Rend the Heavens Wide 3rd Sunday of Advent | December 17, 2023

There was a poem made

In the days of Caesar, when his subjects went to be reckoned, there was a poem made, too dark for him (naive with power) to read.

It was a bunch of shepherds who discovered in Bethlehem of Judah, the great music beyond reason and reckoning.

Waldo Williams, translated from the Welsh by Rowan Williams

cover by Lenae van der Bijl

Children's programming is available during both services on the lower level, see page 14 for details.

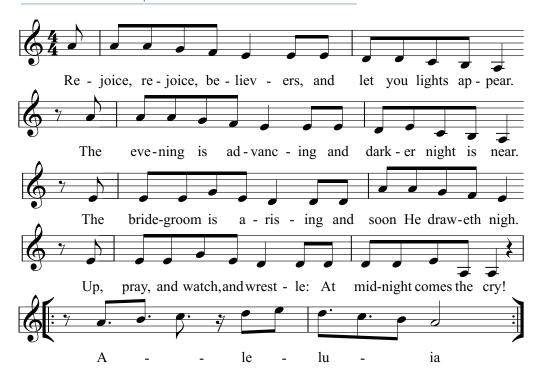
Large Print orders of worship are available in the back of the sanctuary.

Welcome

Silent moment to prepare for worship

Advent Colors: Purple recalls the Royalty of the present and coming King, and the candles recall the Light of the world, Jesus Christ.

Call to Worship



from Matthew 25

Leader:

Let us keep our lamps trimmed and burning. Though the bridegroom may tarry, let us stay awake through the night so that on that day and hour we do not know, we might find the door opened for us, and greet our Lord with praise and adoration.

All: "Hallelujah!
For the Lord our God
the Almighty reigns.
Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready.



Rejoice, Rejoice Believers, Words: Laurentius Laurenti, 1700; Music: Paul van der Bijl, 2008

Lighting of the Advent Candle

The Advent wreath is a circle with no beginning and no end. It is a symbol of God's unending love and faithfulness.

Matt Ver Steeg & Jessica Hull, and their children Nora and Adam ①, Kristen & Tyler Darke, and their children, Jane and Henry ②

Reader: The people who walked in darkness

have seen a great light;

those who lived in a land of deep darkness —

on them light has shined.

All: Prepare the way of the Lord.

Reader: We light the first candle as a sign of hope in the

Christ who came and who will come again.

All: Prepare the way of the Lord.

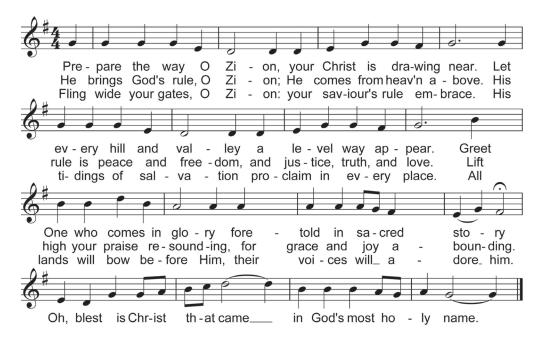
Reader: We light the second candle as a sign of the **love** of

Christ who bore our darkness so that we could see His light.

All: Prepare the way of the Lord.

Reader: We light the third candle as a sign of the **joy** that Christ gives his children through His saving grace.

All: Prepare the way of the Lord.



Prepare the Way, words, Frans Mikael Franzen 1772-1847, music: Bereden vag for Herren, 1697

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Leader: Faithful God, you have opened the door to us through your Son, Jesus Christ, the bridegroom. We greet you with praise and adoration.

All: Jesus, we wait for you to come.

Our lamps our burning with the hope and expectation of your return! While we wait, grow us in grace by your Spirit.

silent moment of adoration

Choral: Covenant Choir, Salvation is Created, by Pavel Chesnokov

Salvation is created, in the midst of the earth, O God, O our God. Alleluia.

An Advent Confession of Sin

from Isaiah 2:3-5

Leader: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, that he may teach us his ways and the nations shall beat their swords into plowsha

and the nations shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

Come, let us walk in the light of the LORD.

All: Father, forgive us for we prefer darkness rather than light, and walk in the ways of war rather than your peace. Grant us your peace.

Silent time to confess



Assurance of Pardon

from Isaiah 11 and 12

Leader: Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD

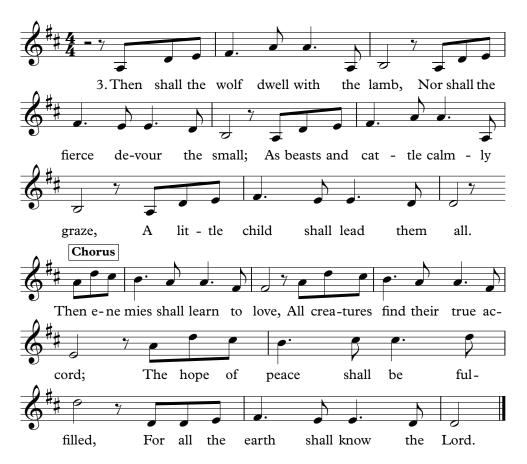
is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.

All: For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

tne sea.

Leader: The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them.

All: For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.



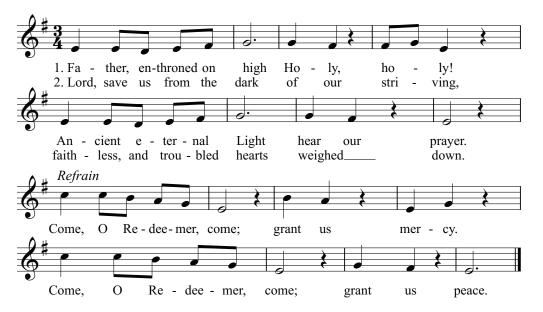
Lessons from the Word

read by Kristin and Shane O'Grady ①, Michael Bergstrom ②

Gospel Lesson - Matthew 1.18-23, p.807 New Testament Lesson - Romans 5.1-5, p.942

Reader: The Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God



Come, O Redeemer, Come, by Fernando Ortega, 1995

The Word

Pastor Aaron Baker Hope, Zephaniah 3:14–20, p.790

¹⁴ Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart,

O daughter of Jerusalem!

¹⁵ The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies.

The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil.

¹⁶ On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:

"Fear not, O Zion;

let not your hands grow weak.

¹⁷ The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save;

he will rejoice over you with gladness;

he will quiet you by his love;

he will exult over you with loud singing.

¹⁸ I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival, so that you will no longer suffer reproach.

¹⁹ Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors.

And I will save the lame

and gather the outcast,

and I will change their shame into praise

and renown in all the earth. ²⁰ At that time I will bring you in,

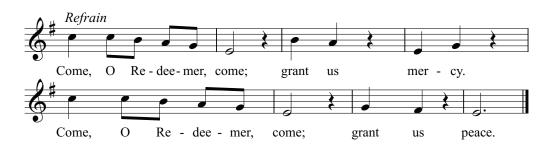
at the time when I gather you together;

for I will make you renowned and praised

among all the peoples of the earth,

when I restore your fortunes

before your eyes," says the LORD.



Sacrament of Communion

2 Corinthians 13:11-14: Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

Leader: The Lord be with you All: And also with you.

Leader: Lift up your hearts

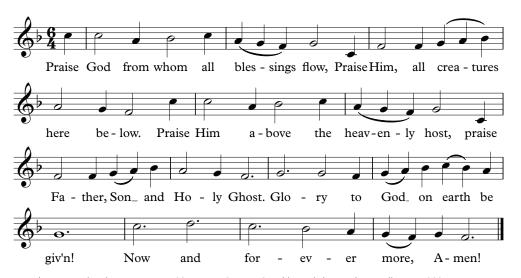
All: We lift them up to the Lord.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God

All: It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

Greet each other in the name of Christ

Giving back to God a portion of what he's already given us is an important part of the Christian life. The bread and wine we use in communion are a picture of the gifts that God has given us, offered back to him as an act of worship. You can offer your resources back to God in support of the work of the church by placing your offering in the boxes in the back on the way out. You can also give online at covenantchicago.org/give, use the QR code on page 16, or text a donation amount to 84321.



Doxology, Words: Thomas Ken, 1709, Music, Sussex Carol by Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1900

The Great Thanksgiving, from the Anglican Church, 1998

Leader: As we approach your table, grant us the peace with each other that we find in you so

that we can come to this feast united in love. Accept now our offerings of bread, wine

and gifts to you Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to the work of your kingdom.

All: It is indeed right and good to give you thanks and praise, almighty God and everlasting Father, through Jesus Christ your Son.

Leader: He is the one foretold by all the prophets,

whom the Virgin bore with love beyond all telling.

John the Baptist was his herald and made him known when at last he came.

All: In his love Christ fills us with joy as we prepare to celebrate his birth,

so that when he comes again he may find us watching in prayer,

our hearts filled with wonder and praise.

Leader: And so, with angels and archangels,

and with all the company of heaven,

we proclaim your glory,

and join in their unending hymn of praise.

All: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,

heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.



Distribute the Bread & Cup

Please note that we serve both red wine and white grape juice. Gluten free bread is available in a separate dish.

Receiving Communion

Communion (also called The Lord's Supper or the Eucharist) is the family meal of baptized Christians. We invite all to partake of this sacrament who trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation, and seek strength to live more faithfully for him.

Silent prayers for reflection

Prayer for those taking communion

Lord Jesus, your perfect life, your death and resurrection are the source of all blessing in this life and the life to come. As I eat this bread and drink this cup, renew me in the joy and glory of knowing and serving you. I come to this table on the basis of your merit only and not my own. As you have completely and fully offered yourself for me, I now completely and fully offer myself to you as a living sacrifice. Amen.

Prayer for those searching for truth

Lord Jesus, you claim to be the way, the truth, and the life. If what you claim is true, please guide me, teach me, and open to me the reality of who you are. Grant that I might be undaunted by the cost of following you as I consider the reasons for doing so. Give me an understanding of you that is coherent, convincing, and that leads to the life that you promise. Amen.

Prayer of belief

Lord Jesus, I admit that I am weaker and more sinful than I ever before believed, but, through you, I am more loved and accepted than I ever dared hope. I thank you for paying my debt, bearing my punishment on the cross and offering forgiveness and new life. Knowing that you have been raised from the dead, I turn from my sins and receive you as Savior and Lord. Amen.

Prayer for those struggling with sin

Lord Jesus, you have called us to follow you in baptism and in a life of committed discipleship in your church. Grant that I may take the necessary steps to be one with your people, and live in the fullness of your Spirit. Grant also that I may see in you the fulfillment of all my need, and may turn from every false satisfaction to feed on you, the true and living bread. Enable me to lay aside the sin that clings so closely, and run with perseverance the race set before me, looking to you, the author and finisher of my faith. Amen.

Song for Communion

You are welcome to join in song:



The King Shall Come, John Brownlie, traditional American melody. Kentucky Harmony 1816.

Respond to the Table

Leader:

Remembering your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we take from your creation this bread and this wine and joyfully celebrate his dying and rising, as we await the day of his coming.

With thanksgiving we offer our very selves to you to be a living and holy sacrifice dedicated to your service.

All: Great is this mystery of faith:

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.



The Work of the People

Romans 12:4–6, For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them.

in community

Events and opportunities at Covenant during the coming weeks.

Go With Joy



Leader: Benediction

Romans 15:5–7 May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Welcome to Covenant Presbyterian Church

TODAY AT COVENANT

1st Service, 9am

2nd service, 11:15am

Nurseries, ages 0-4, lower level

- Nurseries, ages 0-4, lower level
- Children's Worship: preK-5th Grade, lower level

Common Ground, 10:15am

- Coffee and snacks in the Fellowship Hall
- Nursery: Ages 0-4 (Lower Level)
- Sunday School: PreK-8th Grade (Lower Level)
- Sunday School: High School (Youth Room, Ed Building)
- Adult Education: Waiting (All Saints Room, Lower Level)
- Adult Education: The Once and Future King (Library, Ed Building)



Advent and Christmas Calendar:

December 17: Third Sunday of Advent

December 24: Fourth Sunday of Advent, A Service of Lessons & Carols,

only one service at 10:15 (nursery provided for children (0-4);

no Common Ground

December 24: Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, 7 pm

(nursery provided for children 0-4)

December 31: Only one service at 10:15 am (nursery provided for children 0-4);

no Common Ground



Communion Servers: Jonathan and Sara Ellison, Mark Lester (9:00); Christie Kay, Hyunseob Kim, Mike

FisherDubois (11:15)

Ushers: Chuck Michalek, Matt Ver Steeg, Mark Scheerhorn (9:00), Michael Bergstrom (11:15)

Large Print orders of worship and electronic hearing assistance devices are available in the back of the sanctuary. An usher can assist you with finding and using these items.

COMMON GROUND CLASSES

Waiting: In this Advent class taught by women on the Spiritual Formation team, we will explore our own seasons of waiting and how God meets us in them. We will hear personal stories from some of Covenant's own people and look to specific stories in scripture that point us to the tasks, transition and transformation of waiting and how those can lead us to anticipation, trust and hope. Join us in the All Saints Room this week as Jennie von Drehle teaches on hope and transformation in waiting.

The Once and Future King: Prophecy, Incarnation & Apocalypse. Advent gathers up all of time for God's people. In Advent, we remember the ancient promises of a coming King, we celebrate the mystery of Incarnation, and we anticipate a second Advent of Jesus in glory. Join us in the Library as Jason Stanghelle teaches on the apocalypse.

Communicants Class: The staff will teach a two-week communicants class for children beginning Sunday, January 7. The class will address the sacraments, repentance, faith, and how we are to take the Lord's supper.



The class is intended to prepare children who may be ready to take communion to talk with one of the pastors about being admitted to the table. We ask that each child in the class have a parent in attendance with him or her. The class will meet during Common Ground at 10:15 on January 7 and 14. For more information or to RSVP, please contact Ian Troll (ian@covenantchicago.org).

Winter Class Break: On December 24 and 31, there will be no Common Ground. On January 7 and 14, we'll gather together in the Fellowship Hall for bagels as a full congregation. Common Ground nurseries, Sunday School and adult classes will take a break with the exception of the communicants class. Classes will resume on January 21.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Small Groups: Covenant small groups meet throughout the city. Small groups are a great way to get to know others at Covenant, study Scripture, and pray together. If you'd be interested in learning more about small groups, please contact Pastor Dan. (dadamson@covenantchicago.org).

Pickleball at Covenant: Join others from Covenant for pickleball in the gym on some Saturdays from 9 to 11 am. All are welcome to join; instructors will be available if you're new to the sport. Sign up on our website (covenantchicago.org/pickleball/) for upcoming dates: December 23 and 30. Questions? Contact Ian Cull (iancull74@gmail.com)

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Ushers Needed: Ushers are the first people to greet people as they come to Covenant. They pass out the orders of worship, help people find the bathrooms and classrooms, and help at the end of service to clean up the sanctuary. Most ushers serve once a month. If you'd like to join our usher team, please contact Margret-Ann Natsis (margretann.natsis@gmail.com).

Common Ground Volunteers: Covenant is looking for additional volunteers to help with coffee and snacks for Common Ground. Volunteers help with either setup (during the 9:00 am service) or clean up (during the 11:15 service), as well as helping during Common Ground to replenish coffee as needed. Most volunteers serve once a month. If you'd be interested, please contact Larissa Bossemeyer (lbossemeyer@covenantchicago. org).

Serve Breakfast at Breakthrough: On the fourth Saturday of every month, Covenant provides breakfast for the Breakthrough women's shelter. If you are interested in volunteering to help purchase, prepare and serve food to shelter guests, you can reach out to breakthrough@covenantchicago.org for more information or sign up for upcoming dates on our website: https://covenantchicago.org/events/breakfast-at-breakthrough/.

Gospel Justice Center: Please pray for Covenant's Gospel Justice Center, a legalaid clinic created in partnership with Together Chicago and Administer Justice, and run entirely by Covenant volunteers. On the second Saturday of every month, we welcome our neighbors with legal questions from the Logan Square, Bucktown, Garfield Park and Humboldt Park neighborhoods. Please pray for us to care well for our guests, and pray for us to grow in our ability to become a more known presence in our neighborhood.

Staff Gift QR Code

NEWS AND UPDATES

Staff Gift: Each holiday season, the elders and deacons collect a special offering for a staff gift, which is distributed to the pastoral and support staff. If you would like to contribute you can use the envelopes available at the Welcome Table, write "staff gift" in the memo line of a check or give online (https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/staffgift). Please note: staff gift is not tax deductible.

Youth Bake Sale Thank You: Thank you to all who supported the Youth Group in their bake sale last week! They raised over \$1400 towards their retreat at Camp Timberlee this winter.

Year End Giving: Please note per IRS regulations, contributions to Covenant must be submitted or postmarked by December 31, 2023 in order to appear on your 2023 Contribution Statement. If you have any questions, contact Gene Pierson (gpierson@covenantchicago.org).

Advent Devotional. Advent Devotional guides are available on the Welcome Table. You can also find it online at covenantchicago.org/sundays/advent/.

Sermon Devotional Emails: Twice a week, a team from Covenant sends sermon devotional emails that will help you reflect on and pray through the prior week's sermon text and Scripture lessons. Email devotional@covenantchicago.org to sign up.

Meals Ministry: The Meals Ministry cares for our community by providing occasional meals to individuals and families. If you have recently experienced health problems, have welcomed a new child into your family, or have suffered a loss, please visit covenantchicago.org/meals-ministry/ to request a meal. The Meals Ministry also seeks volunteers to cook and deliver meals, and you can sign up to volunteer through the website link. Questions? Contact meals@covenantchicago.org.

Let Us Pray for You. Covenant's staff meets to pray for the congregation throughout the week. We would be honored to pray for you. You can share prayer requests by writing them on the tear out portion at the back of the order of worship or by emailing Pastor Dan (dadamson@covenantchicago.org).

Sermon Text Next Week: John 1

Giving QR Code

Pastoral Staff

Aaron Baker Pastor, abaker@covenantchicago.org

Dan Adamson Associate Pastor, dadamson@covenantchicago.org

Support Staff

Larissa Bossemeyer

Director of Ministries: Ibossemeyer@

covenant chicago.org

Gene Pierson

Director of Finance & Property: gpierson@covenantchicago.org

Ian Troll

Director of Children and Youth Ministries: ian@covenantchicago.org

Paul van der Bijl

Director of Worship and Music: pvanderbijl@covenantchicago.org

Session

Aaron Baker (Moderator), Dan Adamson, David Dillon, Dave Hoover, Brad Lewis, Steve Lehmann, Joshua Norton

Please direct correspondence for the Session to session@covenantchicago.org.

Diaconate

Andrew Dykstra, Jonathan Ellison, Phil Koerner, Joel Miller, Margret-Ann Natsis, Shane Rector, Jon Skinner, Deb Van Der Molen, Matt Ver Steeg, Kylene Young

Treasurer: Ben Harvey

If you're in need or wish to speak with a deacon, you can email us at diaconate@covenantchicago.org.

Welcome to Covenant

Please fill out this form, tear it out, and put it in one of the offering boxes at the back of the church.

circle one:

	New to Covenant Regular Attender Member
Name:	
Email:	
Address:	
Phone:	
	†This is new or updated information †
I am interested in:	
	More information
	Small Groups
	Service Opportunities
	Membership
	Receiving the Email Letter
	Children and Youth Ministry
	Other:
Prayer Requests:	

Covenant Life

Worship Together:

We are made to worship the Triune God, and our worship is always ordered around Jesus Christ and the forgiveness and grace he secured for us by his cross, resurrection and ascension. Gathering around this good news together on Sundays strengthens our appetites, imaginations and abilities to live as followers of Jesus.

Grow and Learn Together:

Learning about our faith and growing together in it forms us into human beings who are fully swept up into the work God is doing to reconcile all things to himself in Jesus. Learning is more than simply knowing; it is the internalization of truth that leads to mature thinking and acting.

Serve Together:

The natural outcome of receiving and experiencing grace is to be propelled outward into mission and service. All of us have been given gifts to use for the good of our common life and for the good of the broken world around us, and we encourage everyone to regularly use their gifts in service.



a church, a city, and a world continually made new by the grace of Christ

2012 W. Dickens Chicago, IL 60647 773.486.9590

covenantchicago.org