



Central United Methodist Church

A Reconciling Congregation

Organized 1810—Incorporated 1822—Sanctuary completed 1867

April 6, 2025

Fifth Sunday in Lent

Seeding the Soil: (Contemplative Practices for Sustaining our Spirits)

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

Brandon Reeves & Augustus Williamson

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

THE COMMUNITY GATHERS

INVITATION TO WORSHIP

Welcome to week 5 of our Lenten journey. Our worship theme this year, guiding our way toward Holy Week in these most wilderness of days, is "Seeding the Soil: Contemplative Practices for Sustaining Our Spirits."

Looking back to week 2, we learned about Lectio Divina, *divine reading*. Today we will explore Visio Divina, the contemplative practice of *divine seeing*. This ancient prayer form invites us to focus with all our senses, not simply sight, on images around us. Using curiosity and wonder to consider what these images reveal to us about God, one another, our own lives and journeys. On this Sunday as we celebrate the Environment, commit ourselves to working for justice for all people and all of creation, and share in Communion there is no lack of images for us to contemplate. As we move through this service, let our attention wander to the earth, creation, the table, the bread, the juice, and the people and the values that make up and tend to the soil of Central. What possibilities do you see? What seeds are beginning to sprout?

I Am an Acorn

1. D Em7 (or G) D Em7

2. I am an a-corn, the packet, the seed

3. God is with-in me and God is the tree I am un-

4. fold-ing the way I should be Carved in the palm of God's

5. ha-nd Carved in the palm of God's hand

- 1. I am an acorn, the packet, the seed
 - 2. God is within me, & God is the tree
 - 3. I am unfolding the way I should be
 - 4. & 5. Carved in the palm of His hand (2x)
- [Sown in the soil of God's land (2x)]

- Carol Johnson

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OPENING PRAYER

God, open our hearts, our minds, and our vision to the divine presence and sacred images surrounding us. May we embrace the lessons they teach and en flesh the possibilities they inspire. Amen.

OPENING HYMN

Be Thou My Vision

UMH #451

1. Be thou my vision, O God of my heart;
naught be all else to me, save that thou art.
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

2. Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, God;
thou and thou only, first in my heart,
great God of heaven, my treasure thou art.

3. Great God of heaven, my victory won,
may I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be my vision, O Ruler of all

WORDS: Ancient Irish; trans by Mary E. Byme, 1905; versed by Eleanor H. Hull, 1912, alt.; MUSIC: Trad. Irish melody; harm. by Carlton R. Young, 1963; Alt. © 1989 The United Methodist Publishing House; harm. © Abingdon Press; CCLI 2815228

THE COMMUNITY PREPARES

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

PASSING THE PEACE

Augustus Williamson

CHILDREN'S MOMENT

Deaconess Anne Hillman

LITANY FOR THE TREES

(adapted from “in the trees” by m jade kaiser at *enfleshed: liturgies that matter*)

ONE: In the trees, God, you linger.

ALL: With branches like arms outstretched in prayer, they invite, they host, they bear witness, they create.

ONE: Generations come and go,

ALL: but still they remain with such knowing, such history, such wisdom in their flesh.

ONE: The Holy in them, as it often does,

ALL: requires a disruption of ordinary ways of perceiving, or else it goes unnoticed.

ONE: Through their testimonies you teach us about growing in every direction,

ALL: about becoming sources of home, about resilience and resurrection and beauty across stages of life.

ONE: You – the trees – both sources of our life-breath. Make us fierce protectors of these sage companions

ALL: and the sacred flesh of all the earth. Amen.

CHOIR ANTHEM

Lead Me Lord, words and music by John D. Becker

THE COMMUNITY SEEDS

CONTEMPORARY READING

"The earth speaks in the language of gifts. When we learn to see with grateful eyes, we understand that reciprocity is the heart of a just and sacred life."

Source: Kimmerer, R. W. (2013). *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. Milkweed Editions.

SCRIPTURE

John 12. 1-8

Six days before Passover, Jesus went to Bethany, the village of Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. There they gave a banquet in Jesus' honor, at which Martha served. Lazarus was one of those at the table. Mary brought a pound of costly ointment, pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus, wiping them with her hair. The house was full of the scent of the ointment.

Judas Iscariot, one of the disciples—the one who was to betray Jesus—protested, "Why wasn't this ointment sold? It could have brought nearly a year's wages, and the money been given to poor people!" Judas didn't say this because he was concerned for poor people, but because he was a thief. He was in charge of the common fund and would help himself to it.

So Jesus replied, "Leave her alone. She did this in preparation for my burial. You have poor people with you always. But you won't always have me."

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

ALL: Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION

Rev. Paul Perez

CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE *Visio Divina*

Around the perimeter of the Sanctuary, the Green Team assembled three tableaux representing rivers, woods, and prairies. Those worshipping in person are invited to move around the sanctuary and to gaze at the tableaux and engage in Visio Divina. For those worshipping online, the Green Team has provided images that will be shared. You are encouraged to use the instructions and prompts below to guide your meditation.

Gaze with Wonder – *Let your eyes rest on the scene or image. Notice colors, shapes, and movement without analysis. What draws you in?*

Reflect with Heart – *What emotions or memories arise? How does this part of creation speak to your soul?*

Pray with Creation – *Offer gratitude, lament, or praise. What is God revealing? Pray for the land, water, and creatures.*

Act with Love – *How is this vision calling you to respond? Commit to one action to honor and protect creation.*

THE COMMUNITY SHARES

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

OFFERTORY

Pie Jesu from the *Requiem* by John Rutter

Laura Burger, Soprano

*Blessed Jesu, Lord I pray in thy mercy, grant them rest
Lord our God, we pray thee, grant them everlasting rest*

DOXOLOGY

Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days

UMH #269

Verses 4 & 5

4. And through these days of penitence, and through your Passion-tide, forevermore, in life and death, O Lord, with us abide.
5. Abide with us that when this life of suffering is past, an Easter of unending joy, we may attain at last!

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

God, we bring our tithes and offerings to you. These tangible gifts are symbols of the world we seek and the creation we long for. Through our giving and our living may the beloved community we imagine spring forth from the soil you've called us to cultivate. Amen.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

ONE: God be with you.

ALL: And also with you.

ONE: Open the eyes of our hearts.

ALL: We open them to the wonders of Creation.

ONE: Let us give gratitude to the God of Creation.

ALL: It is good to give our gratitude.

ONE: It is a good thing to recognize the beauty of Creation. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Wind and water, light and dark, day and night, sun and moon, sky and stars, dry land and sea; seeds, plants, trees, fruits; birds, fish, cattle, creepy crawlers, wild animals, and humankind all created in God's image. Six days of creating followed by a day of rest. God looked around and said, "indeed, this is all so very good."

And so we, as members of God's creation, pause to marvel at the world around us and join in the unending hymn,

ALL: Holy God of gentleness and grace, the universe is filled with signs of your glory. Blessed and good is everything and everyone you have made. Blessed are you, and blessed is our sibling, Jesus Christ.

ONE: When the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, he walked the path lined with the same dust from which all Creation was formed. For 40 days and 40 nights he prayed and fasted, reflecting on the past, contemplating the present, and preparing for the future. Today, we too are wandering this wilderness of Lent, reflecting on the journey that brought us to this place, contemplating the beauty and the suffering around us, preparing for an unknown tomorrow.

On the night that he surrendered, Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, sliced it, served the disciples saying,

ALL: "gaze upon this, see the wheat and grain, the labor that went into mixing and preparing the loaf. Take. Eat. Remember."

ONE: When the plate of bread had been passed, Jesus raised the cup, saying,

ALL: "see the seed that produced the fruit and work of those who turned the grapes into the wine. Take. Drink. Remember."

ONE: Let us remember that last meal and the invitation that brings us to this table. May this wondrous feast be a reminder of the mystery of faith,

ALL: Christ has died; Christ has risen; Christ will come again.

ONE: Spirit fall fresh on us gathered together and on these gifts of bread and cup. May they be for us visual signs and physical samples of the goodness of God. Move among us; healing hurts and divisions; calming fears, stirring community and a collective commitment to creating a world where no one hungers or eats alone.
Amen.

SHARING THE BREAD & THE CUP

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

CLOSING HYMN *God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens* UMH #150

**1. God, who stretched the spangled heavens, infinite in time and place,
flung the suns in burning radiance through the silent fields of space,
we your children, in your likeness, share inventive powers with you.
Great Creator, still creating, show us what we yet may do.**

**2. Proudly rise our modern cities, stately buildings, row on row;
yet their windows, blank, unfeeling, stare on canyoned streets below,
where the lonely drift unnoticed in the city's ebb and flow,
lost to purpose and to meaning, scarcely caring where to go.**

**3. We have ventured worlds undreamed of since the childhood of our race;
known the ecstasy of winging through untraveled realms of space;
probed the secrets of the atom, yielding unimagined power, f
acing us with life's destruction or our most triumphant hour.**

**4. As each far horizon beckons, may it challenge us anew,
children of creative purpose, serving others, honoring you.
May our dreams prove rich with promise, each endeavor well begun.
Great Creator, give us guidance till our goals and yours are one.**

WORDS: Catherine Cameron, 1967; MUSIC: William Moore, 1825; Words © 1967 Hope Publishing Co. CCLI 2815228

THE COMMUNITY WATERS

WORDS OF BENEDICTION

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 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 Waawiyataanong (“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)