

Artist Louis Glanzman

***A Service of Worship for the  
Second Sunday of Advent  
6 December 2020***

It is in *deeds* that we become aware of what our lives really are,  
of our power to harm and to hurt,  
to wreck and to ruin;  
of our ability to derive joy and to bestow it upon others;  
to relieve and to increase our own and other people's tensions.

It is in the employment of our will,  
not in reflection,

that we meet our own selves as they are;  
not as we should like them to be.

In our deeds we expose our immanent as well as our suppressed desires,  
spelling out that which we cannot apprehend.

What we may not dare to think,  
we often utter in deeds.

The heart is revealed in the deeds.

Abraham Joshua Heschel

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

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

Ringings in the hour

Silence is kept

Prelude

J.S. Bach

“Come, Savior of the Nations”

Call to Worship

Lighting the Second Advent Candle

+Opening Sentences

**Peace is the heart of God  
but how shall we find peace between people?  
There can be no flower of peace  
from the seeds of discord;  
there can be no fruit of peace  
from the root of injustice;  
there can be no reaping of peace  
from the sowing of oppression.  
But when in our thoughts  
we honour God and our neighbours,  
when in our words  
we encourage those who are lonely or depressed,  
when in our actions  
we seek justice and freedom for all,  
then peace breaks out with happiness  
in all the places where people meet  
and women and men, young and old,  
join in the tongues of all the nations  
to praise the Prince of Peace,  
Jesus, Emmanuel, God alongside us.**

## Presenting a Bible to Townes Kyle-Robbins

Minister: Every week we read from the sacred stories together and each of us understands them a bit differently. Listening together we can hear many things.

**People: Thus, we are joined as a community of interpreters, giving and receiving in our search for what is sacred.**

Minister: One of our customs is to offer our children the sacred stories in the hopes that they will read them carefully and offer us their insights.

**People: For we affirm that every person has access to the divine.**

Minister: There is one among us, Townes, who has recently turned ten. We welcome him, officially this day, into the community of interpreters. Together we have much to learn from each other. Townes, we would like to give you a Bible. It is full of stories that are sacred to us. Will you read them and think about them, always remembering that they are meant to teach us love for God, our neighbors, and our world?

Townes: I will read these sacred stories and seek to learn from them.

**People: Then together we will join with you, Townes, and with others in the great and ongoing conversation among interpreters. We will share our understanding, our experiences, our questions, and our hopes as we read from the sacred stories and open ourselves to the dialogue that follows. We welcome and affirm you as a companion in this process.**

Scripture Lesson

Matthew 1:12-25

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.*

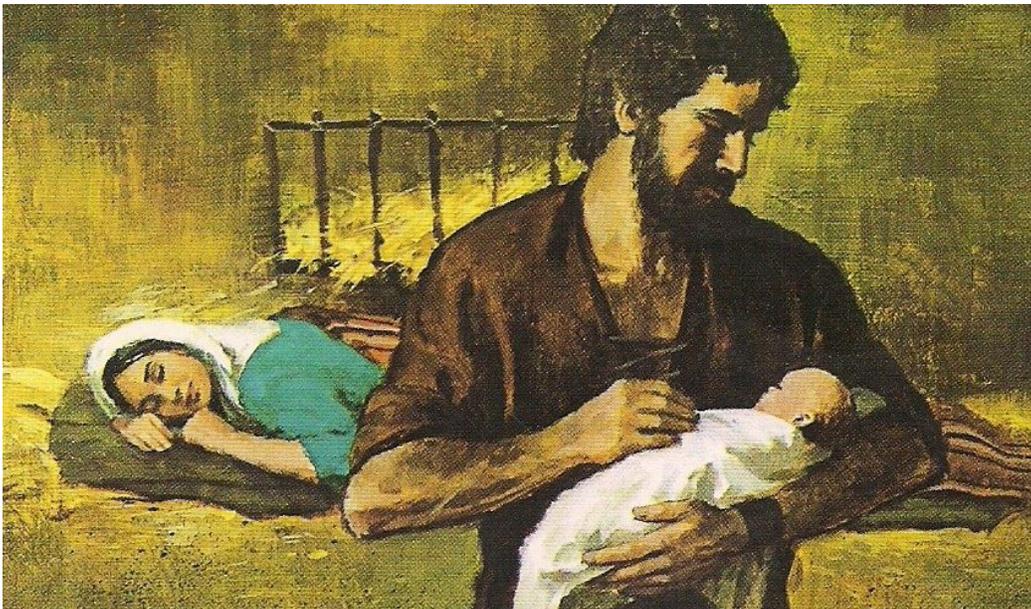
Call to Confession

Silent Confession

Unison Confession

**God of stables, stars and surprises,  
of light and hope and new life:  
Open our eyes and hearts to what you are about in our world.  
Forgive our obsession with property and propriety.  
Forgive our compromises and our narrowness of vision.  
Open us to your grace that we might hear again  
the song of the angels, and respond  
with a song in our hearts and lives.**

Words of Assurance



Music

Anonymous 15th cent. German carol

"Joseph, Dearest, Joseph, Mine"

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

Hymn

"Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"

Prayer

Invitation

**+Prayer of Dedication**

**Behind resistance,  
behind aggression and jealousy,  
behind any kind of tension,  
there is a soft spot  
we are trying to protect.  
Someone's actions hurt our feelings  
and before we notice what we're doing,  
we armor ourselves  
in a very old and familiar way.  
We can either let go  
and connect with that soft spot  
or we can continue  
to stubbornly hold on...**

**The real work of the peacemaker  
is to find the soft spot  
and the tenderness in that very uneasy place  
and stay with it.**

**\*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**

**Thunder rumbles in the mountain passes  
And lightning rattles the eaves of our houses.  
Flood waters await us in our avenues.**

**Snow falls upon snow, falls upon snow to avalanche  
Over unprotected villages.  
The sky slips low and grey and threatening.**

**We question ourselves.  
What have we done to so affront nature?  
We worry God.  
Are you there? Are you there really?  
Does the covenant you made with us still hold?**

**Into this climate of fear and apprehension, Christmas enters,  
Streaming lights of joy, ringing bells of hope  
And singing carols of forgiveness high up in the bright air.  
The world is encouraged to come away from rancor,  
Come the way of friendship.**

**It is the Glad Season.  
Thunder ebbs to silence and lightning sleeps quietly in the corner.  
Flood waters recede into memory.  
Snow becomes a yielding cushion to aid us  
As we make our way to higher ground.**

**Hope is born again in the faces of children  
It rides on the shoulders of our aged as they walk into their sunsets.  
Hope spreads around the earth. Brightening all things,  
Even hate which crouches breeding in dark corridors.**

**In our joy, we think we hear a whisper.  
At first it is too soft. Then only half heard.  
We listen carefully as it gathers strength.  
We hear a sweetness.  
The word is Peace.  
It is loud now. It is louder.  
Louder than the explosion of bombs.**

**We tremble at the sound. We are thrilled by its presence.  
It is what we have hungered for.  
Not just the absence of war. But, true Peace.  
A harmony of spirit, a comfort of courtesies.  
Security for our beloveds and their beloveds.**

**It is Christmas time, a halting of hate time.**

**On this platform of peace, we can create a language  
To translate ourselves to ourselves and to each other.**

**We, Angels and Mortals, Believers and Non-Believers,  
Look heavenward and speak the word aloud.  
Peace. We look at our world and speak the word aloud.  
Peace. We look at each other, then into ourselves  
And we say without shyness or apology or hesitation.**

**Peace, My Brother.**

**Peace, My Sister.**

**Peace, My Soul.**

Benediction

Postlude

Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck

“Come, Savior of the Nations”

### **Worship Notes**

The worship leader is **Nicholas Stepp**.

The prelude is played by Patrick Parker, organ.

The Call to Worship is from *Night Visions* by Jan L. Richardson, a quote from Jack Boozer.

The Opening Sentences is “Meditation” by John Johansen-Berg.

The Unison Confession is from *Worship for All Seasons, Volume 1* edited by Thomas Harding.

The Prayer of Dedication is adapted from *Practicing Peace in Times of War* by Pema Chödrön.

The Affirmation of Faith is “Amazing Peace: A Christmas Poem” by Dr. Maya Angelou.

The postlude is played by Patrick Parker, organ.

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

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

The adult education class will continue with recorded lectures by John Dominic Crossan, one of the prominent scholars of the life of the historical Jesus. Response to last week's talks was quite positive. The title of the lecture series is "The Challenge of Jesus," referring to the threat Jesus posed to the Roman Empire and, by extension, to local rulers of the empire such as Herod Antipas and Pontius Pilate. In the selections for this week, Crossan will talk first about Herod the Great, who was actually quite a significant figure. Other segments will provide further information about time, place, history and theology helpful in understanding the life and ministry of Jesus.

- Bill Martin

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. 6	9:00 a.m.	Worship Online
	10:00 a.m.	Adult Education via Zoom
	11:00 a.m.	Facebook Live coffee time
Wed. Dec. 9	7:00 p.m.	Covenant Singers, Zoom Meeting
	5:30 p.m.	Kids Corner, Zoom Meeting
Thur. Dec. 10	10:00 a.m.	Community Group, Zoom Meeting
	8:00 p.m.	Community Group, Zoom Meeting
Fri. Dec. 11	1:00 p.m.	Lunchtime Lectionary, 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

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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.*