

Covenant Presbyterian Church

9:30 and 11:00 am

Austin, Texas
Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 23, 2007

PREPARATION

PRELUDE

Ding Dong Merrily on High
ProMusica Handbells

Fred Gramann

WELCOME

Please sign the friendship register at this time and pass it down the row, then return it to its original position, noting the names of those worshipping with you. At the conclusion of the service, take time to greet one another in the name of Christ.

PRAISING GOD

*CALL TO WORSHIP AND LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Based on Isaiah 58:8

Leader: Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; the one who follows me will not walk in darkness but have the light of life."

We light this candle as a sign of the coming light of Christ.

People: Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you,
the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

All: Let us worship God!

*HYMNS OF PRAISE

Angels from the Realms of Glory
O Little Town of Bethlehem

Hymn 189, stanzas 1, 2, and 4
Hymn 180, stanzas 1 and 4

*PRAYER OF ADORATION

HYMN (9:30)

It Came upon the Midnight Clear

Hymn 191, stanzas 1 and 3

CALL TO CONFESSION

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Hymn 154, stanza 1

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Lord Christ, we confess our willingness to be loved but also our reluctance to love. We confess our readiness to accept your forgiving love but also our refusal to forgive. We confess our eagerness to grasp your offer of redeeming love but also our resistance to follow you without question. Forgive us our failure to respond as we should. Come to us anew, and by your grace, assist us to receive you with joy, as the shepherds; with gratitude, as Simeon; with obedience, as Mary; with love, as you have loved us . . .

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

Angels We Have Heard on High

Hymn 189, Refrain

Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!

* - Those who are able, please stand

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

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

SACRAMENT OF INFANT BAPTISM (9:30)

Frank Mott Edwards IV
Born on June 25, 2007
Son of Frank and Kelley Edwards
Deacon: Randy Erben Elder: Judith Thorburn

MINISTRY OF THE WORD

CHILDREN'S SERMON (11:00)

Gayla Zachry

ANTHEM (11:00)

Where Shepherds Lately Knelt

Carl Schalk

*Where shepherds lately knelt and kept the angel's word, I come in half-belief, a pilgrim, strangely stirred.
But there is room and welcome there for me.
In that unlikely place I find him as they said: Sweet, newborn Babe and in a manger bed:
A still small Voice to cry one day for me.
How should I not have known Isaiah would be there, His prophecies fulfilled? With pounding heart, I stare:
A Child, a Son, the Prince of Peace – for me.
Can I, will I forget how Love was born and burned its way into my heart: unasked, unforced, unearned,
To die, to live, and not alone for me.
(Text by Jaroslav J. Vjada)
The Sanctuary Choir*

SCRIPTURE

John 3:1-21

New King James Version

SERMON

Unconditional Love

Rick Murray

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

*HYMN OF RESPONSE

Of the Father's Love Begotten

Hymn 181, stanzas 1, 2, and 4

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

In love you came to a stable in Bethlehem to become one with us.
In love you walked the plains and hills of Galilee and Judea to teach us how to live.
In love you were nailed on a cross on Calvary to bear away our sin.
In love you rose from a tomb in Joseph's garden to defeat death's power over us.
In love you ascended beyond the clouds to be our reigning Lord.
You came to love us so that we need never feel unloved, deserted, alone, condemned.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

ANNOUNCEMENTS

GIVING OF OURSELVES IN TITHES AND OFFERINGS

OFFERTORY

There's a Song in the Air
ProMusica Handbells

arr. Michael Keller

*DOXOLOGY

Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow

Hymn 34

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND 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 FOR GOING FORTH

Sing We Now of Christmas

Hymn 193, stanzas 1, 2, and 3

*BENEDICTION

*POSTLUDE

Angels We Have Heard on High

Timothy Albrecht

ASSISTING IN WORSHIP

Jill Williams at 8:15, 9:30, and 11:00; James Lee at 9:00 and 6:30 (New Covenant Fellowship); Chesney Szaniszló at 9:30; Dora Arce Valentín at 11:30 (Iglesia Luyanó, our sister church in Cuba); Rick MacArthur at 11:15; and Heather Werle at 6:30

John Schmidt, organist

ProMusica Handbells – Linda Rutherford, director

The Sanctuary Choir – Tom Brown, director

Lighting the Candle of Advent 8:15 – Elizabeth Christian and Bruce Todd
9:30 – Kelly, Allison, Emily, Annabel, Katherine, and Maggie Dwyer
11:00 – Matt, Dawn, Sarah, Michael, and Grace Hood
11:15 – Matt, Mimi, Matthew, Travis, Natalie, and Madeline Blankenship

Christmas Eve Worship Services at Covenant Presbyterian Church

3:00 p.m. Communion Service

5:00 p.m. Worship Service for families with younger children

5:30 – 6:30 p.m. Live Nativity Scene on the Patio

6:30 p.m. Worship Service for families with older children

8:30 p.m. Candlelight Communion Worship Service

11:00 p.m. Candlelight Communion Worship Service

Mission Statement

By God's own grace and power,

Covenant Presbyterian Church

will be a church

of passionate worship, sacrificial service, respectful evangelism,

authentic fellowship, and rich discipleship –

a place where seekers are invited and equipped

to become mature disciples of Christ in Austin and around the world.

Out of respect for our neighbors, please refrain from parking on the streets in the Allandale neighborhood, especially on Louise Lane and Marilyn Street.

Overflow parking is located in the UTAIC parking garage, and the Park and Shuttle Service is available to bring you to the Covenant Campus

For more information about events at Covenant,
please see our *Covenant Matters* handout in the Narthex.

IF YOU ARE NEW TO COVENANT

Welcome! We are thankful you have chosen to worship with us today! We ask that you identify yourself by signing the red attendance book in each pew. Following each service, you are invited to stop by our Visitor's Table to pick up information on Covenant's many groups, programs and events. We want you to feel welcome here and hope that we can help you find ways to grow in your faith.

Five services of worship are offered each Sunday—8:15 a.m. (a traditional Communion service), 9:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. (traditional services), 11:15 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. (contemporary services). A shuttle service runs from 8:15 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. carrying worshippers from the UTAIC parking lot at 5508 Parkcrest Drive, 1/2 mile west of Covenant.

You may become a member of Covenant by profession of faith and baptism, reaffirmation of faith or letter of transfer. The Session meets the second Sunday of each month, immediately following the 9:30 a.m. worship service for the purpose of receiving new members. Would you like to know more about Covenant and what we believe as Presbyterians? You're invited to join one of our New Member Classes that begin periodically throughout the year. For more information, please contact Mary Helen Mitchell at 512-334-3018 or mhmittchell@covenant.org.

COVENANT PRAYS

Prayers of celebration and joy for – Ryan James Curtis and Hayley Jewel Curtis, born on December 16. Parents are James and Stacy Curtis.

Prayers of sympathy and support for – Wendell and Lynn Bell on the death of Wendell's mother, Ama Bell, on December 17 in Gatesville, TX. Services are December 21 in Gatesville.

Kandace Floyd and Charles and Nancy Floyd on the death of Kandace's grandmother and Charles' mother, Ilene Messer, on December 17 in Wellington, TX. Services were December 20 in Wellington.

Prayers for recently hospitalized – Tricia Argust and Hayley Curtis.

Prayers for – Jim Kleinhenz, Barb Sleet, Stephanie Meyer Kelly, Mike Page, Jim Stansell, Walter Bell, David Miller, Beverly Miller, Rick Roth, Phil Harvell, Nelle Slay, Bob Ferguson, Ginger Hurst, Milton and Helen Carlston, Darleen Kleinhenz, Emily Bernard, Gregg Mason, Betsey Wiswell, Bill Ross, Michael and Alice Macdonald Harris, Sgt. Kevin Guy, Dorice Jeffries, Al DiCristofaro, Clayton Nance, Frank and Ginger Jones, Casey Bernholz, Amy Boykin, Roy Tomlin, David Kershner, Harold Skaggs, Dolores Cox, Sandy Blitch, Carolyn Walker, Forrest Roan, Fred Conder, Mike Rhoades, and Geanne Taylor.

Prayers requested by our sister church, Iglesia Presbiteriana Reformada en Luyanó, in Havana Cuba – Por el restablecimiento de Pedro Prendes, Blanquita y su hermana; los hermanos Vandama, Noemí, Olga Lara; Hortensia y su nieta Vidal. Que el Dios que hizo la luz y puso el amor entre las personas nos llene de paz y nos llene da valor para promover la justicia.

Homebound Friend of the Week (notes of encouragement are welcome)

Ms. Ruth Ellen Norman, 7925 Rockwood Ln., Apt. 109C, Austin, TX 78757. Deacon is Al DiCristofaro

Although prayer requests will be removed from this listing after three weeks, please contact Kay Austin in the church office, 454-5231, or kaustin@covenant.org, if prayer continues to be requested.

Recycling containers for this publication are available in the Narthex.