



ADVENT HOUSTON

VESPERS SERVICE

March 6, 2022

“Unfortunately some Christians live as though the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ never happened. Our lives become absorbed in the day-to-day experiences of life. We focus on name-brand clothing, the color of our houses, the size of our bank account, the year and make of our automobile, the prestige in which others hold us, and the symbols of our own power. We too easily forget our Maker and Redeemer, replacing God with things and ambition. Lent is the season that does something about this situation. It calls us back to God, back to basics, back to the spiritual realities of life. It calls on us to put to death the sin and the indifference we have in our hearts toward God and our fellow persons. And it beckons us to enter once again into the joy of the LORD - the joy of a new life born out of a death to the old life.”¹

Lent is a forty-day period in the church calendar that dates back to the 4th century. It was originally a time of preparation and spiritual discipline for all who were being baptized at Easter—the normal time of baptism for all new Christians and their families. As early as the 1st century, we see Christians using a time of preparation for their baptism, and with time, this preparation grew to forty days in association with Jesus' forty days of prayer and fasting in the wilderness.

Lent is a time that beckons us to remember our own baptismal vows. Martin Luther encouraged his congregation during Lent to “live into [their] baptism.” And so, we too should live into our dying with Christ and rising with Christ. We too are called to live into that pattern of repentance and faith. We are invited to turn away from all distractions and sins and turn toward God.

This lenten practice can take many forms. We can choose to fast from food, reminding ourselves that Christ is our daily bread. As theologians Louis Weil and Charles Price remind us, “The psychosomatic unity of human beings makes it inevitable that a physical glut will cloud mind and spirit.” Alternately, we can fast from some of the distracting behaviors that we have slipped into, like scrolling on our phones at bedtime. Or, we can pursue new habits that help us to pattern our lives on the life of Jesus; we may commit to praying every day or to calling a friend to check on them every day.

During this lenten season, make time to consider the condition of your heart and to enter into a season of living out your baptism in repentance and faith.

WHAT IS A VESPERS SERVICE?

Vespers comes from the Latin word for “evening.” A Vespers service is a traditional prayer service at the hour of sunset. Traditionally, it is characterized by frequent readings of scripture, time for contemplation, and prayer.

We at Advent Houston invite you to use this Vespers service time to slow down, to worship with us outside, and to savor our God. You can expect more subdued music, several readings of scripture, a short homily, and communion.

¹ Robert E. Webber, *Ancient Future Time*

Reflection

"I imagine Lent for you and for me as a great departure from the greedy, anxious anti-neighborliness of our economy, a great departure from our exclusionary politics that fears the other, a great departure from self-indulgent consumerism that devours creation. And then an arrival in a new neighborhood, because it is a gift to be simple, it is a gift to be free; it is a gift to come down where we ought to be."

— **Walter Brueggemann** *A Way Other Than Our Own: Devotions for Lent*

"Self-denial can never be defined as some profusion - be it ever so great - of individual acts of self-torment or of asceticism. It is not suicide, since there, too, a person's self-will can yet assert itself. Self-denial means knowing only Christ, and no longer oneself. It means seeing only Christ, who goes ahead of us, and no longer the path that is too difficult for us... . Self-denial is saying only: He goes ahead of us; hold fast to him."

— **Dietrich Bonhoeffer** "Discipleship and the Cross," *Meditations on the Cross*

"The Lenten Spring Has Come!
The Light of Repentance!
O Brothers, let us cleanse ourselves from all evil,
Crying out to the Giver of Life
'Glory to Thee, O Lover of Man!'"

— **Byzantine Hymn**

"O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, faintheartedness, lust of power, and idle talk. But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love to your servant. Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own sin and not to judge my brother, for You are blessed from all ages to all ages. Amen"

— **St. Ephraim the Syrian**

*Call to Worship – From Psalm 91

Leader: He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

People: I will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”

*Song – When All Thy Mercies

When all Thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise
Unnumbered comforts to my soul
Thy tender care bestowed,
Before my infant heart conceived
From Whom those comforts flowed.

Chorus: Through all eternity to Thee
A joyful song I'll raise
For oh, eternity's too short
To utter all Thy praise!

When worn with sickness, oft hast Thou
With health renewed my face
And when in sins and sorrow sunk
Renewed my soul with grace
Ten thousand thousand precious gifts
My daily thanks employ;
Nor is the least a cheerful heart
That tastes those gifts with joy.

(Repeat chorus)

Through every period of my life
Thy goodness I'll pursue,
And after death, in distant worlds,
The glorious theme renew.

(Repeat chorus)

Prayer of Adoration

A Litany of Thanksgiving

Leader: For the beauty and wonder of your creation, in earth and sky and sea.

People: We thank you, Lord.

Leader: For all that is gracious in the lives of men and women, revealing the image of Christ,

People: We thank you, Lord.

Leader: For our daily food and drink, our homes and families, and our friends,

People: We thank you, Lord.

Leader: For minds to think, and hearts to love, and hands to serve,

People: We thank you, Lord.

Leader: For health and strength to work, and leisure to rest and play,

People: We thank you, Lord.

Leader: For the brave and courageous, who are patient in suffering and faithful in adversity,

People: We thank you, Lord.

Leader: For all valiant seekers after truth, liberty, and justice,

People: We thank you, Lord.

Leader: For the communion of saints, in all times and places,

People: We thank you, Lord.

Leader: Above all, we give you thanks for the great mercies and promises given to us in Christ Jesus our Lord;

People: To him be praise and glory, with you, O Father, and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.

First Scripture Lesson

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

[1] “When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance and have taken possession of it and live in it, [2] you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from your land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket, and you shall go to the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name to dwell there. [3] And you shall go to the priest who is in office at that time and say to him, ‘I declare today to the LORD your God that I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our fathers to give us.’ [4] Then the priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down before the altar of the LORD your God.

[5] “And you shall make response before the LORD your God, ‘A wandering Aramean was my father. And he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number, and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. [6] And the Egyptians treated us harshly and humiliated us and laid on us hard labor. [7] Then we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. [8] And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great deeds of terror, with signs and wonders. [9] And he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. [10] And behold, now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which you, O LORD, have given me.’ And you shall set it down before the LORD your God and worship before the LORD your God. [11] And you shall rejoice in all the good that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house, you, and the Levite, and the sojourner who is among you. (ESV)

Leader: The Word of the LORD

People: Thanks be to God.

Song – From the Depths of Woe

From the depths of woe I raise to Thee
The voice of lamentation;
Lord, turn a gracious ear to me
And hear my supplication;
If Thou iniquities dost mark,
Our secret sins and misdeeds dark,

O who shall stand before Thee?
(Who shall stand before Thee?)
O who shall stand before Thee?
(Who shall stand before Thee?)

To wash away the crimson stain,
Grace, grace alone availeth;
Our works, alas! Are all in vain;
In much the best life faileth;
No man can glory in Thy sight,
All must alike confess Thy might,

And live alone by mercy
(Live alone by mercy)
And live alone by mercy
(Live alone by mercy)

Therefore my trust is in the Lord,
And not in mine own merit;
On Him my soul shall rest, His word
Upholds my fainting spirit;
His promised mercy is my fort,
My comfort and my sweet support;

I wait for it with patience
(Wait for it with patience)
I wait for it with patience
(Wait for it with patience)

What though I wait the live-long night,
And 'til the dawn appeareth,
My heart still trusteth in His might;
It doubteth not nor feareth;
Do thus, O ye of Israel's seed,
Ye of the Spirit born indeed;

And wait 'til God appeareth
(Wait 'til God appeareth)
And wait 'til God appeareth
(Wait 'til God appeareth)

Though great our sins and sore our woes
His grace much more aboundeth;
His helping love no limit knows,
Our upmost need it soundeth.
Our Shepherd good and true is He,
Who will at last His Israel free

From all their sin and sorrow
(All their sin and sorrow)
From all their sin and sorrow
(All their sin and sorrow)

Prayers of the People

People: Almighty God, whose blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan: Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations; and, as you know the weaknesses of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

*Leader continues to intercede on behalf of the community,
the Church, and the world.*

Leader: We pray all of this in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray, saying...

**People: Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be Your Name,
your kingdom come,
your 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 Yours is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Second Scripture Lesson

Romans 10:8-13

[8] But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); [9] because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. [10] For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. [11] For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." [12] For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. [13] For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (ESV)

Leader: The Gospel of the LORD

People: Praise be to you, LORD Christ.

Children's Lesson

Children are invited forward at this time for a brief lesson.

*Song – Isaiah 43

When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you,
And the waves will not overcome you.
Do not fear,
For I have redeemed you,
I have called you by name,
You are Mine.

Chorus:

For I am the Lord your God (I am the Lord your God),
I am the Lord your God (I am)
The Holy One of Israel
Your Savior
(Repeat)

I am the Lord (do not fear)
I am the Lord (do not fear)
I am the Lord (do not fear)
I am the Lord (do not fear)

When you walk through the fire
You'll not be burned,
And the flames will not
Consume you.
Do not fear,
For I have redeemed you,
I have called you by name,
You are Mine.
(Repeat chorus)

*Gospel Lesson

Luke 4:1-13

[1] And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness [2] for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. [3] The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." [4] And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'" [5] And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, [6] and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. [7] If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." [8] And Jesus answered him, "It is written,

"You shall worship the Lord your God,
and him only shall you serve.'"

[9] And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, [10] for it is written,

"He will command his angels concerning you,
to guard you,'"

[11] and

"On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"

[12] And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" [13] And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time. (ESV)

Leader: The Word of the LORD.

People: Thanks be to God.

Homily

Rev. Taylor Leachman

*Affirmation of Faith

African Hymn

(Taken from a 10th Century African Hymn)

People: The cross is the hope of Christians
The cross is the resurrection of the dead
The cross is the way of the lost
The cross is the savior of the lost
The cross is the staff of the lame
The cross is the guide of the blind
The cross is the strength of the weak
The cross is the doctor of the sick
The cross is the aim of the priests
The cross is the hope of the hopeless
The cross is the freedom of the slaves
The cross is the power of the kings
The cross is the water of the seeds
The cross is the consolation of the bondmen
The cross is the source of those who seek water
The cross is the cloth of the naked.
We thank you, Father, for the cross.

Confession of Sin

Adapted from *The Valley of Vision*

(Adapted from the confession of sin of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches and Psalm 66)

Leader: Dearest Savior, help us. We are slow to learn, prone to forget, and quick to rebellion.

People: We are pained by our graceless hearts:
Our prayer-less days,
Our poverty of love,
Our sloth in the heavenly race,
Our sullied conscience,
Our wasted hours, and
Our unspent opportunities.

Leader: We are blind even as Your light shines all around us:

People: Take the scales from our eyes,
Grind to dust our hearts of unbelief.
Grant us trust in you and your Word.
Make it our highest joy to learn from You,
Meditate on You,
Gaze on You,
Sit like Mary at your feet,
Lean like John on your breast,
Appeal like Peter to your love.

Leader: We believe, Lord—But please help our unbelief.

People: Father in heaven, forgive our sins.
Forgive us for the sins that we remember.
Forgive us for the sins we have forgotten.
Forgive us for being weak in face of temptation.
Forgive us for being stubborn in the face of correction.
Forgive us for trying to earn your favor.
Forgive us for failing to receive your grace.
Forgive us for judging others harshly.
Forgive us for being lenient on ourselves.
Forgive us for the lies we have told others.
Forgive us for the truths we have avoided.
Have mercy on us, and make us whole. Amen.

*Assurance of Pardon

Romans 10:9-13

Leader: If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Leader: Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life.

Celebration of Holy Communion

People: We do not presume to come to this, Your Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your Table. But you are the same Lord whose property is always to have mercy. Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body and our souls washed through his most precious blood that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. We pray through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Leader: The LORD be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them up unto the LORD.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the LORD, our God.

People: It is right to give him thanks and praise.

Leader: It is very good and right, our duty and privilege, to at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto you, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God. Therefore with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify your glorious Name; evermore praising you, and saying...

People: 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.

Words of Institution

Leader: Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

**All: Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Chris will come again.**

Leader: Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us.

People: Therefore, let us keep the feast.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the LORD, our God.

*All of the communion packets contain grape juice.
Gluten free crackers are available (not included in the communion packets).*

Communion Song – Dear Refuge of My Weary Soul

Dear refuge of my weary soul,
On Thee, when sorrows rise
On Thee, when waves of trouble roll,
My fainting hope relies
To Thee I tell each rising grief,
For Thou alone canst heal
Thy Word can bring a sweet relief,
For every pain I feel

But oh! When gloomy doubts prevail,
I fear to call Thee mine
The springs of comfort seem to fail,
And all my hopes decline
Yet gracious God, where shall I flee?
Thou art my only trust
And still my soul would cleave to Thee
Though prostrate in the dust

Hast Thou not bid me seek Thy face,
And shall I seek in vain?
And can the ear of sovereign grace,
Be deaf when I complain?
No still the ear of sovereign grace,
Attends the mourner's prayer
Oh may I ever find access,
To breathe my sorrows there

Thy mercy seat is open still,
Here let my soul retreat
With humble hope attend Thy will,
And wait beneath Thy feet,
Thy mercy seat is open still,
Here let my soul retreat
With humble hope attend Thy will,
And wait beneath Thy feet

*Closing Prayer of Thanksgiving and Mission

*Benediction

The Lord bless you
And keep you
Make His face shine upon you
And be gracious to you
The Lord turn His face toward you
And give you peace

Amen, amen, amen (3X)

May His favor be upon you
And a thousand generations
And your family
And your children
And their children
And their children

May His presence go before you
And behind you
And beside you
All around you
And within you
He is with you
He is with you

In the morning
In the evening
In your coming
And your going
In your weeping
And rejoicing
He is for you
He is for you (Repeat 6x)

Amen, amen, amen (Repeat)

Giving

If you are interested in giving to the mission of Advent Houston, you can do so by clicking on the QR code below.



Upcoming Vespers Services

4:30pm

Sunday, April 10

Sunday, May 1

Media Release

Advent Houston shares photos taken at our events in our monthly newsletters, on our website, or on social media for the purpose of promoting and highlighting the church's mission. By being present, you consent to being photographed and having these photos shared. For individuals who are not comfortable being visible in a shared photograph, please notify the church at admin@adventpres.org to opt out of the media release.

Announcements

Join the Mission



ADVENT HOUSTON

we are
HIRING

- Ministry Operations Coordinator
- Director of Music & Media
- Children's Ministry Director

More Info:
713-364-6748
adventpres.org/careers

We are looking for 3 candidates to join our growing team and church plant in the Texas Medical Center area of Houston.

Send your resume to:
taylor.leachman@adventpres.org

Ministry Operations Coordinator: Advent Houston is seeking to hire for numerous positions:

- Ministry Operations Coordinator
- Director of Music & Media
- Children's Ministry Director.

If you are interested in any of these positions, please email Taylor Leachman, taylor.leachman@adventpres.org, for the job description and more information.

Upcoming Events



**MEN'S
BREAKFAST**

WEDNESDAY
MARCH 23, 7:00AM
COMMON BOND

ADVENT

Men's Breakfast

Wednesday, March 23 at 7:00am

We will gather at Common Bond Medical Plaza to discuss *The Common Rule* by Justin Earley and how we can begin to apply better Kingdom habits to our lives that have been so disrupted during this pandemic season of life. No preparation is needed to join.



EASTER SERVICE

SUNDAY, APRIL 17
LOCATION & TIME: TBD

ADVENT
HOUSTON
WWW.ADVENTPRES.ORG

Easter Service

Sunday, April 17

Join us for an Easter service. This service is not a launch of weekly services, but is a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. Email taylor.leachman@adventpres.org, for more information.

We would love to keep in touch with you!
Scan this QR Code



to sign up for our newsletter.

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