

Education Hour

Children's Education:

There is no children and youth education this Sunday. Please join us for an Advent celebration in the narthex.

Adult Education:

There is no adult education this Sunday.

We will have Education Hour on Dec. 27 and Jan 3 at 9:30 a.m.
We will have one service each of those Sundays at 11 a.m.

Calendar

Sunday 12/20	8:15 a.m.	Worship
	9:15 a.m.	Coffee & Fellowship Carols & Wassail
	11:00 a.m.	Worship
Monday 12/21	6:00 p.m.	Theology Book Group
Tuesday 12/22	6:30 p.m.	Winter Solstice Celebration at Labyrinth
Wednesday 12/23	6:30 p.m.	Yoga
Thursday 12/24	10:00 a.m.	Garden Workday
Sunday 12/27	6:30 p.m.	Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
	No service at 8:15 a.m.	
	9:30 a.m.	Education
	10:30 a.m.	Coffee & Fellowship
	11:00 a.m.	Worship
Tuesday 12/29	6:30 p.m.	Yoga
Wednesday 12/30	10:00 a.m.	Garden Workday
Sunday 1/3	No service at 8:15 a.m.	
	9:30 a.m.	Education
	10:30 a.m.	Coffee & Fellowship
	11:00 a.m.	Worship



Thank You!

Pledged dollars goal is \$340,000.

Currently raised: \$349,022.

Pledged hours goal is 450.

Currently raised: 5,174 hours



Helpful Information

Childcare Childcare is provided in the nursery beginning at 8:45 a.m.

Communication Cards If you're a visitor with us, please fill out a blue Communication Card and drop it in the Offering basket.

Covenant Membership Membership in Covenant Church is open to all persons who affirm the loving presence of God, the life and teachings of Jesus, and the revealed Spirit throughout the ages. Those interested in learning more about Covenant are encouraged to express that interest to one of the Ministers or the Worship Leader. Any person desiring membership first becomes an inquirer and is asked to attend an orientation class designed to acquaint inquirers with the church and its beliefs. After a period of eight weeks, the inquirer may indicate a desire to become a member.

Celebrations and Concerns If you would like to share a celebration or concern with the Covenant community, please post it on the announcements board in the Narthex or e-mail it to prayer@covenanthouston.org.

Covenant Newsletter There is a weekly Newsletter available online at www.covenanthouston.org. To have this Newsletter e-mailed to you, please send an e-mail request to office@covenanthouston.org.

Covenant Recycles If you do not wish to keep your bulletin this Sunday, please recycle it by placing it on the stand located in the Narthex on your way out.

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, 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

Jeremy Rutledge
Minister

Laura Mayo
Associate Minister

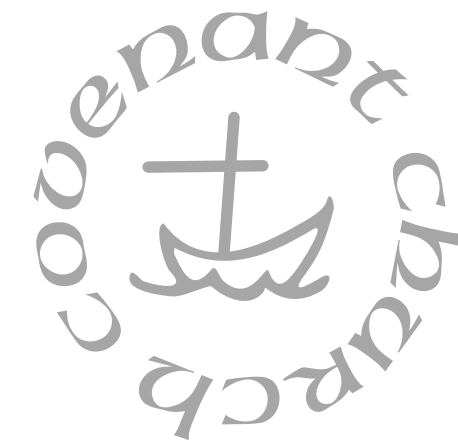
Fran Avera
Minister of Music

Carl McAliley
Organist

Pat Long
Office Administrator

Hanh-Nhi Ngo
Office Administrator

Covenant Church
4949 Caroline
Houston, TX 77004
713.668.8830



A Service of Worship for the Fourth Sunday of Advent 20 December 09

The Christian claim is particularly scandalous, though. In the face of tyrants and great empires of the Mediterranean world two thousand years ago, God slips unobtrusively into a small occupied province far from the center of worldly power, in the person of a helpless baby, born to a peasant couple who've not yet married and who are out on the road. In the Christian story, God incarnate identifies from the very start with the powerless, the oppressed, the poor, and the homeless.

Scotty McClennan

please enter for worship in silence

* Prelude “Divinum Mysterium” Wilbur Held

Call to Worship (11:00) Hector Berlioz
 “Thou Must Leave Thy Lowly Dwelling”

*+ Processional Hymn 12: Besançon
 “People, Look East”

* Lighting the Fourth Advent Candle
 Response: Cradle Song
*Come, wander where lion and lamb gently play,
 Where evil is banished and faith takes the day,
 A babe in a manger to fool the world’s eyes.
 One candle is lit for God’s loving surprise.*

Music (11:00) Regney/Baker
 “Do You Hear What I Hear”

Presenting a Bible to Byron Kress (11:00)

Scripture Lesson Luke 1:39-56
 These are our sacred stories.
Thanks be to our God.

A Time for Children

*+ Response: Mueller
*Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay
 close by me forever and love me, I pray.
 Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
 and teach us to love Thee and help us to share.*

Call to Confession

Silent Confession

Unison Confession

**O God, we pray one-way prayers,
 which allow no time for listening.
 We seek favored status for ourselves,
 our families, our friends, our nation.
 We try to manipulate you, bargain with you,
 control you, avoid you.
 We pray Christmas holiness in our homes and churches,
 rather than opening a year-long room at the inn
 for the stranger, the lonely one, the child.
 Restore us, O God.
 Let us see ourselves in your shining face. Amen.**

Music (8:15) arr. Timothy Johnson
 “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”

(11:00) Hector Berlioz
 “Thou Must Leave Thy Lowly Dwelling”

Meditation: The Songs We Choose to Sing

Hymn 600 Morning Song
 “Song of Mary”
 (sing verses 1 and 2)

Deacons’ Group Ministry

Invitation

Prayer

Offering
 Offertory: J.S. Bach
 “Sleepers, Awake!”

+ Prayer of Dedication

**Sing out my soul,
 sing of the holiness of God:
 who has delighted in a woman,
 lifted up the poor,
 satisfied the hungry,
 given voice to the silent,
 grounded the oppressor,
 blessed the full-bellied
 with emptiness,
 and with the gift of tears
 those who have never wept;
 who has desired the darkness
 of the womb,
 and inhabited our flesh.
 Sing of the longing of God,
 sing out, my soul.**

+ Doxology Old Hundredth
*Praise God from whom all blessings flow.
 Sing praise all creatures here below.
 Praise God above ye heavenly host.
 Praise Maker, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

+ Recessional Hymn 11 Valet will ich dir geben
 “O Lord, How Shall I Meet You”

+ Unison Benediction
**Even so, come, Lord Jesus.
 But how will we recognize You?
 Will You be cloaked in the baroque splendor of the stars?
 Or in the dust of our dailiness?
 Or in the thunder of pomp and circumstance?
 Or in the wear and tear of our secret lives?
 And how can You come,
 You who fit but awkwardly into the modes of our language,
 Into the turns and twists of our thinking?
 Can You steal into the silences between our words?
 Can You speak into the clamor between our pauses?
 And how will we receive You?
 With fear and trembling?
 Or with casual condescension?
 With hope and joy?
 Or with unbelief and boredom?
 We dare not answer our own questions, Lord.
 You must answer them by coming.**

Sung Benediction Gartan
 “Love Came Down at Christmas”

Postlude J. S. Bach
 “My Soul Doth Magnify the Lord”

Worship

The Acolyte lights the candles at the beginning of worship and carries the light out at the conclusion of the service. The acolyte for the second service is **Ruben Milano**.

The Worship Leader is **Lois Guehring**.

The Call to Worship is from a Minnesota Public Radio interview with Frederick Buechner.

The Fourth Candle of Advent is lit by **Moses Mason** (8:15) and **Beth Braun** (11:00).

Josh Cowan leads the Children and Youth Choir at the 11:00 service. **Reagan Miller** plays the guitar. **Eric Avera** is the soloist.

The Unison Confession is from *An Improbable Gift of Blessing* by Maren Tirabassi and Joan Jordan Grant.

The oboe solo is played by **Angie Parle**.

The Deacons’ Group Ministry report is given by **Martha Murphree** (8:15) and **Ashley Kress** (11:00).

The Prayer of Dedication is from Janet Morley in *Imaging the Word: An Arts and Lectionary Resource*.

The Unison Benediction is by **Vassar Miller**.
Jim Avera sings the Benediction in the early service.

Words of Assurance

* Ushers will seat latecomers
 + Please stand if you are able

+ Please stand if you are able