



Central United Methodist Church

A Reconciling Congregation

Organized 1810—Incorporated 1822— Sanctuary completed 1867

December 24, 2021

Christmas Eve

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

Glory in the Highest

Bobbi Thompson

Anne Hillman

Clara Zundel

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: An unmarried teenage girl was invited –

ALL: To carry Christ into this world.

ONE: An ordinary carpenter was invited –

ALL: To be a father to a child unlike any other.

ONE: The shepherds were invited –

ALL: Outcast and isolated, included at the manger.

ONE: The Magi were invited –

ALL: Foreigners and seekers, included at the manger.

ONE: And if she was invited and he was invited, and they were invited –

ALL: Then we can trust that we too are invited.

***OPENING HYMN**

The First Noel

UMH #245

1. The first Noel the angel did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay; in fields where they lay keeping their sheep, on a cold winter's night that was so deep. (Refrain)

(Refrain) **Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, born is the King of Israel.**

2. They looked up and saw a star shining in the east, beyond them far; and to the earth it gave great light, and so it continued both day and night. (Refrain)

3. And by the light of that same star three Wise Men came from country far; to seek for a king was their intent, and to follow the star wherever it went. (Refrain)

4. This star drew nigh to the north-west, o'er Bethlehem it took its rest; and there it did both stop and stay, right over the place where Jesus lay. (Refrain)

5. Then entered in those Wise Men three, full reverently upon the knee, and offered there, in his presence, their gold and myrrh and frankincense. (Refrain)

WORDS: Trad. English carol; MUSIC: Trad. English carol; harm. from *Christmas Carols New and Old*, 1871; CCLI2815228

ACTS OF SHARING

GREETING

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

ONE: In God's house, there is hope – for God loves us too much to leave us just as we are.

In God's house, there is peace – for all that separates us from God falls away.

In God's house, there is joy – Because God created music, and coffee, and dance floors and laughter that is contagious, and endless rounds of peek-a-boos with babies; and if those things have God's fingerprints, then God's house surely exudes joy.

And in God's house, there is love – Because God is love, from start to finish and that love exists for us all.

ALL: And in the center of our hope, in the center of our peace, in the center of our joy, in the center of our love, is God – who came to this earth to dwell among us.

ONE: So tonight we light the Christ Candle, for God's love just could not stay away. Welcome home. Amen.

ADVENT SONG

Sung to the tune of UMH #420

1. Kindle this flame of Christ. 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; CCLI2815228

TIME FOR CHILDREN

Deaconess Anne Hillman

CALL TO CONFESSION

ONE: Every Sunday we pray a prayer of confession together.

As a kid, I used to think that this was a time to air out all the things I did wrong – all the reasons I was a bad person. However, as I have grown, I have realized – that's not what this is.

Instead, this is a small moment for all of us to pause and recognize that we aren't perfect, we are still works in progress, and we want God's help to grow.

How powerful is that?

Where else in the world does a group of people gather every week and say out loud:

“I'm sorry. I want to grow. Help me get there.”

So tonight as we pray, remember how powerful this is. This is one small way we accept God's invitation to deeper faith and life-changing love. Let us pray together now....

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Holy God, you throw open the door and invite us into relationship, day in and day out. However, instead of running toward you, we dip our toes in the water of this faith. We hold our breath. We play it safe. We struggle to believe that a love so unfettered, so unfiltered, could be for us. As a result, we often deny this worth for ourselves and others. Forgive us for ignoring your invitation to be the people you call us to be. Forgive us for the ways in which we hold back from deeper connection to you or withhold your radical love from others. Open our ears to not only hear your invitation, but to trust that this good news exists even for us. Gratefully we pray, amen.

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

ONE: Family of faith, even when we fail to trust God's love, and even when we fail to love others as we should, God still loves us. That door *never* closes. So hear and believe this good news:

ALL: God invites us into a life of faith. God loves us through every season of life. God forgives us when we lose our way and invites us deeper every step of the way. We are loved, invited, claimed, celebrated, and forgiven. Thanks be to God!

SPECIAL MUSIC

The Star Carol

Bobbi Thompson

Anne Hillman

Clara Zundel

INVITATION TO OFFERING

Jesus was not born in a real home.

He was born into poverty.

He was born into simplicity.

He was born into a manger in Bethlehem.

And despite the little he might have had, Jesus still spent the rest of his days on earth giving to others.

Generosity is in the DNA of our faith. We give what we can, not because we *should* or because scripture says to. We give because we're family. We give because we belong to one another. We give because all are invited into God's house. So let us give our tithes and our offerings now.

OFFERTORY

Wherever You Are

Bobbi Thompson

***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

Gracious God, your story is one that forever invites us to be our full selves, to take up space, to go where we feel called, and to allow this community to feel like home. So use these gifts to keep building your home here. With gratitude as tall as the ceiling, we pray, Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER

***CENTERING HYMN**

Angels We Have Heard on High

UMH #238

**1. Angels we have heard on high sweetly
singing o'er the plains, and the
mountains in reply echoing their
joyous strains. (Refrain)**

**3. Come to Bethlehem and see Christ
whose birth the angels sing; come,
adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord,
the new-born King. (Refrain)**

*(Refrain): Gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria,
in excelsis Deo!*

**4. See him in a manger laid, whom the
choirs of Angels praise; Mary, Joseph,
lend your aid, while our hearts in love
we raise. (Refrain)**

**2. Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why
your joyous strains prolong? What the
gladsome tidings be which inspire your
heavenly song? (Refrain)**

WORDS: Trad. French carol; *Crown of Jesus*, 1862, alt.; MUSIC: French
carol melody' arr. by Edward Shippen Barnes, 1937; harm. by Austin C.
Lovelace, 1964; Harm. © 1964 Abingdon Press; CCLI2815228

ACTS OF PROCLAMATION

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Holy God,

We've heard this story a million times –

Mary and Joseph, the angels, the shepherds.

We've heard it a million times,

but we want to hear it like it's the first.

So move among us.

Circle back.

Draw close.

Crack open our hearts and fill them with your goodness.

Help us to hear what it is you might be saying to us

with curiosity, joy and hope.

This is an invitation.

Come be here with us.

Gratefully we pray, amen.

GOSPEL LESSONLuke 2:1-20*

from the Inclusive Bible

In those days, Caesar Augustus published a decree ordering a census of the whole Roman world. This first census took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All the people were instructed to go back to the towns of their birth to register. And so Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to “the city of David” – Bethlehem in Judea, because Joseph was of the house and lineage of David; he went to register with Mary, his espoused wife, who was pregnant.

While they were there, the time came for her delivery. She gave birth to her firstborn, a son; she put him in a simple cloth wrapped like a receiving blanket, and laid him in a feeding trough for cattle, because there was no room for them at the inn.

There were shepherds in the area living in the fields and keeping night watch by turns over their flock. The angel of God appeared to them, and the glory of God shone around them; they were very much afraid.

The angel said to them, “You have nothing to fear! I come to proclaim good news to you – news of a great joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in David’s city, a savior – the Messiah – has been born to you. Let this be a sign to you: you’ll find an infant wrapped in a simple cloth, lying in a manger.”

Suddenly, there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in high heaven! And on earth peace to those on whom God’s favor rests.”

When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go straight to Bethlehem and see this event that God has made known to us.” They hurried and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger; once they saw this, they reported what they had been told concerning the child. All who heard about it were astonished at the report given by the shepherds.

Mary treasured all these things and reflected on them in her heart. The shepherds went away glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as they had been told.

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

ALL: Thanks be to God!

SPECIAL MUSIC*Little Baby Jesus*Bobbi Thompson
Anne Hillman
Clara Zundel**MESSAGE***Invited Home*

Rev. Dr. Jill Hardt Zundel

CLOSING HYMN

Silent Night

UMH #239

1. **Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright round yon virgin mother and child, Holy infant so tender and mild, sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.**
2. **Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight; glories stream from heaven a-far, heavenly hosts sing Alleluia! Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!**
3. **Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light; radiant beams from thy holy face with the dawn of redeeming grace, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord at thy birth.**
4. **Silent night, holy night, wondrous star, lend thy light; with the angels let us sing, Alleluia to our King Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born.**

WORDS: Joseph Mohr, 1818, alt.; sts. 1,2,3 trans by John F. Young; st. 4 trans. anon.; MUSIC: Franz Gruber, 1818; 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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