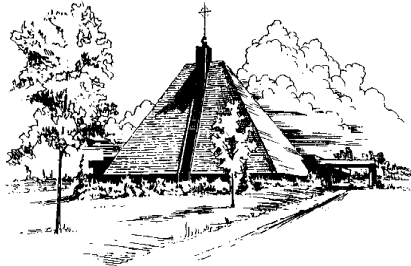


COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

CINNAMINSON, NEW JERSEY



3rd SUNDAY OF ADVENT

10:00 AM

DECEMBER 17, 2023

Covenant's Mission Statement

"To share God's love with all people, to nurture each other, to serve those in need, and to invite everyone into fellowship and worship as we strive to follow the example of Jesus Christ."

PRELUDE

"Watchman, Tell Us of the Night"

arr. Hayes

GREETING AND PRAYER OF PREPARATION

Holy Spirit living within us, guide our hearts and minds as we welcome today all those who worship with us at Covenant Presbyterian Church. Give us discerning hearts so that everyone who crosses our threshold feels welcomed in the spirit of your love. Help us to recognize each person as an individual sent by you who will enrich our lives. And most of all, O God, let this be a place of love and acceptance of all your children; in the name of your child, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CHORAL INTROIT

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

Larson

CALL TO WORSHIP

When God restores our fortune, our dreams will come true.

We will sing "Glory!" to our God; we will rejoice in our Savior's birth.

Our mouths shall be filled with laughter; joy shall chime from our lips.

God has made it clear: those who serve are God's children.

Then we will proclaim: 'look what the Lord has done':

so others will know beyond any doubt how the Holy One has blessed us with hope.

We wept - now we will cheer "Joy! Joy!" We were lost - now we will run home laughing.

For God has picked us up where we fell; God has kept the promises made so long ago.

With prayer and praise, in scripture and in song, let us Worship the Living God!



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Rosica Family

3rd Candle (pink): Hope is assertive, and peace is subversive. But joy? Joy is rebelliously provocative. How dare joy make its way into our dreary, despairing world? How dare joy show up in all its flashiness—it even gets a pink candle for crying out loud! How dare we, in the midst of war and hate and despair, deep division and grief and violence, come together and rejoice? How dare some shepherds start speaking of good news and the heavenly host declaring peace on earth in the midst of a violent Roman occupation? But if they did it, why can't we? Why can't we sing for joy that God is breaking open into our world again? Why can't we be rebellious against the politicians and news anchors and doomsday sayers that there is joy for the world—no—joy to the world! We light this candle because God is provoking us to sing for joy, to sing and dance and laugh so hard we have tears, because there is peace and hope in this world.

Let us pray:

God of joy, call us to sing, remind us to dance, tickle us into fits of laughter, because You are in our world and in our lives and doing something new, right now. Death and despair have nothing on You, and we rejoice in You, our Savior. Amen.

OPENING HYMN

"O Lord, How Shall I Meet You"

(See page 10)

CALL TO CONFESSION

God's promise to us is eternal. God wishes to bless us with hope, with joy, with life. But our desires lead us to reject God and these blessings. Let us confess how too often we choose the path of tears, rather than the joy which can lead us to God's heart. Together, let us pray:

PRAYER OF CONFESSION:

We try not to do any evil, Anointing God, but it is so hard to let go of those little things we enjoy - gossiping about the pregnant girl in the neighborhood; making light of the accomplishments of a co-worker; daydreaming about someone else's partner.

Forgive us, Loving God. You have freely given us salvation, yet we act as if we are the ones who paid for it. Help us to rejoice always in your grace, and to give thanks in every moment for that life we receive through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.



SILENT MEDITATION



LORD HAVE MERCY (3x)

576

Lord, Have Mercy

Lord, have mer - cy.
Christ, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy on us.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Hear the good news and be a peace with yourself:

Go, and take God's Good News to others: to those held captive by sin; to those cradling broken hearts; to those grieving lost relationships. God forgives us all and makes us new.

Even as we rejoice in God's mercy, we will tell everyone we meet, "God has done such wondrous things for us, and wants to do the same for you!" Thanks be to God! Amen.

Let us stand up as we are able and praise the God who loves us!

WE ARE FORGIVEN (1x)

FORGIVENESS

447

We Are Forgiven

We are for - giv - en. We are for - giv - en. Thanks be to
God. Thanks be to God. We are for - giv - en.
We are for - giv - en. Thanks be to God. Thanks be to God.



SHARING OF PEACE

Since God has forgiven us in Christ, let us forgive one another. The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

And also with you.

Let us greet one another in Jesus' name!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Together, let us pray.

Guide us, O God, by your Word and Spirit, that in your light we may see light, in your truth find freedom, and in your will discover your peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed and did not deny it, but he confessed, "I am not the Messiah." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said,

"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord, 'as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, "Why, then, are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandal." This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

Glory to You, Lord Christ.

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

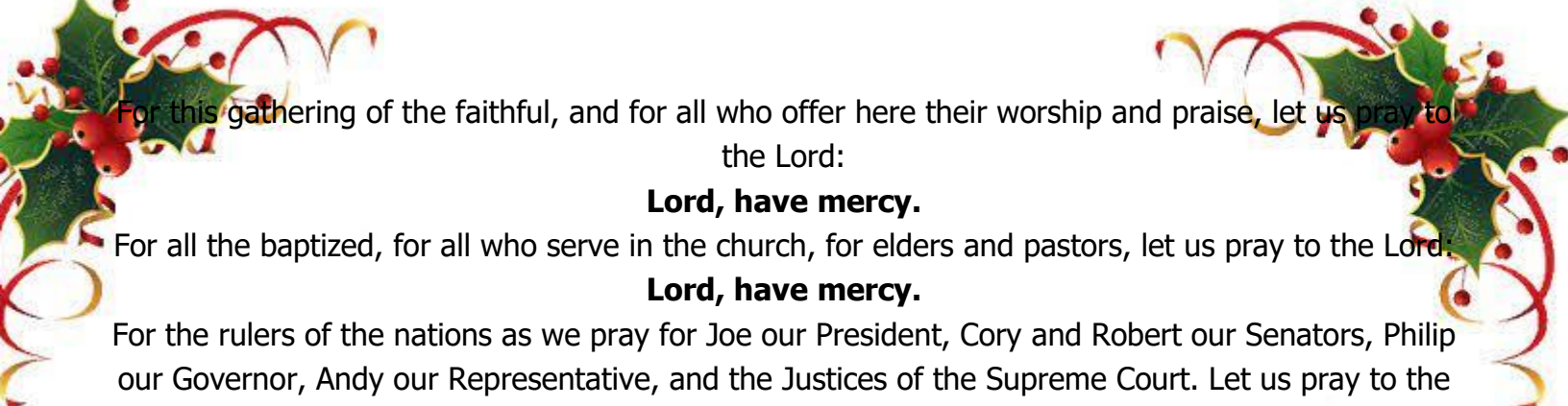
For the peace from above, for the loving kindness of God, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the world, for the unity of the church of God, and for the well-being of all peoples, let us pray to the Lord

Lord, have mercy.





For this gathering of the faithful, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For all the baptized, for all who serve in the church, for elders and pastors, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For the rulers of the nations as we pray for Joe our President, Cory and Robert our Senators, Philip our Governor, Andy our Representative, and the Justices of the Supreme Court. Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this town of Cinnaminson, for every city and community, and for those who live in them, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For seasonable weather, and for abundant harvests for all to share, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For the good earth which God has given us, and for the wisdom and will to conserve it, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For those who travel by land, water, or air, or through outer space, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For the aged and infirm, for the widowed and orphaned, and for the sick and the suffering, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For the poor and the oppressed, for those unemployed and the destitute, for prisoners and captives, and for all who remember and care for them, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For deliverance in times of affliction, strife, and need, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For blessings and mercies we have received and need:

Lord, have mercy.

For all your children to know the peace and joy of your supporting care, let us pray to the Lord

Lord, have mercy.

For all who have died in the hope of the resurrection and are at rest, let us give thanks to the Lord.

Eternal God, ruler of all things in heaven and earth, accept the prayers of your people, and strengthen us to do your will; through Jesus Christ. Amen.

CALL TO STEWARDSHIP

May we not hide our gifts, Loving God, but offer them to you with trust and hope, so all may join us on the journey to your kingdom of grace and hope, peace and healing. The offerings for the work of the church will now be received.

OFFERTORY

“Silent Night”

arr. Springer





DOXOLOGY

"Praise God from Whom All Blessings"

#809

OFFERTORY PRAYER

May we not hide our gifts, Loving God, but offer them to you with trust and hope, so all may join us on the journey to your kingdom of grace and hope, peace and healing. The offerings for the work of the church will now be received.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

CANTATA

"Love Came Down at Christmas"

Joel Raney

"Love Came Down"

"Come Emmanuel, Come

"Grant Us Peace"

"Listen to the Joyful Song"

"Love Be Yours, Love Be Mine"

"Love Divine"

CHARGE AND BLESSING

Go out into the world ... be with us all. Amen.

O Lord, may you this week open up doors for us to share your love!

POSTLUDE

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

arr. Hayes

MINISTERS: Donna and Scott Scioli (Ushers), Janette Hutchinson (Refreshments)

COVENANT CHOIR

Music Director – Greg DiBona

Narrator – Mike Martin

Soprano


Kelly Higgs
Nicole Peak
Pat Salmon
Susan Staub
Leslie Todd

Alto

Marge Jeffries
Carol Lovell
Ann Rosica

Tenor

Jeanne Martin
Zack Rosica
Bob Seither





ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. DAILY PRAYER

Covenant is now offering Daily Prayer videos narrated by our new Pastor, Bob! This is a wonderful way to begin each day in prayer. If you are not receiving them, please notify Bob, or Greg and you will be placed on the email list.

2. GIVING ENVELOPES

All 2024 envelopes will be available next week. They will be organized by number and will be located in the narthex.

3. INITIAL OFFERING: As a congregation in the Presbyterian Church (USA), we support the administrative costs of the Presbytery for Southern Jersey, the Synod of the Northeast and the General Assembly. These costs are shared equitably through per capita apportionment as each congregation contributes money based on the number of active members. Please prayerfully consider using your special envelope marked Initial Offering to help Covenant meet its giving responsibility for our connectional church. For 2024 we are requesting a contribution of \$40.00 per member to meet the per capita costs of the presbytery, synod and general assembly. Thank you.

4. 2023 YEAR END GIVING. If you would like to know where your 2023 giving record stands against your estimate of giving, please see Chris Todd. He'd be happy to print out your giving record. To be credited for 2023, giving should be submitted by December 31, 2023.

5. CHRISTMAS CARDS

The December bulletin board welcomes Christmas greeting cards from our members. Please feel free to send them or drop them off to the church office and they will be posted on the bulletin board - a wonderful way to reconnect with our Covenant friends.

6. FLOWER CHART

The flower chart is posted on the bulletin board for 2024. Sign your name on a specific date in order to dedicate flowers to a loved one.

7. CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

Join us for our Christmas Eve Service at 4PM! We will have our bell choir, chancel choir and guest flutist Elisa Muzzillo and guest violinist, Nina Zubaidi providing music. The "ABC's of Christmas" will conclude with the traditional candle lighting ceremony.

8. ANGEL TREE

The Deacon's Angel Tree is ready for the 2023 season. We're sponsoring two local families in need who could use our help making this Christmas a little brighter. The items on the Angels are specific to these families, not generic items as in past years. All the gifts are things the families have requested. Beginning Sunday, December 3rd. You will be able to take an Angel from the Angel Tree and help make a very special Christmas for these needy families. All items should be returned unwrapped, with the Angel tag attached, by Sunday December 17th. You can direct any questions to Jeanne Martin. Thank you.



9. SUNDAY SCHOOL

Attention all children starting at age 4. Covenant will be hosting Sunday School during the 10am Church Service on the following dates: December 17th.

10. YOUR PARTICIPATION IS NEEDED! Members are invited to participate in our services. Please contact Bonnie Cain or Greg DiBona if you are interested in reading scripture or leading our worship services. We are also in need of more volunteers to operate the camera and soundboard. Please contact the church office if you are interested.

11. BIBLE STUDY The Bible Study will be located in the lounge on Mondays at 11AM. All are welcome!

12. STEWARDSHIP: Total Income for 12/10: Total Income: \$2432.00, Envelope Giving: \$2427.00, Deacons: \$110.00.





Christmas Eve Service

December 24th, 2023

4:00 PM



Covenant Presbyterian Church



2618 New Albany Road

Cinnaminson, NJ 08077



Prayer List

Thoughtful prayers following Pastor Bob's strong message. Thank you! We are appreciative of Betty Herskovitz leading us in scripture reading and announcements of upcoming activities. Thank you to the choir and Greg for their Advent music.

Prayers are still urgently needed for peace in our world, our country and our communities. The violence must come to an end.

Please keep our Covenant families and friends in your prayers:

Treva - continued progress in her healing and ease of back pain so that she might return to good health
Carol Grunigen - able to keep strong as she watches over her mom
Betty Graham - once again she is in the hospital - please pray for healing in her leg
Joan Samph - relief from the pain in her knee and leg
B. Ann and Dave DuBois - good care as they both deal with health issues - we miss seeing them
Terri Bell - able to rest in comfort and strength for Ken as he takes very good care of her
Barbara Van Tassel's friend, Betty McCord - receiving very good care
Bonnie Cain's sister, Valerie - recovering from a fall and scheduled for surgery
Mary Lou's friend, 2-year-old Logan - receiving radiation to hopefully free him of cancer and allow him to grow healthfully
Betty Herskovitz's friend, Bill - good results from treatment
Rita DiBona - Greg's grandmother - healing for her following a fall
Bruce and his family - securing an apartment and good care for Bruce as he deals with health concerns
Susan's friend's mother-in-law, Angie Ieradi - hospitalized with persistent and serious health concerns that she respond well to treatment
Dick Craft for good care and rehabilitation that he is now receiving.



O Lord, How Shall I Meet You 104

1 O Lord, how shall I meet you, how wel-come you a - right?
 2 Love caused your in - car - na - tion; love brought you down to me;
 3 You come, O Lord, with glad - ness, in mer - cy and good-will,

Your peo - ple long to greet you, my hope, my heart's de - light!
 your thirst for my sal - va - tion pro-cured my lib - er - ty.
 to bring an end to sad - ness and bid our fears be still.

O kin - dle, Lord most ho - ly, a lamp with - in my breast,
 O love be - yond all tell - ing, that led you to em - brace
 In pa - tient ex - pec - ta - tion we live for that great day

to do in spir - it low - ly all that may please you best.
 in love, all loves ex - cel - ling, our lost and fal - len race.
 when your re - newed cre - a - tion your glo - ry shall dis - play.

Though many Advent hymns address Christ with entreaty and invitation, this more contemplative text considers how an individual prepares for and responds to Christ's coming. It also brings together a recollection of the First Coming with an anticipation of the Second Coming.