



# Central United Methodist Church

## *A Reconciling Congregation*

Organized 1810—Incorporated 1822—Sanctuary completed 1867

December 7, 2025

## **Second Sunday of Advent – What do you fear? When we're running out of hope, God is at work.**

### **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

### **ACTS OF GATHERING**

#### **PRELUDE**

Augustus Williamson & Brandon Reeves

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

#### **WELCOME**

#### **ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING (from *A Sanctified Art*)**

Gerring-Jachim Family

ONE: In a world full of fear, where do you see  
glimmers of peace?

**ALL: We see glimmers of peace in the quiet of early morning, when people shake  
hands, when loved ones say they're sorry, and when the church sings together.**

ONE: You are right. Even in a fearful world,  
peace is all around us.  
Today we light the candle of peace as a  
reminder of this good news. May this  
flicker of light help us remember that  
even in a fearful world, peace is present.  
We only have to look for it.

*(Light candle.)*

**Thanks be to God! Amen.**

**\*OPENING HYMN**

*O Little Town of Bethlehem, v. 1, 3 & 4*

UMH #230

**1. O Little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie;  
above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.**

**Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;  
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.**

**3. How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given;  
so God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.**

**No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,  
where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.**

**4. O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;  
cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.**

**We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!**

WORDS: Phillips Brooks, ca. 1868; MUSIC: Lewis H. Redner, 1868; CCLI 281528

**ACTS OF WELCOME**

**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**

**CHILDREN'S MOMENT**

Deaconess Anne Hillman

**ACTS OF PROCLAMATION**

**FIRST SCRIPTURE**

*Isaiah 43:19-21*

Christine Crawford

Look, I am doing something new!

Now it springs forth—can't you see it?

I'm making a road in the desert and setting rivers to flow in the wasteland.

Wild beasts will honor me—the jackals and the ostriches—for I will put water in the desert and rivers in the wasteland for my chosen people to drink,

these people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.

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

ALL: Thanks be to God.



The Second Sunday of Advent | What do you fear?  
WHEN WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF HOPE, GOD IS AT WORK



## Something in the Water

by T. Denise Anderson

Inspired by Isaiah 43:19-21

20"x20" Acrylic on canvas

Deutero-Isaiah<sup>5</sup> addresses a community that had been in exile for a while and had probably resigned themselves to their fate. But the prophet has the temerity to proclaim that God still has something in store and asks if they can “perceive” what it is. That word “perceive” would not let go of me. The Hebrew word can be translated as “know” or even “discern.” Christian churches don’t talk about this often, but one way ancient Israelite communities discerned God’s direction was through divination.

The water imagery in this text is strong and shows up in contrasts (“rivers in the desert” and “waters in the wilderness”). The Holy One is making something out of nothing, providing life-sustaining water to a thirsty nation as God’s “new thing” “springs” forth. It’s also interesting to me that water itself is a tool of divination. To the extent the prophet is inviting the community to “discern” what God is doing, I was reminded of the practice of scrying or “seeing”—looking into a reflective surface like water to get clarity on what Spirit might be saying.

Another translation of “perceive” is “feel.” Here I depict someone placing their hand in the water of God’s provision and direction. Is it God’s hand manipulating the water to send it forth, or is it the hand of someone trying to know/feel/discern the water? A sudden onset of water (like a flood or deluge) can be terrifying, but in this case water is coming to the rescue. What might be scary right now, but is actually coming to save us? How do the waters help us see God and ourselves? By claiming rest, what can we discern in the stillness when we divest from the cycle of fear and turn to the water?

—REV. T. DENISE ANDERSON

5 Deutero-Isaiah refers to Isaiah 40-55, which scholars attribute to an anonymous prophet during the Babylonian Exile. It is characterized by themes of hope for the deliverance of the exiled Jewish people.

## ANTHEM

*Keep Your Lamps*, arr. by Andre Thomas

### \*SCRIPTURE

*Matthew 11:1-11*

Christine Crawford

When Jesus had finished instructing the Twelve, he left the area to teach and preach in the outlying towns of the region.

While John was in prison, he heard about the works the Messiah was performing, and sent a message by way of his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you 'The One who is to come' or do we look for another?"

In reply, Jesus said to them, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see:

'Those who are blind recover their sight; those who cannot walk are able to walk; those with leprosy are cured; those who are deaf hear; the dead are raised to life; and the *anawim*—the "have-nots"—have the Good News preached to them.'

"Blessed is the one who finds no stumbling block in me."

As the messengers set off, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out to the wasteland to see—a reed swaying in the wind? Tell me, what did you go

out to see—someone luxuriously dressed? No, those who dress luxuriously are to be found in royal palaces. So what did you go out to see—a prophet? Yes, a prophet—and more than a prophet! It is about John that scripture says,

'I send my messenger ahead of you to prepare your way before you.'

The truth is, history has not known a person born of woman who is greater than John the Baptizer. Yet the least born into the kin-dom of heaven is greater than he.

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

**ALL: Thanks be to God.**

## MESSAGE

What do you fear?

Rev. Paul Perez

*When we're running out of hope, God is at work."*

## ACTS OF SHARING

### INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

#### OFFERTORY

*Come, Emmanuel*, words and music by Pepper Choplin



**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

### **A SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION (from *A Sanctified Art*)**

ONE: With-us God,

We live in a fearful world.

If we're honest, we come to this Table today with the taste of fear on our tongues.

**ALL: We come to this Table carrying our anxiety.**

**We come to this Table asking for guidance.**

**We come to this Table with all of life's "what-ifs."**

ONE: But you do not disregard our fear.

You do not brush it under the rug or call us foolish.

You do not ignore the realities in front of us.

You do not dish out hurtful platitudes,

telling us to "toughen up" or "power through."

ONE: Instead, you meet us here.

**ALL: You listen to our fears.  
You remind us that we are not alone.  
You surround us with people who love us.**

ONE: You show us where we are strong.  
You walk beside us.  
And you give us a new song to sing.

ONE: So today we pray, gracious God:

**ALL: replace the fear on our tongues with words of hope and songs of joy.  
As we come to this Table, pour out your Spirit on this bread and cup.  
Remind us that even in a fearful world, you are on the move.  
Remind us that even in a fearful world, you are here,**

ONE: Instill that good news in us, for this is a joyful feast.  
Fear is not the loudest voice today.  
What a gift that is. Amen.

## **SHARING THE BREAD & CUP**

### **MUSIC DURING COMMUNION**

Augustus Williamson & Brandon Reeves

### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Loving God, In a world racked with fear, you gather us together. You set the table. You meet us here. You nourish our bodies as you nourish our spirits. You remind us that this is a joyful feast, and that fear cannot win every time. So with renewed courage, with renewed hope, with renewed conviction, send us out into the world. Help us to feed others as you have fed us.

With gratitude we pray, Amen.

**\*CLOSING HYMN**      *It Came upon the Midnight Clear*, v.1, 3, & 4      UMH #218

**1. It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,  
from angels bending near the earth, to touch their harps of gold:  
"Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heaven's all gracious King."  
The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.**

**3. And ye, beneath life's crushing load, whose forms are bending low,  
who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow,  
look now! For glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing.  
O rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing!**

**4. For lo! The days are hastening on, by prophet seen of old,  
when with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold  
when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,  
and the whole world send back the song which now the angles sing.**

# **BENEDICTION**

## **BENEDICTION & SENDING FORTH**

In a fearful world, may you look for God's spirit.

May you reach for each other's hands.

May you choose courage whenever you can.

And in all things, may you remember that good news is louder than fear.

In the name of the one who calls, the one who sends, and the one who journeys with—go in peace and be not afraid.

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)