



# COVENANT CHURCH

HOUSTON

A Service of Worship for the  
Second Sunday of Advent  
7 December 2025





Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!  
**And also with you!**

Ring in the hour

Silence is kept

\*Prelude

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”

Gerhard Krapf  
(1924-2008)

Call to Worship

+Opening Hymn #13

“Prepare the Way”

Bereden väg för herran

**Prepare the way, O Zion, your Christ is drawing near!**

**Let every hill and valley a level way appear.**

**Greet One who comes in glory, foretold in sacred story.**

**O blest is Christ that came in God’s most holy name.**

**Christ brings God’s rule, O Zion; he comes from heaven above.**

**His rule is peace and freedom, and justice, truth, and love.**

**Lift high your praise resounding, for grace and joy abounding.**

**O blest is Christ that came in God’s most holy name.**

**Fling wide your gates, O Zion; your Savior’s rule embrace,**

**And tidings of salvation proclaim in every place.**

**All lands will bow rejoicing, their adoration voicing.**

**O blest is Christ that came in God’s most holy name.**

+Lighting the Second Advent Candle

Response: “We Are Waiting” (please see hymn insert)

Invitation

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

*+Please stand in body or spirit*

These are our sacred stories.

**Thanks be to God.**

Time for Children

First Sunday Food Offering

+ Response:

Moon Beams

**Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth,  
giving a promise of safety and worth.**

**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

**We confess that the liberation our faith offers  
is a challenge to our comfortable ways of being.**

**We confess that the liberation our faith offers  
is a threat to the status quo we have inherited.**

**We confess that the liberation our faith offers  
is a gift to all who will open it and themselves to transformation.**

Words of Assurance

Music

John Ferguson  
(1941-2025)

“Comfort, Comfort”

*“Comfort, comfort now my people; tell of peace!” so says our God.  
Comfort those who sit in darkness mourning under sorrow’s load.  
To God’s people now proclaim that God’s pardon waits for them!  
Tell them that their war is over; God will reign in peace forever.*

*For the herald’s voice is crying in the desert far and near,  
Calling us to true repentance, since the Kingdom now is here.  
Oh, that warning cry obey! Now prepare for God a way!  
Let the valleys rise to meet him, and the hills bow down to greet him!*

+Please stand in body or spirit

*Straight shall be what long was crooked, and the rougher places plain!  
 Let your hearts be true and humble, as befits his holy reign!  
 For the glory of the Lord now on earth is shed abroad,  
 And all flesh shall see the token that God's word is never broken.*

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

+Hymn

St. Helena

"Unexpected and Mysterious"

1 Un - ex - pect - ed and mys - te - rious is the gen - tle  
 2 In a mo - men - tar - y meet - ing of e - ter - ni -  
 3 We are called to pon - der mys - t'ry and a - wait the

word of grace. Ev - er - lov - ing and sus - tain -  
 ty and time, Mar - y learned that she would car -  
 com - ing Christ, to em - bod - y God's com - pas -

ing is the peace of God's em - brace. If we fal - ter  
 ry both the mor - tal and di - vine. Then she learned of  
 sion for each frag - ile hu - man life. God is with us

in our cour - age and we doubt what we have known, God is  
 God's com - pas - sion, of E - liz - a - beth's great joy, and she  
 in our long - ing to bring heal - ing to the earth, while we

faith - ful to con - sole us as a moth - er tends her own.  
 ran to greet the wom - an who would rec - og - nize her boy.  
 watch with joy and won - der for the prom - ised Sav - ior's birth.

+Please stand in body or spirit

Prayer

Offering

Offertory

Rebecca Groom te Velde

“Creator of the Stars of Night”

(b. 1956)

*We will tithe the cash offerings on the first Sunday of each month. This means that we will give 100% of the cash offerings to one of the mission organizations that Covenant partners with on that Sunday. These funds will be above and beyond what Covenant has budgeted to give to Missions. Today's cash offerings will go to the Houston Food Bank, which provides a variety of resources to eighteen nearby counties to lessen food insecurity in southeast Texas.*

+Prayer of Dedication

**God of unveiled truth,  
faithful flame in times of darkened sun and waning moon:  
lift up our unknowing hearts, and waken our sleeping love  
to announce the coming dawn of unexpected peace;  
through Jesus Christ, the one who is to come.**

+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.**

+Affirmation of Faith

**Christianity is a perspective  
that is not already true...  
it becomes true  
where human beings are freed.**

+Closing Hymn #8

Truro

“Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates”

**Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates,  
Behold, the King of Glory waits;  
The King of kings is drawing near;  
The Savior of the world is here!**

+Please stand in body or spirit

**Fling wide the portals of your heart;  
Make it a temple, set apart  
From earthly use for heaven's employ,  
Adorned with prayer, and love, and joy.**

**Redeemer, come! I open wide  
My heart to Thee; here, Lord, abide.  
Let me Thy inner presence feel;  
Thy grace and love in me reveal.**

Benediction

\*Postlude

Adrian Vernon Fish  
(b. 1956)

“Processional on ‘Delighted We Shall Be’ (Greenlandic Advent hymn)”

*+Please stand in body or spirit*

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

### Worship Notes

The worship leaders are **Genie Joslin** and **Ken Parker**.

The Advent décor in the Sanctuary was designed by **Nancy Henry**, **Nita Lindley**, and **Linda Phenix**.

The Call to Worship is “First Coming” by Madeleine L’Engle.

**Ava Daughtry** and **Grace Rodriguez** give the Invitation.

**Sam Sherman** gives the Missions Invitation.

The Unison Confession is by Jeremy Rutledge.

The instrumentalists are **Jacy Grannis** (viola), **Brian Gharala** (tambourine), and **Laura Mayo** (triangle).

The text of “Unexpected and Mysterious” is by Jeannette Lindholm.

**Deacon Nita Lindley** gives the prayer.

The Prayer of Dedication is by Steven Shakespeare.

The Affirmation of Faith is adapted from *On Earth as in Heaven: A Liberation Spirituality of Sharing* by Dorothee Sölle.

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### About Today’s Service

The epigraph for this Sunday’s bulletin is by Ben Wildflower, a printmaker in Philadelphia.

Ben took up printmaking to hand print Christmas cards. The Magnificat image made in Advent 2016 gained widespread circulation on social media the following year, prompting Ben to begin a small business. Doing art for money took a lot of fun out of art, and Ben now sells his labor doing physical work he enjoys and is a member of an AFL-CIO trade union.

The themes of his art are mostly Biblical. Ben spent his middle school and high school years in Papua New Guinea, where his parents were missionaries. Years later, he found a home in the Episcopal Church. Much of his work reflects how certain passages of Scripture are emphasized in some traditions but completely overlooked in others, such as God’s love for the impoverished. Ben writes, “The Christian life demands that all the hungry be fed, whatever the cost to the ruling class.”

–*Raymond Stubblefield*

### Children and Youth Announcements

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

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



## 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.

There will be a congregational business meeting after worship on December 21.

Christmas Eve Worship will be at 5:30pm.

## Calendar

Sun. December 7	12pm	Advent Celebration & Tree Decorating, Narthex.
Mon. December 8	7pm	Insight Meditation Houston, 2nd floor of Huff Fellowship Hall building.
Tues. December 9	7pm	Young Adult Group Christmas Party, Library.
Thurs. December 11	10am	Community Group, Zoom.
	1:15pm	Lunchtime Lectionary Lab, Zoom.
	7:15pm	Covenant Singers Rehearsal, Sanctuary.
Sun. December 14	9:30am	Adult Education, 2nd floor of Huff Fellowship Hall building: Jason Steiner explains The Facebook.
	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.*