
if we're lucky, we burn with hope.**

**It isn't safe, this life. Don't let anyone  
tell you otherwise. But if you are able,  
as you listen to the screaming, sing.  
Sing through the walls. Sing of miracles,  
healing and light. Sing. Because when  
all else is ash, still, we can sing. We can sing.**

Words of Assurance

Music

arr. Walter L. Pelz

**"Of Our Maker's Love Begotten"**

(b. 1926)

*Of our Maker's love begotten ere the worlds began to be,  
he is Alpha and Omega, he the source, the ending he,  
of the things that are, that have been and that future years shall see, evermore and evermore.*

*Oh, that birth forever blessed, when the mother full of grace,  
by the Holy Ghost conceiving, bore the shepherd of our race,*

+Please stand in body or spirit

*and the babe the world's love-teacher first revealed his sacred face, evermore and evermore.*

*This is he whom seers in old times chanted of with one accord;  
whom the voices of the prophets promised in their faithful word;  
now he shines, the long-expected; let creation praise its Lord, evermore and evermore.*

*Oh, ye heights of heaven adore him; angel hosts his praises sing;  
powers, dominions, bow before him, and extol our God and Joy;  
let no tongue on earth be silent, every voice in concert ring  
evermore and evermore.*

*Christ, to thee, with God Creator, and, O Holy Ghost, to thee,  
hymn and chant and high thanksgiving, and unwearied praises be:  
honor, glory, and dominion, and eternal merit be  
evermore and evermore.*

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

<sup>+</sup>Hymn #600

Morning Song

"Song of Mary"

**My soul gives glory to my God, my heart pours out its praise.  
God lifted up my lowliness in many marvelous ways.**

**My God has done great things for me: Yes, holy is this name.  
All people will declare me blessed, and blessings they shall claim.**

**From age to age to all who fear, such mercy love imparts,  
Dispensing justice far and near, dismissing selfish hearts.**

**Love casts the mighty from their thrones, promotes the insecure,  
Leaves hungry spirits satisfied; the rich seem suddenly poor.**

**Praise God, whose loving covenant supports those in distress,  
Remembering past promises with present faithfulness.**

Prayer

<sup>+</sup>*Please stand in body or spirit*

Offering

Offertory

Johann Sebastian Bach

(1685-1750)

“Quia respexit’ from *Magnificat*”

*Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae,  
ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.*

[For God has regarded the lowliness of God’s handmaiden;  
for behold, from henceforth all generations will call me blessed.]

+Prayer of Dedication

**For all things rising  
out of the hiddenness of shadows  
out of the weight of despair  
out of the brokenness of pain  
out of the constrictions of compliance  
out of the rigidity of stereotypes  
out of the prison of prejudice;  
for all things rising  
into life, into hope  
into healing, into power  
into freedom, into justice;  
we pray, O God,  
for all things rising.**

+Doxology

Old Hundredth

**Praise God the Source of life and birth.  
Praise God the Word, who came to earth.  
Praise God the Spirit, holy flame,  
All glory, honor to God’s name! Amen.**

+Responsive Affirmation of Faith

God, could this be the year when we see it?  
The goodness that is coming,  
like starlight from a distant time?  
**Could this be the Advent when we sense it?  
That the springtime of the soul  
will one day last forever?**

+Please stand in body or spirit

**Could this be the Advent when we notice  
the inbreaking of your coming promises?**

Promises full of blessing:

Of truth so clear, so bright,  
that every shadowy lie must flee away.

**Of compassion so deep, so strong  
that everyone is encircled in the embrace.**

Of restoration so complete, so beautiful  
that there is gladness everywhere.

**And of justice so satisfying and so right,  
that all will be well.**

May this Advent be the new beginning,  
as we learn to love by the light of your coming promises.

**Glimpsing the world through tears,  
while also seeing something sacred shining through too.**

**Our Truth. Our Light. Our Promise incarnate.**

**Amen.**

<sup>+</sup>Closing Hymn

Lauda Anima

**Praise, my soul, the God of heaven,  
Glad of heart your carols raise;  
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,  
Who, like me, should sing God's praise?  
Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Praise the Maker all your days!**

**Praise God for the grace and favor  
Shown our forebears in distress;  
God is still the same forever,  
Slow to chide, and swift to bless.  
Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Sing our Maker's faithfulness!**

**Like a loving parent caring,  
God knows well our feeble frame;**

*+Please stand in body or spirit*

**Gladly all our burdens bearing,  
Still to countless years the same.  
Alleluia! Alleluia!  
All within me, praise God's name!**

**Angels, teach us adoration,  
You behold God face to face;  
Sun and moon and all creation,  
Dwellers all in time and space.  
Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Praise with us the God of grace!**

Benediction

\*Postlude

“Postlude for Thanksgiving”

Charles Callahan  
(1951-2023)

*+Please stand in body or spirit*

*\*Please hold silence and remain seated during the postlude*



### **Worship Notes**

The worship leader is **Stephen Caldwell**.

The oboist is Grace Tice.

Today's Star over Bethlehem banner was created by **Nancy Henry** and **Michelle Bennack**.

The Call to Worship is "Magnificat" by Lynn Ungar.

The Unison Confession is "Instead of Losing Faith" by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer.

**Deacon Moses Mason** gives the prayer.

The soloist is **Norah Gharala**.

The Prayer of Dedication is "Prayer for All Things Rising" by Jan Richardson.

The Responsive Affirmation of Faith is "A Blessing for Beginning Again in Advent" by Kate Bowler.

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### **About Today's Service**

Happy New Year! Covenant follows the liturgical year, an ancient Christian calendar that shapes our worshipping life around the story of Jesus's birth, life, death, and resurrection. This week, Christians around the world begin the new liturgical year with the season of Advent: four weeks of anticipation, patience, and preparation before celebrating the birth of Jesus at Christmas. At Covenant, we have an Advent wreath with four blue candles. The blue color symbolizes the broad hopefulness of the season. The first candle lit today also represents hope. At the start of each week of Advent, we will light an additional candle, in turn symbolizing peace, joy, and love. We will light the center candle, called the "Christ candle," on Christmas Eve.

*-Jason Steiner*

### **Announcements**

Tuesday, December 9, 7pm - Young Adult Group Christmas Party.

December 21 - 9:30am Caroling and Wassail, 10:30am Solstice Labyrinth Walk, 11am Choral Service of Magnificats.

Christmas Eve Worship will be at 5:30pm.

### **Children and Youth Announcements**

November 30 - Youth Social: Pecan Grove Christmas Hayride

December 7- Advent Celebration & Tree Decorating: all are welcome to participate!

Saturday, January 17 - CCSC Family Service Day, 12:00 -1:15 p.m.

## Calendar

Sun. November 30	6pm	Youth Social: Pecan Grove Christmas Hayride.
Mon. December 1	7pm	Insight Meditation Houston, 2nd floor of Huff Fellowship Hall building.
Thurs. December 4	10am	Community Group, Zoom.
	1:15pm	Lunchtime Lectionary Lab, Zoom.
	7:15pm	Covenant Singers Rehearsal, Sanctuary.
Sat. December 6	9am	Art as Prayer, Huff Fellowship Hall.
Sun. December 7	9:30am	Adult Education, 2nd floor of Huff Fellowship Hall building: Raymond Stubblefield continues his exploration of spiritual practices.
	9:30am	Handbell Rehearsal, Huff Fellowship Hall.
	10:30am	Covenant Singers Rehearsal, Sanctuary.

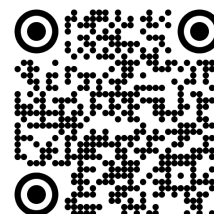
## Information

**Childcare:** Childcare is provided in the children's area beginning at 9:30 a.m. Children aged 2 and under are invited to the nursery. Children aged 3 to 9 are invited to the children's area after the Time for Children.

**Covenant Recycles:** If you do not wish to keep your order of worship, please recycle it by placing it on the stand located in the narthex.

**Office Hours:** The Church Office is open Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 8am-3pm, and Tuesday from 1pm-5pm.

**Helpful Links:** Scan here for digital Visitor and Celebration & Concern Cards; any sign-up forms mentioned in the Announcements; and other useful information.



*Covenant Church affirms the sanctity, dignity, and equality  
of human beings and the value of all life in the universe.  
We welcome persons of all racial and ethnic heritages, all sexual orientations,  
all gender identities, and all faith perspectives to our Christian community.  
We stand for each individual's right to worship God and to respond  
to God's call to ministry in her or his own understanding  
of God's all-encompassing love.  
We value a holistic approach to faith and seek to worship in ways that are  
intellectually credible, emotionally stimulating, spiritually engaging  
and contemporarily relevant.  
We value music and art and ritual to express what we cannot ever fully say.  
We value participation so that we might hear many approaches  
to our shared faith.*

**Covenant Church, an ecumenical, liberal, Baptist congregation**

Members of Covenant, Ministers

Fran Avera, Minister of Music, Emerita

Trena' Jamison, Director of Children and Youth

Heather Laureles, Director of Administration & Communications

David Lee, Director of Music

Laura Mayo, Senior Minister

Jason Steiner, Organist and Associate Director of Music

Raymond Stubblefield, Minister of Congregational Life

Brendon Young, Moores School of Music Artist in Residence

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*Covenant Church recognizes the laws of the State of Texas and the rights of its citizens. Consistent with this acknowledgment and with respect for the values of our Church, we also acknowledge that our congregants and visitors seek a safe and comfortable space for worship and celebration. In that spirit, we request that all firearms be left in a secure place outside of the Church. We thank God for providing us with the opportunity to worship together and to continue to respect each other as human beings.*