



*A Service of Worship for the
Third Sunday of Advent
12 December 2021*

It may seem naive,
in a world of grief,
to choose to live in joy;

It may seem foolish,
in a world where solemnity is power,
to sing and dance to a different tune;

It may seem cruel,
in a world of suffering and injustice,
to speak of light and celebration;

But you have come, Jesus,
to bring joy into our grief,
light into our dark nights,
singing into our mourning;
and it is an act of healing and proclamation
to believe and embrace the joy you offer.

Joy to the world!
The Lord is come!
Hallelujah!

John van der Laar

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ring in the hour

Silence is kept

Prelude

Johann Gottfried Walther
(1684-1748)

“Wachet Auf! Ruft Uns die Stimme”
Sleepers, Wake! A Voice is Calling

Call to Worship

Lighting the Third Advent Candle

Response: (please remain seated)

Cradle Song

**Come, festively sing while awaiting the birth,
join angels in dancing from heaven to earth.
Wave banners of good news, lift high thankful praise.
One candle is lit for the joy of these days.**

*+Opening Hymn #40

“Joy to the World”

Antioch

Scripture Lesson

Luke 1:67-79

These are our sacred stories.

Thanks be to God.

Time for Children

*+Response:

Moon Beams

**Joy is a song that welcomes the dawn,
telling the world that the Savior is born.
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

*Ushers will seat latecomers

+Please stand in body or spirit

Unison Confession

**The deeper that sorrow carves into your being,
the more joy you can contain.**

**Is not the cup that holds your wine
the very cup that was burned in the potter's oven?**

**And is not the lute that soothes your spirit,
the very wood that was hollowed with knives?
When you are joyous, look deep into your heart
and you shall find it is only that which has given you sorrow
that is giving you joy.**

Words of Assurance

Music

John Ferguson

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice!

Silent Reflection

THE CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table

Hymn #602

Merle's Tune

“Song of Zechariah”

Sharing the Bread and the Cup

If you would like to take communion, please move outside. Deacons will be serving communion on the garden side and labyrinth side of the church. Our communion elements include both wine and water and gluten free and vegan crackers. All are always welcome to communion at Covenant.

Prayer

Offering

Offertory

Frank Speller
(1938-2017)

“Chorale Prelude on ‘O Come, O Come, Emmanuel’”

+Prayer of Dedication

**Move us, Joyful God,
take our hands and lead us in your dance of creation.
When we are uncertain,
guard our hearts with your peace.
When our steps falter,
surround us with the strength of your Spirit.
Guide us, Dancing God,
until we move and sing with the joy of your salvation.
In the name of Emmanuel, God with Us, we pray, Amen.**

+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

**Joy is not a constant.
It comes to us in moments
- often ordinary moments.
Sometimes we miss out
on the bursts of joy
because we're too busy
chasing down the extraordinary moments.
Other times we're so afraid of the dark
we don't dare let ourselves enjoy the light.
A joyful life is not a floodlight of joy.
That would eventually become unbearable.
I believe a joyful life is made up of joyful moments
gracefully strung together
by trust, gratitude and inspiration.**

+Closing Hymn #9

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

Veni Emmanuel

Benediction

Postlude

J.S. Bach
(1685-1750)

“Nun komm der Heiden Heiland-Savior of the Nations, Come”

Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Beverly Rodgers**.

Our Advent banner was created by **Nancy Henry**.

Nita Lindley and **Linda Phenix** are creating and coordinating our Advent scene.

The third Advent candle is lit by **Nita & Joe Lindley**.

The Call to Worship is by **Vassar Miller**.

The Unison Confession is by Kahlil Gibran.

The Prayer of Dedication is by Nancy Gowler Johnson.

The Affirmation of Faith is by Brené Brown.

Education 9:00 - 9:40 a.m.

Adult Education recorded education sessions will be made available on this page: [Adult Education Recordings](#).

Our reflection on Advent themes will continue with *Joy*. A short video on the science of happiness will be followed by considering some examples of joy and happiness, again through an Advent lens. We will conclude with another glorious selection from the *Messiah*.

- *Bill Kline*

Zoom links and materials are available on the Online Gatherings page on our website: [Covenant Gatherings](#)

Announcements

Quarterly Business Meeting (Covenant) 12pm

Calendar

Sun. Dec 12	9:00 am	Adult Education, Zoom Meeting
	11:00 am	Worship in-person, Covenant
	11:00 am	Worship live-stream
	12:00 pm	Quarterly Business Meeting, Covenant
Tue. Dec 14	1:00 pm	Lunchtime Lectionary Lab, Zoom Meeting
Thur. Dec 16	10:00 am	Community Group, Zoom Meeting
Thur. Dec 16	7:15 pm	Covenant Singers Rehearsal, Covenant
Fri. Dec 17	1:00 pm	Book Club, Zoom Meeting

Helpful Information

Visitor Cards: If you're a visitor with us, please submit a [Visitors Card](#).

Celebrations and Concerns: If you would like to share a celebration or concern with the Covenant community, please submit a [Celebrations and Concerns Form](#).

Membership: If you are interested in learning more about Covenant, we encourage you to talk with one of the ministers or the worship leader. Email Office@covenanthouston.org.

Newsletter: To subscribe to the newsletter, send a request to office@covenanthouston.org.

Office Hours: The church office is currently not open, but we are responding to emails and phone calls.

*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

Laura Mayo, Senior Minister

Jodi Bash, Director of Communication

Trena' Jamison, Director of Children and Youth

Fran Avera, Minister of Music, Emerita

David Lee, Director of Music

Christopher Teel, Organist

Monique Cruz, Office and Financial Administrator

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Pursuant to Section 30.07, Penal Code (trespass by license holder with an openly carried handgun), a person licensed under Subchapter H, Chapter 411, Government Code (handgun licensing law), may not enter this property with a handgun that is carried openly.