



*A Service of Worship for  
27 December 2020*

It is today that our best work can be done  
and not some future day or future year.

W. E. B. DuBois

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

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

Ring in the hour  
Silence is kept

Prelude

J.S. Bach

“From Heaven Above to Earth I Come”

Call to Worship

Hymn

Attr: George Frederick Handel, Isaac Watts; alt.

Arr. Lowell Mason

"Joy to the World"

+Opening Prayer

**Gracious and Holy One,  
creator of all things  
and of emptiness,  
we come to you.**

**Empty us  
of the disguises and lies  
in which we hide ourselves  
from other people  
and from our responsibility  
for our neighbors  
and for the world.**

**Hollow out in us a space  
in which we will find ourselves,  
find peace and a whole heart,  
a forgiving spirit and holiness,  
the springs of laughter,  
and the will to reach boldly  
for abundant life for ourselves  
and the whole human family.**

Scripture Lesson

Luke 2: 15-19, John 16:33, Philippians 4: 4-7

These are our sacred stories.

**Thanks be to God.**

Time for Children

+Response:

Hymn to Joy

***Joyful, Joyful, we adore thee, God of glory, Lord of love;  
Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee, Opening to the sun above.  
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; Drive the gloom of doubt away;  
Giver of immortal gladness, Fill us with the light of day.***

Call to Confession

Silent Confession

Unison Confession

**We look with uncertainty  
Beyond the old choices for  
Clear-cut answers  
To a softer, more permeable aliveness  
Which is every moment  
At the brink of death;  
For something new is being born in us  
If we but let it.  
We stand at a new doorway,  
Awaiting that which comes.  
Daring to be human creatures.  
Vulnerable to the beauty of existence.  
Learning to love.**

Words of Assurance

Music

African-American Spiritual  
Arr. Hart Morris

“Go, Tell It on the Mountain”

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

Hymn

African-American Spiritual  
Arr. John W. Work III

“Go, Tell It on the Mountain”

Prayer

Invitation

+Prayer of Dedication

**As we are glad, Creator God,  
when the dawn reveals the world to us,  
innocent and fresh,  
so may we discover the infant in the manger,  
and in delight be ready to start anew.**

\*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

**We believe in the Christmas story  
that has been passed down to us  
told by our parents and theirs  
to teach us that the holy and the human  
aren't so far apart  
that sometimes miracles can happen  
can be commonplace –  
just look at a baby.**

**The story reminds us to marvel.**

**Yet we are troubled by the Christmas story  
for it envisions a different world  
an alternate kingdom  
where new seeds are sown  
and watered with irresistible ideas**

**peace on Earth  
good will to all.**

**The story calls us to work for what we want.**

**And we are grateful for the Christmas story  
the way it comes to us as a midwife  
discovering what needs to be born  
a certain mindfulness perhaps  
a commitment to justice  
the hope of real change  
and an awareness that life is a gift.**

**The story asks that we all join in its incarnation.**

**We believe in  
and are troubled by  
and are grateful for  
this Christmas story.**

**May it be born in us this day.**

Benediction

Postlude

César Franck

“Sortie: Venez, Divin Messie”

### **Worship Notes**

The worship leader is **Charity Grannis**.

Our guest proclaimer today is **Ann Stout**.

The prelude is played by Patrick Parker, organ.

The Call to Worship is by Neale Donald Walsch.

“Joy to the World” led by Carl McAliley, organ and The Covenant Singers.

The Opening Prayer is from *Guerrillas of Grace* by Ted Loder.

The Unison Confession is a poem of Anne Hillman reprinted in *Life Prayers: From Around the World*, edited by Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon.

“Go, Tell It on the Mountain” is played by The Bayou City Bells directed by **David Lee**.

“Go, Tell It on the Mountain” is led by Patrick Parker, organ and The Covenant Singers.

The Prayer is by Thomas Merton.

The Prayer of Dedication is from *A New Zealand Prayer Book*.

The Affirmation of Faith is by Jeremy Rutledge.

The postlude is played by Carl McAliley, organ.

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

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

The next two Sundays will each feature the spiritual journeys of Jackie Rundstein and Ben Ball, a couple who is relatively new to our Covenant community. We will hear about Jackie's spiritual journey on December 27<sup>th</sup> and Ben's on January 3<sup>rd</sup>. On the following two Sundays in January Ben will guide us in two sessions exploring our own life experience of theology, topics to be announced as we move into the new year.

Zoom links and materials are available on the Online Gatherings page on our website: <https://www.covenanthouston.org/covenant-gatherings.html>

### Announcements

#### **Sunday schedule for this Sunday:**

9:00 - Adult Education with Zoom

10:00 - Worship via videos on the worship website

11:00 - Gather together for coffee time with Zoom

Covenant will be holding smaller groups on Zoom. We will also hold virtual coffee time each Sunday at 11am on Facebook.

### Calendar

Sun. Dec. 27	9:00 a.m.	Worship Online
	10:00 a.m.	Adult Education via Zoom
	11:00 a.m.	Facebook Live coffee time
Wed. Dec. 30	7:00 p.m.	Covenant Singers, Zoom Meeting
Thur. Dec. 31	10:00 a.m.	Community Group, 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](mailto:Office@covenanthouston.org).

**Newsletter:** To subscribe to the newsletter, send a request to [office@covenanthouston.org](mailto: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 Children & Youth

Director of Communication

Fran Avera, Minister of Music, Emerita

David Lee, Interim Director of Music

Patrick Parker, Organist

Monique Cruz, Office and Financial Administrator

*4949 Caroline Street*

*Houston, Texas 77004*

*713-668-8830*

*[office@covenanthouston.org](mailto:office@covenanthouston.org)*

*[www.covenanthouston.org](http://www.covenanthouston.org)*

*Pursuant to Section 30.06, Penal Code (trespass by license holder with a concealed handgun), a person licensed under Subchapter H, Chapter 411, Government Code (handgun licensing law), may not enter this property with a concealed handgun.*

*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.*