



Central United Methodist Church

A Reconciling Congregation

Organized 1810—Incorporated 1822— Sanctuary completed 1867

December 12, 2021
Third Sunday of Advent

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: UMH = The United Methodist Hymnal; TFWS = The Faith We Sing; SOZ = Songs of Zion



PRELUDE

Bobbi Thompson

INTROIT

Bobbi Thompson

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)

ACTS OF PRAISE

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

ONE: A voice calls out in the wilderness

ALL: It sings of a home for all. It speaks of justice and peace.

ONE: We could choose to ignore it.

ALL: We could drown out that song. We could choose not to listen.

ONE: Instead, we come into this space.

ALL: We let the world grow quiet. We listen.

ONE: A voice calls out in the wilderness. Do you hear it?

ALL: We hear it. In listening, we worship.

ONE: Let us draw near to God.

***OPENING HYMN**

A Home For All

Tune UMH #240

1. Light the candles, deck the halls, we are making room for all. Practice hospitality, give in Christian charity, but to create lasting change a transactional exchange won't make straight our crooked ways or lift valleys into plains prophets of the ages call: "We must build a home for all."

3. Set a table for a feast, Crystal, china, silver gleam once the banquet has been blessed, gather 'round in Christmas best but Christ's table has been set with the simplest meal of bread offering abundant grace, here all people have a place. Prophets of the ages call: "We must build a home for all."

2. Stack the gifts beneath the tree, hang the lights where all can see. Send cards full of Christmas cheer to the family far and near. But the greatest gift we share is a world that's just and fair. Though it feels so far away, we work for God's promised day. Prophets of the ages call: "We must build a home for all."

Tune: Felix Mendelssohn, 1840; Words: Anna Strickland 2021 Commissioned by A Sanctified Art, LLC. CCLI2815228

ACTS OF SHARING

GREETING AND WELCOME OF FIRST TIME VISITORS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

Joy

ONE: Joy is seeing people you love after months apart

ALL: Joy is hearing, "Come on over, it has been too long."

ONE: Joy is the stretches and giggles of a newborn child.

ALL: Joy is making it home when the journey is long.

ONE: Joy is your dog sliding to meet you at the door.

ALL: Joy is the energy of a new season.

ONE: Joy is feeling found when you thought you were lost.

ALL: So today we lift the candle of joy, because God's welcome for us is nothing short of joyful.

ONE: Rest in that good news. Let it wash over you.

ALL: Family of faith, we are close to home. Amen

ADVENT SONG

Sung to the tune of UMH #420

1. Kindle this flame of joy. May it burn
bright and true. Lighting the way that is
of God, the journey we pursue.

2. God's realm is our desire, where peace
and justice reign. Heaven and earth
combined as one, when Christ shall come
again.

Tune: Robert Jackson, 1888; Words ©2009 Gary L. Lake Dillensyder. Published by the General Board of Discipleship of the United Methodist Church; CCLI2815228

TIME FOR CHILDREN

Deaconess Anne Hillman

CALL TO CONFESSION

ONE: It takes courage to tell the truth. John the Baptist knew it. His job as a prophet certainly could not have been easy. And you and I know it.

Our job as a people of faith – to create a home for all – has never been easy.

In our prayer of confession, may we channel some of John the Baptist's courage to tell the truth about ourselves and our world. We do not do this to shame ourselves or guilt ourselves for being imperfect. We speak the truth out loud because we know that we cannot grow and change without first being honest.

So let us be brave. Let us be bold. Let us be truth-tellers as we confess together now to a God who couldn't love us anymore than God already does. Let us pray:

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Expansive God,

We know that the church is your house, and your house has room for everyone.

Yet, too often, instead of setting the table for our neighbors, we block the door.

Instead of welcoming all, we judge others by our own standards. Instead of sharing our second coat, we hide it in the attic, holding on to fear instead of letting go with love.

Remind us that your home is a home for *all*, that the truth requires hard work, that truth requires uncomfortable justice. Help us to be bold enough to see it and brave enough to live it. With hope we pray, Amen.

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

ONE: Family of faith, God sent prophets like John the Baptist to us because this work is not easy. Helping create a world where all might have a home, and all might be loved, and all might know peace, is an audacious goal. Fortunately for us, when we mess up – when we lose our way or forget our call – we are met with grace. God could not love us any more or any less than God already does. So rest in this good news:

ALL: We are at home with God – forgiven, claimed and loved. The door is always open for us. Thanks be to God. Amen.

INVITATION TO OFFERING

The people asked John, "What should we do?"

I've asked myself that a million times in my life.

How do I make a difference?

Can I really do anything that could help this hurting world?

Is it already too late? Is it already too big?

It can feel overwhelming at times, but John says, "If you have two coats, give one away."

It's all that easy and it's all that hard.

So, friends, let us give our tithes and our offerings now, knowing that these gifts help build a world where all have a home – where all are welcomed, fed, loved and known.

What should we do? We should give what we have.

It's all that easy and all that hard.

OFFERTORY

***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. Amen.**

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

God who welcomes us home, who creates space, who leaves a chair with our name on it – we have two coats and are giving one away. That's what this offering is. It's our second coat. It's our hearts on our sleeves. It's our audacious hope that there can indeed be a better world than this one. So take these gifts and use them to move us closer to that promised day. Gratefully, we pray, Amen.

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

PASTORAL PRAYER

*CENTERING HYMN

In the Bleak Midwinter

adapted from UMH #221

- 1. In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan, earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone; snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow, in the bleak midwinter, long ago.**
- 2. Our God, transcends all heaven, earth and its domain. Heaven and earth shall flee away, when Christ comes to reign. In the bleak mid-winter a stable place sufficed the Sovereign God Almighty, Jesus Christ.**

- 3. Angels and archangels may have gathered there, cherubim and seraphim thronged the air; but his mother only, in her maiden bliss, worshiped the beloved with a kiss.**
- 4. What can I give him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb; if I were a Wise One, I would do my part; yet what I can I offer: give my heart.**

ACTS OF PROCLAMATION

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

God, whose love is like the sun warming me from the inside,
if you are my home,
then your word is the street light guiding me there.
So I want you to know –
I am walking your way,
we are walking your way,
and we are looking for a light.
And our feet are dirty –
we've lost our way a time or two.
And our bags are heavy –
we're carrying an array of grief and fear on our backs.
But we're on our way.
We're looking for your light.
We're listening for your word.
When you see us coming,
when you feel our hearts move,
we hope you'll run down the driveway and catch us.
Leave the light on.
We are on our way home.
Gratefully we pray, Amen.

*GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 3:2-18

from the Inclusive Bible

In those days, during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the Word of God came to John, ben-Zechariah, in the desert. John went through the entire region of the Jordan proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as is written in the words of Isaiah, the prophet:

“A herald’s voice in the desert, crying, ‘Make ready the way of our God; clear a straight path. Every valley will be filled, and every mountain and hill will be leveled. The twisted paths will be made straight, and the rough road smooth – and all humankind will see the salvation of God.’”

John said to the crowds who came out to be baptized by him, “You pack of snakes! Who warned you to escape the wrath to come? Produce good fruit as a sign of your repentance. And don’t presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Sarah and Abraham as our mother and father’, for I tell you that God can raise children for Sarah and Abraham from these very stones. The ax is already laid at the root of the tree; every tree that doesn’t produce good fruit will be cut down and tossed into the fire.”

When the people asked him, “What should we do?” John replied, “Let the one with two coats share with the one who has none. Let those who have food do the same.”

“Tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to John, “Teacher, what are we to do?” John answered them, “Exact nothing over and above your fixed amount.”

Soldiers likewise asked, “What about us?” John told them, “Don’t bully anyone. Don’t accuse anyone falsely. Be content with your pay.”

The people were full of anticipation, wondering in their hearts whether John might be the Messiah. John answered them all by saying “I am baptizing you in water, but someone is coming who is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not fit to untie! This One will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire. A winnowing fan is in his hand to clear the threshing floor and gather the wheat into the granary, but the chaff will be burnt in unquenchable fire.” Using exhortations like this, John proclaimed the Good News to the people.

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

ALL: Thanks be to God!

MESSAGE

A Home for All

Rev. Dr. Jill Hardt Zundel

CLOSING HYMN

All Are Welcome

1. Let us build a house where love can swell and all can safely live, a place where saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive. Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace, here the love of Christ shall end divisions: All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.
2. Let us build a house where prophets speak, and words are strong and true, where all God’s children dare to seek to dream God’s reign anew. Here the cross shall stand as witness and as symbol of God’s grace; here as one we claim the faith of Jesus; All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.
3. Let us build a house where love is found in water, wine and wheat: A banquet hall on holy ground, where peace and justice meet. Here the love of God, through Jesus, is revealed in time and space, as we share in Christ the feast that frees us; All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.
4. Let us build a house where hands will reach beyond the wood and stone, to heal and strengthen, serve, and teach and live the Word they’ve known. Here the outcast and the stranger bear the image of God’s face; let us bring an end to fear and danger; All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.
5. Let us build a house where all are named, their songs and visions heard and loved and treasured, taught and claimed as words within the Word. Built of tears and cries and laughter, prayers of faith and songs of grace. Let this house proclaim from floor to rafter, All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

Words and Music by Marty Haugen ©1994 by GIA Publications, Inc; CCLI2815228

BENEDICTION AND SENDING FORTH

*BENEDICTION

Rev. Dr. Jill Hardt Zundel

As you leave *this* service, *your* service begins:

Comfort the homesick.

Open your doors to others.

Seek sanctuary.

Be brave enough to go home by another way.

And remember that here in God's house, all are welcomed – so come back soon.

In the name of our Foundation – God, Spirit and Redeemer – go in peace. Amen.

Central United Methodist Church

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