



Central United Methodist Church

A Reconciling Congregation

Organized 1810—Incorporated 1822—Sanctuary completed 1867

January 4, 2026

Second Sunday After Christmas - Epiphany

OUR WELCOMING STATEMENT

Central United Methodist Church is a Reconciling Congregation. Regardless of your race, ethnicity, immigration status, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic situation, age, ability, belief, or background, whether you are single or partnered, you are God's beloved and you are welcome here.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

We envision Central United Methodist Church as a vital, diverse, River of Life nurtured by the light of Christ, rooted deeply in and living the scriptures, a holy presence in the center of the City of Detroit, transforming individuals, institutions, and the world, advocating peace and justice in all we do.

* Indicates when to stand, if able in body or in spirit. **Please silence cell phones.
Hymnal Guide: W&S=Worship & Song, UMH = The United Methodist Hymnal,
TFWS = The Faith We Sing

PRELUDE

Augustus Williamson & Brandon Reeves

The Prelude and the Postlude are times for silent prayer and meditation guided by some of our gifted musicians.

ACTS OF WELCOME

WELCOME

***CALL TO WORSHIP** (adapted from *enfleshed: liturgy that matters*)

ONE: In our search for meaning, community, and the abundant life,

ALL: God draws us into the heart of Love.

ONE: Guiding us through lands unknown,

ALL: God companions us on the journey.

ONE: With the Holy as our guide,

ALL: we will encounter Christ enfleshed.

***OPENING HYMN**

Magi, We of Orient Are
(from *Ye Olde Christmas Carols for Inclusive Worship*,
Revised by Tallessyn Z. Grenfell-Lee)

tune of UMH #254

**Magi, we of Orient are bearing gifts, we traverse afar,
Field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star. (Refrain)**

*(Refrain) O star of wonder, star of light, star with holy beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light!*

**Gold for thee in Bethlehem found; gold, for each shall wear a crown.
Peace forever, ceasing never; anthems of peace resound! (Refrain)**

**Frankincense to offer have I; incense owns divinity nigh;
Prayer and praising, voices raising; Spirit, who dwells inside! (Refrain)**

**Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume breathes a life of gathering gloom;
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying, sealed in the stone-cold tomb. (Refrain)**

**Glorious now, Creation arise! Love has heard our anguished cries!
Alleluia, Alleluia, sounds through the Earth and skies! (Refrain)**

GREETINGS AND WELCOME OF FIRST TIME VISITORS

Please help us know you were here in worship today by scanning the QR code above with your phone. There is also a place for notes and prayer requests for the pastor.

ANNOUNCEMENTS**ACTS OF PROCLAMATION****CHILDREN'S MOMENT**

Deaconess Anne Hillman

ANTHEM

Jazz Gloria by Natalie Sleeth

***SCRIPTURE**

Matthew 2:1-12

Stuart Jacobson

After Jesus' birth—which happened in Bethlehem of Judea, during the reign of Herod—magi from the East arrived in Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the newborn ruler of the Jews? We observed his star at its rising and have come to pay homage.” At this news Herod became greatly disturbed, as did all of Jerusalem. Summing all the chief priests and religious scholars of people, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born.

“In Bethlehem of Judea,” they informed him. “Here is what the prophet has written:
‘And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah,
Are by no means least among the leaders of Judah,

Since from you will come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.””

Herod called the magi aside and found out from them the exact time of the star’s appearance. “Go and get detailed information about the child. When you have found him, report back to me—so that I may go and offer homage, too.

After their audience with the ruler, they set out. The star which they had observed at its rising went ahead of them until it came to a standstill over the place where the child lay. They were overjoyed at seeing the star and, upon entering the house, found the child with Mary, his mother. They prostrated themselves and paid homage. Then they opened their coffers and presented the child with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

They warned in a dream not to return to Herod, so they went back to their own country by another route.

ONE: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

ALL: **Thanks be to God.**

MESSAGE

Wondering and Wandering

Rev. Paul Perez

ACTS OF SHARING

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING (*enfleshed: liturgy that matters*)

Like the magi who brought gifts to Jesus, we bring our own offerings as signs of gratitude. For that which God has already done for us and for that which God has only just begun within us, let us give thanks.

OFFERTORY

The Work of Christmas, words by Howard Thurman,
music by Dan Forrest



For electronic giving, please use this QR Code

DOXOLOGY: Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below; Praise God for all that love has done; Creator, Christ, and Holy One.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (*enfleshed: liturgy that matters*)

Holy One, in a spirit of awe we offer these gifts. For you have led us to Love, invited us to linger in its presence, and promised us that no matter where we go, Love will go with us. May these offerings also be swept up into the embrace of Love to be channeled in the direction of all who hunger for your presence. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

A SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION (*enfleshed: liturgy that matters*)

ONE: The Holy One be with you

ALL: And also with you

ONE: Open your hearts to the One who is Love

ALL: We open our hearts to you, O God

ONE: Let us give thanks to God, who welcomes the stranger

ALL: To the One who reaches across every border, we give thanks and praise

ONE: In wonder of your expansive embrace, we give you praise, O God. Through your radical welcome, you reveal the limitations of our own imaginations. You break down walls and boundaries we don't even realize we have erected.

Like the magi guided by the light of star through foreign territory, you call us all towards you. You lead your people across borders of hate and into lands of curious and different. You strengthen us as we journey, learning and unlearning stories about one another. Gathered in your presence, we come to recognize the gifts of community rich in diversity.

Therefore, we join our voices with your people on earth and all the company of the heavens, singing praise to you,

**ALL: Holy, Holy, Holy One
God of justice and love
Heaven and earth are full of your wonder
Hosanna among us**

ONE: You move in mysterious ways, O God. This journey with you is filled with more questions than answers. Each time we think we have you figured out, you surprise us again, revealing yourself in new ways.

In Jesus, we saw your radical welcome of strangers extended in challenging ways. Ways that disrupt our traditions and unsettle our comfort zones.

Jesus broke religious rules in order to include all people.
He lifted up the sacredness of the people and places deemed unclean.
He cared more about the well-being of the oppressed than his own reputation.

Jesus taught us to rethink your presence among us, but we couldn't accept it.
Resistant to transformation, your people sent him to the cross.

On the night of his arrest, Jesus shared a meal with his companions.

He took bread, blessed it, broke it, gave it to his disciples and said:

**ALL: "This is my body which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."**

ONE: After the meal, he took the cup, blessed it, and shared it saying:

ALL: “This cup that is poured out is the new covenant.”

ONE: In remembrance of all you have done to save us,
we proclaim the mystery of our faith:

ALL: Christ was birthed among us.

Christ was killed among us.

Christ rises again among us.

ONE: May the same Spirit that lifted Christ from the grave be poured out on these gifts.
Make this bread and this cup be an extension of your welcome that knows no
bounds. Fill us with the courage and faith to join you in the work of tearing down
walls that exclude and pointing to the Sacred in the margins.

SHARING THE BREAD & CUP

MUSING DURING COMMUNION

Augustus Williamson & Brandon Reeves

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

*CLOSING HYMN

We Seek You With Our Questions

We seek you with our questions, God,
with open heart and mind;
we long to live a fresher life
and leave our past behind,
for all that we have known before
has faded and grown worn.

We seek you with our questions, God,
that we might be reborn.

We wonder why things come to pass
and how to come alive.

Where do your living waters flow?
How can dry bones revive?

Who are you, God, who meet us here
with wisdom and with sign?

We seek you with our questions, God,
we yearn for truth divine.

You seek us with your questions, God,
inviting us to dare

to know you and to love you more,
to grow through act and prayer.

“Who will you trust and follow now?
My truth is all around.”

You seek us with your questions, God,
you seek and we are found.

BENEDICTION

BENEDICTION & SENDING FORTH (*enfleshed: liturgy that matters*)

With the Holy as our guide, let us go in search of that which will set us free.

Christ has taken on flesh. Hope lives and moves among us. Love is calling us together.

May it be so among us. Go in peace. Amen

CHORAL BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Brandon Reeves

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Rev. Paul Perez, Lead Minister

Rev. Edwin Rowe, Pastor Emeritus

Deaconess Anne Hillman, Ph.D. Director of Children, Youth and Family Ministries

Margaret Reese, Director of Music

Brandon Reeves, Collaborative Pianist

Debra Cox, Office Administrator

Angela Bakeley, Receptionist

Dave Wilson, Building Maintenance Manager

This service is live-streamed under CCLI STREAM PLUS 21469425

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT

Central United Methodist Church acknowledges that the building in which we carry out our collective life together occupies and is built upon land that is part of what was first known as Waawiyaataanong (“At the curved shores.”), the ancestral and contemporary homeland of the Three Fires Confederacy, but which is now referred to as Detroit. In 1807 the Ojibwe, Odawa, Potawatomi, and Wyandot nations granted use of these sovereign lands to the US government through the Treaty of Detroit. Central United Methodist Church affirms the continued Indigenous sovereignty over these lands and honors all tribes with a connection to Detroit. We commit ourselves to working together with our native brothers and sisters to advance equity in all dimensions of life and to promote a better future for the earth and all its peoples. (Adopted by the Ministry Team - April 22, 2021)