



*A Service of Worship for the
Third Sunday of Advent
13 December 2020*

You can prepare
but still
it will come to you
by surprise
crossing through your doorway
calling your name in greeting
turning like a child
who quickens suddenly
within you
it will astonish you
how wide your heart
will open
in welcome
for the joy
that finds you
so ready
and still so
unprepared.

Jan Richardson

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ring in the hour

Silence is kept

Prelude

Dietrich Buxtehude

“A Babe Is Born in Bethlehem”

Call to Worship

Lighting the Third Advent Candle

+Opening Sentences

**We live in all we seek.
The hidden shows up in too-plain sight.
It lives captive on the face of the obvious
– the people, events, and things of the day
– to which we as sophisticated children
have long since become oblivious.
What a hideout: Holiness lies spread
and borne over the surface
of time and stuff like color.**

Scripture Lesson

Luke 2:8-20

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

**Gracious God, we have sought you in high and holy places;
we are ill-prepared to acknowledge your presence
among the lowly and the poor.**

We believe you are profound, but we overlook your obvious truths.

**We are anxious about the unknown but we hardly consider
the realities immediately in front of us.**

**Turn us, incarnate God, by the simple wonders of your love,
to a rebirth of faith and hope and joy. Amen.**

Words of Assurance

Music

Dietrich Buxtehude

"In Dulci Jubilo"

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

Hymn

Carol

"It Came Upon the Midnight Clear"

Prayer

Invitation

+Prayer of Dedication

**Empower me
to be a bold participant,
rather than a timid saint in waiting,
in the difficult ordinariness of now;
to exercise the authority of honesty;
rather than defer to power,
or deceive to get it;
to influence someone for justice,
rather than impress anyone for gain;**

**and, by grace, to find treasures
of joy, of friendship, of peace
hidden in the fields of the daily
you give me to plow.**

*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

**This is the promise of the incarnation that we await:
in the birth of a baby in Bethlehem,
God cracked open the heavens
and lit up the earth in the face
of a beautiful, fragile, creature of the dust—just like us.
And we—alongside God—are called to watch and wait
in active hope, transgressing false boundaries
wherever we find them
to share God's justice and grace.**

Benediction

Postlude

Johannes Brahms

“A Rose Has Sprung Up”

Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Raymond Stubblefield**.

The prelude is played by Patrick Parker, organ.

The Call to Worship is from *Leading in Worship: Worship Resources in a Mennonite Voice for Ears of All Kinds*.

The Opening Sentences are from *For the Time Being* by Annie Dillard.

The Unison Confession is from *Touch Holiness* edited by Ruth C. Duck and Maren C. Tirabassi.

The Music is sung by the Covenant Singers, directed by Fran Avera, recorded January 6, 2013.

The Prayer of Dedication is from *Wrestling the Light* by Ted Loder.

The Affirmation of Faith is from “Advent One: To Watch Again Another Night” by Jill Crainshaw.

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 Examined Life and COVID: 2020 and its inner impact.

John Schuster - John, and his life partner, Patricia Kane, brought many gifts to Covenant when they began spending part of each year in Houston when John was teaching at the Jung Center.

John shares his gentle wisdom at:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-power-your-past>

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. 13	9:00 a.m.	Worship Online
	10:00 a.m.	Adult Education via Zoom
	11:00 a.m.	Facebook Live coffee time
Wed. Dec. 16	6:00 p.m.	Youth Group, Zoom Meeting
	7:00 p.m.	Covenant Singers, Zoom Meeting
Thur. Dec. 17	10:00 a.m.	Community Group, Zoom Meeting
	8:00 p.m.	Community Group, Zoom Meeting
Fri. Dec. 18	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.

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 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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