



Central United Methodist Church

A Reconciling Congregation

Organized 1810—Incorporated 1822— Sanctuary completed 1867

March 5, 2023

Second Sunday in Lent

Women's History Month



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; WS=Worship & Song

PRELUDE

Bobbi Thompson

INTROIT

Bobbi Thompson

ACTS OF PRAISE

*CALL TO WORSHIP

ONE: What is it like to begin again?

ALL: It is like flowers in the spring that push through frozen ground.

It is like babies learning to walk, one clumsy step at a time.

It is like Nicodemus in the night, asking Jesus for guidance.

It is like a Sunday morning, starting our week anew.

ONE: May we find God in our seeking.

ALL: May we learn as we go.

ONE: May we be brave enough to begin again.

ALL: Let us worship the God of new beginnings.

*OPENING HYMN

This is a Day of New Beginnings

UMH #383

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|---|---|
| 1. This is a day of new beginnings, time to remember and move on, time to believe what love is bringing, laying to rest the pain that's gone. | 3. Then let us with the Spirit's daring, step from the past and leave behind our disappointment, guilt and grieving, seeking new paths, and sure to find. |
| 2. For by the life and death of Jesus, God's mighty Spirit, now as then, can make for us a world of difference, as faith and hope are born again. | 4. In faith we'll gather round the table to taste and share what love can do. This is a day of new beginnings our God is making all things new. |

ACTS OF SHARING

GREETING

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHILDREN'S TIME

Deaconess Anne Hillman

CALL TO CONFESSION

ONE: One of the things I love about the prayer of confession is it offers us a new beginning. In the prayer of confession, we lay our cards on the table. We speak honestly with God about who we are and who we long to be. And in response, God wraps us in grace and let us begin again. So together, with God's grace, let us wipe the slate clean. Together, with God's grace, let us pray the prayer of confession:

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

ONE: God of new life, you call us into unknown places,

ALL: And we bury our heads in the sand.

ONE: You promise all the stars in the sky,

ALL: And we doubt it can be true.

ONE: You speak of new life in the spirit,

ALL: And we tell ourselves we've missed our chance.

ONE: Over and over and over again, you invite us closer to you.

ALL: Show us the way. Forgive our mistakes. Give us the courage to begin again with You. Amen.

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

ONE: Family of faith, hear and believe this good news: There is a grace to God's love that is bigger than we can imagine. No matter what we did or didn't do yesterday, we have been forgiven. Today, the slate is wiped clean. Today, we are made new. Join me in saying:

ALL: We belong to God. We are held in God's love. We are made new. Amen.

ANTHEM

Gaudeamus by Natalie Sleeth

INVITATION TO OFFERING

We live in an “already-but-not-yet” time. We look around and see the healthy green crops of justice and peace struggling to grow, mixed in with the weeds of violence and suffering and war. We wait like the farmer for the bountiful harvest of God’s reign, and in the meantime, we’re working hard to nurture every little green shoot of hope. These gifts today are one way we tend the garden, this beautiful green garden of God, staking our hope on the future yield promised by God. Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.

OFFERTORY

Promised Land by Natalie Sleeth

*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

Generous God, you shower us with gifts, including the greatest gift of all, your own Son, Jesus Christ. In thanksgiving and praise, we offer you our time, our money, our very selves. In these actions, we proclaim our intention to be a blessing in your world. Amen.

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

PASTORAL PRAYER

Rev. Dr. Jill Hardt Zundel

*CENTERING HYMN

Mothering God, You Gave Me Birth

TFWS #2050

**1. Mothering God, you gave me birth in
the bright morning of this world.**

**Creator, source of every breath, you
are my rain, my wind, my sun.**

**2. Mothering Christ, you took my form,
offering me your food of light, grain of
life, and grape of love, your very body
for my peace.**

**3. Mothering Spirit, nurt’ring one, in
arms of patience hold me close, So that
in faith I root and grow until I flow’r ,
until I know.**

WORDS: Jean Janzen, based on the writings of Juliana of Norwich;
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ACTS OF PROCLAMATION

*GOSPEL READING

John 3:1-17

The Inclusive Bible

A certain Pharisee named Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin, came to Jesus at night. “Rabbi,” he said, “we know you’re a teacher come from God, for no one can perform the signs and wonders you do, unless by the power of God.”

Jesus gave Nicodemus this answer: The truth of the matter is, unless one is born from above, one cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Nicodemus said, “How can an adult be born a second time? I can’t go back into my mother’s womb to be born again?”

Jesus replied, “The truth of the matter is, no one can enter God’s kingdom without being born of water and the Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh; what is born of the Spirit is Spirit. So don’t be surprised when I tell you that you must be born from above. The wind blows where it will. You hear the sound it makes, but you don’t know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

“How can this be possible?” asked Nicodemus.

Jesus replied, “You’re a teacher of Israel, and you still don’t understand these matters? The truth of the matter is, we’re talking about what we know; we’re testifying about what we’ve seen – yet you don’t accept our testimony. If you don’t believe when I tell you about earthly things, how will you believe? No one has gone up to heaven except the One who came down from heaven – the Chosen One. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so the Chosen One must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in the Chosen One might have eternal life. Yes, God so loved the world as to give the Only Begotten One, that whoever believes may not die, but have eternal life.

God sent the Only Begotten into the world not to condemn the world, but that through the Only Begotten the world might be saved.

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

ALL: Thanks be to God!

MESSAGE

How Do We Begin Again?

Rev. Dr. Jill Hardt Zundel

THE PASSING OF THE PEACE OF CHRIST

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

ONE: Friends, if your seeking has led you here, if your weary heart followed breadcrumbs all the way to this sanctuary, then I have good news: you do not have to seek anymore.

This table is God's table. So if you came here looking for justice, then rest in the comfort that all will be fed here. If you came seeking beauty, then let your spirit marvel at the beauty of a community coming together. If you came seeking a brush with the Divine, then know that God is present in this ordinary meal. So kick off your walking shoes. Let your weary heart stop the search. We are standing on holy ground. This is God's Table. All are invited. Come.

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

ONE: Lift up your hearts.

ALL: We lift them up to God.

ONE: Let us give thanks to our God.

ALL: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

ONE: God of the lost and the found, surely it is right for us to give our thanks and praise; for day after day we look for you, and day after day we find you: in the laughter of children, in the sun rising over the horizon, in the flowers of spring.

Our seeking does not go unanswered, and for that we are grateful. So first and foremost, we come to you in prayer to say thank you, for when we're seeking beauty, you give us mountains and freckles, green eyes and brown eyes. When we're looking for reason to hope, you give us rainbows after the storm and candles flickering in the window. When we're seeking peace, you give us three part harmony and the sound of the rain. And when we're seeking justice, your life reminds us that *everyone* is welcome at your Table, and none shall be turned away.

For all these reminders, we are deeply grateful. And yet, gracious God, our seeking does not stop. For even though your fingerprints are all over this world, we are not yet at your promised day.

So in addition to our gratitude, we also pray today for conviction. Do not let us get comfortable with half-hearted seeking. Do not let us grow numb to the suffering of this world. Make us relentless in our pursuit of justice – relentless in our consoling of the grieving, in our welcoming of the stranger, and in the feeding of the hungry.

Like a dog with a scent, may we walk toward your kingdom, never giving up, never wandering off the path. And as we see and as we seek, pour out your Spirit on this ordinary bread and cup. May this meal be the nourishment we need to continue seeking you in the world. Until that promised day, we will pray. Until your promised day, we will seek. Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

God of manna and mustard seeds, we came to this Table hungry and we leave feeling full-full of hope, full of promise, full of what could be.

For we not only found glimpses of you at this Table, but we caught a glimpse of the way things could be:

in a meal where all are welcomed and all are fed. Is there anything holier than that? So thank you for nourishing our curiosity alongside our spirit and our conviction.

May we always seek you the way you seek after us. With grateful hearts, we pray, Amen.

(Written by Rev. Sarah A Speed/ A Sanctified Art LLC/sanctifiedart.org)

***CLOSING HYMN**

Begin Again

See Insert

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BENEDICTION AND SENDING FORTH

***BENEDICTION**

Rev. Dr. Jill Hardt Zundel

As you leave this place,

May God bless you in the seeking.

Seek out the hungry.

Seek the weary.

Seek the good in every person you pass.

Seek out the hopeful.

Seek the faithful.

Seek God in each of us.

As you seek and as you wonder,

may you find what you are looking for.

In the name of our loving God,

who is always seeking us,

go now in peace. Amen.



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.

**Central United Methodist Church
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www.centralumchurchdetroit.org**

Rev. Dr. Jill Hardt Zundel, Senior Pastor

Rev. Edwin Rowe, Pastor Emeritus

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

Maggie Reese, Music Director

Bobbi Thompson, Accompanist & Soloist

Debra Cox, Office Administrator

Andrew Cox, Building Superintendent

Dave Wilson, Building Maintenance

Yvette Meadows and Angela Bakeley, Receptionists

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)