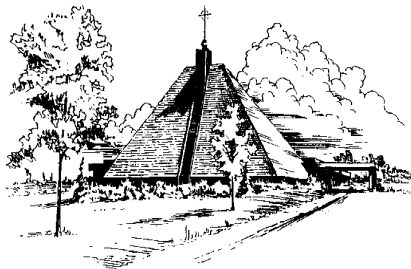


# COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

CINNAMINSON, NEW JERSEY



**4<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**10:00 AM**

**DECEMBER 24, 2023**

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## **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**

"Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"

arr. Hayes

### **GREETING AND PRAYER OF PREPARATION**

Sandi Pascone

**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.**

### **CALL TO WORSHIP**

O come, early morning Mist: slowly moving over our lives to swaddle us in your peace, as we seek to walk through these moments.

**O come, gently falling Grace: calming us in this season that has gotten so out of control we cannot hear the angels sing, or see the shepherds pointing the way.**

O come, Walker with the winds: bring cooling peace to our over-heated fears of the future; knock us off our feet so we can make angels in the snow with all the kids around us.

**O come, Flinger of galaxies, so that as we gaze on them in the silence of holiness, our path to Bethlehem, as well as your heart, might be illuminated for us.**

O Come, Imagination beyond compare, as you gather us up with all of creation to dance with joy around the wonder of your love.

**O come to us, and live with us, this day and forever, Immanuel. O come!**

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



## LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Todd Family

4<sup>th</sup> Candle (purple): Hope is assertive, and peace subversive, and joy provocative. But we know that faith, hope, and love abide, these three, and the greatest of these is love. Love is all these words and all the things we cannot say. Love is transformative. Love is the only thing that can change the world because love has changed us. Love has come to us as a God who became one of us, lived and died for us, and lives again. Love has come to us as a God who risked everything to make us understand that nothing is impossible. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. We will never give up because love is real. Love simply is there. God's love in us is a fire that never dies. God loves you so, so much, that God sent the only Son for us, so that we might all know God's love eternally. We light this candle because God is love.

Together, let us pray:

**God of love, remind us that love is transformative, but it must be shared. We must love one another as You have first loved us, for You loved us so much You sent the Son to us, so that we might know that love can never die, that Your steadfast love remains forever. As Your love transformed the world long ago, Your love continues to transform us into Your children, and we await the promise that love will change the world again. Amen.**

## OPENING HYMN

"Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun"

(See page 12)

## CALL TO CONFESSION

Advent is the time to prepare; Advent is the time to watch and wait; Advent is the time to open our hearts to God, as we pray together saying,

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION:

**We watch for packages to arrive and Christmas cards to be delivered, but we do not keep our eyes open for your coming, Approaching God. We expect our Christmas 'wish list' to be filled, and for the pile under the tree to grow and grow, but we hope you do not expect to transform our lives. We notice where to find the best bargains, and what decorations our neighbors have put on their houses, but we do not notice the little, the least, the lost, the last walking down our streets.**

**Forgive us, Saving God, for our misplaced priorities. May we watch for your coming, may we reach out to those in need, may we wait for hope to come, even as Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, arrives to live in our hearts.**

## 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:

The good news is made known to all people: Christ Jesus was born to save us from our sins.

**Glory and praise to the only wise God, who fills us with healing and hope. Amen.**

## 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.**

### 2 SAMUEL 7:1-11, 16

Now when the king was settled in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind, for the Lord is with you."

But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, "Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar? 'Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David:

Thus says the Lord of hosts:

I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel, and I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place and be disturbed no more, and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel, and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house.

Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever."

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God!**




### SPECIAL MUSIC

"It Came Upon a Midnight Clear"

arr. Springer





**PSALM 89:1-4, 19-26**

I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.

**I declare that your steadfast love is established forever; your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.**

You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to my servant David:

**'I will establish your descendants forever and build your throne for all generations.'**

Then you spoke in a vision to your faithful one and said, "I have set the crown on one who is mighty;

I have exalted one chosen from the people.

**I have found my servant David; with my holy oil I have anointed him;**

my hand shall always remain with him; my arm also shall strengthen him.

**The enemy shall not outwit him; the wicked shall not humble him.**

I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him.

**My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him, and in my name his horn shall be exalted.**

**JOHN 1:1-14**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

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. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.

But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**Glory to you, Lord Christ.**



**SERMON**

"Believing is Seeing"

Rev. Higgs





## PRAYER AND REFLECTION

We pause to reflect on the message  
If you wish, you may want to use the following breath prayer (or any of your choice). The words may  
be said aloud or in silence

Breathe in: "I want to know you ..."  
Breathe out: "... and the power of your resurrection"

## HYMN

"Jesus, Light of Joy"

(See page 13)

## ADVENT CREED

**We believe in one God, who is Creator, maker of all we see and all we don't see. Who is  
Ruler of the universe: Source of all creation!**

**We believe in one God, who is Jesus Christ, God from God, Light from Light, true God and  
true human. He is one with the Creator; the Word made flesh, our Messiah: Savior of all  
creation!**

**We believe in one God, who is Holy Spirit, Breath of God moving among us; Who is one  
with the Creator; one with the Christ; our Comforter and our Guide: Mentor of all  
creation!**

— written by Lisa Frenz

## 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.**

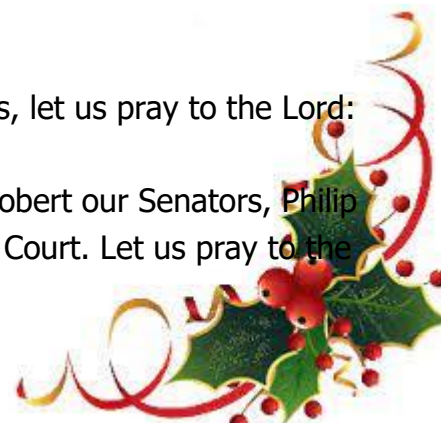
For this gathering of the faithful, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to  
the Lord:

**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**

"While By My Sheep"



arr. Springer

### **DOXOLOGY**

"Praise God from Whom All Blessings"

#809

### **OFFERTORY PRAYER**



May these gifts be signs of the **yes** we would say to you, not only in this season, but in all the days to come. May they bring hope to those who have always had doors slammed in their faces and **NO!** pounded in their ears, so they will know your love and grace are gifts for them as well. In Jesus' name, Amen.



**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**

**HYMN**

"To God Be the Glory"

(See page 14)

**CHARGE AND BENEDICTION**

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**

"I Wonder As I Wander"

arr. Hayes

**MINISTERS:** Betty Herskovitz and Carol Ortlip (Ushers), Ann Rosica (Refreshments)







## 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. 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.

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

**10. STEWARDSHIP:** Total Income for 12/17: Total Income: \$9126.00, Envelope Giving: \$4662.00. Deacons: \$395.00, Capital Improvements Fund: \$25.00.





# Christmas Eve Service

December 24th, 2023

4:00 PM



Covenant Presbyterian Church

2618 New Albany Road

Cinnaminson, NJ 08077



# Prayer List

Thankful prayers for Pastor Bob's leading the Advent service and for the beautiful cantata sung by our choir and led by our choir director, Greg DiBona. We are very fortunate to have very talented members bringing the beauty of music to our church. Thank you to the Rosica family for the reading and lighting of the Advent candles.

Please pray for peace and calm to prevail in our world and in our communities during this Christmas season and hopefully the new year will be peaceful as well.

Please keep our Covenant families and friends in your prayers:

Treva - continued healing and getting stronger and able to enjoy Christmas with her family.

Betty Graham - she has been transferred to Lourdes and will have a procedure this week - please pray for good results and able to feel better

Julia Slater - she will have hip replacement in a few weeks - relief from discomfort and complete healing

Joan Samph - relief from pain in her knee and leg

Dick Craft - successful rehab helping him to feel better

B. Ann and Dave DuBois - able to keep well and deal with health issues - it was great to see them in church

Terri Bell - able to rest in comfort and strength for Ken as he takes very good care of her

Janette Hutchinson - injury to her knee - very good care and healing

Nancy Perritt - not feeling well due to congestion and body aches - relief so she can enjoy Christmas with her family

Bonnie Cain's sister, Valerie - successful surgery and recovering

Mary Lou Newborg's friend, Dave - recovery from several strokes following surgery

Greg's grandmother, Rita - healing from a fall

Bruce and his family - securing an apartment and for Bruce successful results from a procedure this week

Susan's friends - Prayers for comfort and peace for the family of Angie Ieradi who passed away



# 265 Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun

1 Je - sus shall reign wher - e'er the sun does its suc -  
 2 To him shall end - less prayer be made, and prais - es  
 3 Peo - ple and realms of ev - ery tongue dwell on his  
 4 Bless - ings a - bound wher - e'er he reigns: the pris - oners  
 5 Let ev - ery crea - ture rise and bring hon - ors pe -

ces - sive jour - neys run; his king - dom stretch from  
 throng to crown his head; his name, like sweet per -  
 love with sweet - est song, and in - fant voic - es  
 leap to loose their chains; the wea - ry find e -  
 cu - liar to our King; an - gels de - scend with

shore to shore, till moons shall wax and wane no more.  
 fume, shall rise with ev - ery morn - ing sac - ri - fice.  
 shall pro - claim their ear - ly bless - ings on his name.  
 ter - nal rest, and all who suf - fer want are blest.  
 songs a - gain, and earth re - peat the loud A - men!

This hymn is a classic example of how Isaac Watts Christianized the Psalms, in this case Psalm 72:5-19, by turning their messianic language to New Testament equivalents. The tune was at first nameless and anonymous, but is now called by the address of the supposed composer.

# 673

## Jesus, Light of Joy

1 Je - sus, light of joy, sur - round us; let your splen - did  
 2 Now the shad - ows fall a - round us; now the eve - ning  
 3 With the saints we lift our voic - es, God of pow - er,

glo - ry shine: source of ev - ery earth - ly bles - sing,  
 has be - gun: still your gra - cious light is with us,  
 God of might. All cre - a - tion shines with glo - ry,

heav - en's ev - er - last - ing sign. Al - le - lu - ia,  
 bright - er than the morn - ing sun. Al - le - lu - ia,  
 sing - ing prais - es day and night: al - le - lu - ia,

al - le - lu - ia, we a - dore you, light di - vine.  
 al - le - lu - ia, God of glo - ry, Three - in - One.  
 al - le - lu - ia, ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly light.

The images of light in this text are drawn from the ancient Christian vesper hymn *Phos hilaron*, which dates from at least the 3rd century. (For other versions, see nos. 671 and 672.) That rather brief original hymn is augmented here in the third stanza by language based on the *Sanctus*.

ADORATION

# 634 To God Be the Glory

1 To God be the glo - ry; great things he has done!  
2 Great things he has taught us; great things he has done,

So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,  
and great our re - joic - ing through Je - sus the Son;

who yield - ed his life an a - tone - ment for sin,  
but pur - er and high - er and great - er will be

and o - pened the life - gate that all may go in.  
our won - der, our trans - port, when Je - sus we see.

This American gospel song became popular in England in the late 19th century, then returned to this country in the mid-20th century with the Billy Graham crusades. Its continuing popularity may well be due to the freedom from subjective considerations in its praise of God.

## Refrain

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord; let the earth hear his voice!

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord; let the people rejoice!

O come to the Father through Jesus the Son,

and give him the glory: great things he has done!