



Central United Methodist Church

A Reconciling Congregation

Organized 1810—Incorporated 1822—Sanctuary completed 1867

January 8, 2023
Epiphany Sunday



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: Calling all seekers, all dreamers, all believers...

Calling all glass-half-full optimists and lighthouse keepers...

Calling all star-chasers and bedtime prayer speakers...

Bring your questions, your hope, your faith and your fear into this space.

ALL: God is here!

*OPENING HYMN

We Three Kings

UMH #254

1. **We three kings of orient are; bearing gifts we traverse afar, field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star. (Refrain)**

3. **Frankincense to offer have I; incense owns a Deity nigh; prayer and praising, voices raising, worshipping God on high. (Refrain)**

(Refrain) **O star of wonder, star of light, star with royal beauty bright, westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.**

4. **Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume breathes a life of gathering gloom; sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying, sealed in a stone-cold tomb. (Refrain)**

2. **Born a King on Bethlehem's plain, gold I bring to crown him again, King forever, ceasing never, over us all to reign. (Refrain)**

5. **Glorious now behold him arise, King and God and sacrifice: Alleluia, Alleluia, sounds through the earth and skies. (Refrain)**

ACTS OF SHARING

GREETING

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHILDREN'S TIME

Deaconess Anne Hillman

CALL TO CONFESSION

One: One of my favorite things about the Magi is that they go looking for God. Actively and consistently, day by day, they follow the star until it guides them to Jesus. I wish I was more like that, but I admit, I tend to follow God with part of my heart. I tend to get distracted and lost, taking exit ramps off the road, following whatever new shiny sign is present. It's part of being human.

In the prayer of confession, we acknowledge that more often than we'd like to admit, we find ourselves following the wrong star. Fortunately for us, God is the map maker, and God's map is measured in grace, so we have nothing to fear. Let us pray together. Let us seek God together. Join me in the prayer of confession:

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**God of starlight,
we know that faith isn't a vending machine.
Good news can't be bought or manufactured.
It does not arrive with a push of a button.**

**Instead, in this noisy world, we have to look for you in our midst.
We have to walk toward you, just as the Magi did.
We have to believe that love really can change the world.
We have to seek the stars beyond the city lights.**

**Forgive us for forgetting that.
Forgive us for seeking you with only part of our hearts.
We long to be more like the Magi; may we walk your way every single day.
Amen.**

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

ONE: Friends, I have nothing but good news.

Since the very first day, God has taken the pieces of our hearts that we have offered up and has said, "I can work with that." Even in our failings, God has washed us with words of grace, belonging, and love.

No matter what star you've followed,
no matter how far you've walked,
no matter how lost you got –
you belong to God.

God loves you. God forgives you. God claims you.

End of story. Thanks be to God! Amen.

ANTHEM

The Work of Christmas by Dan Forrest

INVITATION TO OFFERING

When circumstances surround us with grief, box us in to fear, or build up our defenses, God turns us toward each other. Together, we find what we need to navigate even the most precarious of times. In this spirit of collective care, let us bring what we have with trust in the Sacred.

OFFERTORY

Rise Up and Shine Arr. Carl P. Daw

***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**

Loving One, we pray you would bless these gifts, small and humble, toward your work of freedom. Guide our intentions and our actions in the direction of your kingdom - where all creatures, creations, neighbors, and even our enemies are delivered from systems of evil. That your blessings may abound on all the earth, Amen.

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

PASTORAL PRAYER

Rev. Dr. Jill Hardt Zundel

***GOSPEL LESSON**

Matthew 2:1-12

Ruth Biersdorf

After Jesus' birth – which happened in Bethlehem of Judea, during the reign of Herod – astrologers from the East arrived in Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the newborn ruler of the Jews? We observed his star at its rising and have come to pay homage.” At this news Herod became greatly disturbed, as did all of Jerusalem. Summoning all the chief priests and religious scholars of the people, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born.

“In Bethlehem of Judea,” they informed him. “Here is what the prophet has written:

‘And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah, since from you will come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.’”

Herod called the astrologers aside and found out from them the exact time of the star's appearance. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, after having instructed them, “Go and get detailed information about the child. When you have found him, report back to me – so that I may go and offer homage, too.”

After their audience with the ruler, they set out. The star which they had observed at its rising went ahead of them until it came to a standstill over the place where the child lay. They were overjoyed at seeing the star and, upon entering the house, found the child with Mary, his mother. They prostrated themselves and paid homage. Then they opened their coffers and presented the child with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

They were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, so they went back to their own country by another route.

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

ALL: **Thanks be to God!**

***CENTERING 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)

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)

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

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

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)

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)

ACTS OF PROCLAMATION

*GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 2:13-23

Ruth Biersdorf

After the astrologers had left, the angel of God suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph with the command, “Get up, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you otherwise. Herod is searching for the child to destroy him.” Joseph got up, awakened Jesus and Mary, and they left that night for Egypt. They stayed there until the death of Herod, to fulfill what God had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I have called my Own.”

Herod became furious when he realized that the astrologers had outwitted him. He gave orders to kill all male children that were two years old and younger living in and around Bethlehem. The age of the children was based on the date Herod had learned from the astrologers. Then what was spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

“A voice was heard in Ramah
sobbing and lamenting loudly;
It was Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled,
for they were no more.”

After Herod’s death, the angel of God appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt – with the command, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and set out for the land of Israel. Those who had designs on the life of the child are dead.”

Joseph got up, awakened Jesus and Mary, and they returned to the land of Israel. Joseph heard, however, that Archelaus had succeeded Herod as ruler of Judea, and Joseph was afraid to go back there. Instead, because of a warning received by Joseph in a dream, the family went to the region of Galilee. There they settled in a town called Nazareth. In this way, what was said through the prophets was fulfilled: “He will be called a Nazarene.”

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

ALL: Thanks be to God!

MESSAGE

Jesus Was a Refugee

Rev. Dr. Jill Hardt Zundel

PASSING OF THE PEACE

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table

One: Friends, we know what it feels like to look for God. We know what it feels like to turn our heads up to the sky, looking for stars or signs. We know what it feels like to walk day after day, hoping that we grow closer to God. We know what it feels like to seek.

I think that's part of why we end up here,
because we are hoping that in the midst of this messy world
we might catch a glimpse of God
that will carry us through.

Well, friends, I have good news.
God is already here,
Like a mighty wind, God is moving through this room.
God is at this Table, inviting us forward.
The invitation may not be as clear as a star in the sky,
but from generation to generation, God has always gathered with God's people.

So come to this Table with your questions and your doubts.
Come with your joys and your gratitude.
Come seeking, come hungry, come curious.
Come open. Come not because you have to, but because you can.
Come with all of you, for there is room for you here.

This is God's Table; this is God's meal.
We are the guests.
So come.

Let us pray...

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

One: God of today, tomorrow and yesterday,
like the Magi, we are seeking you.
Like the Magi, we are bringing ourselves closer to you,
step by step and word by word.

So today we ask that you would make yourself known to us.
Reach into our spirits and give us a boost of confidence that love is real and we are not
alone.

We know we're asking a lot for a group that brings very little. We don't have gold
or frankincense or myrrh. We haven't spent the last several days traveling here
by camel. We're no Magi, but we're yours.

Instead, we bring ourselves to this Table – to your Table – in hopes of catching a glimpse
of you. Speak to us in this bread. Speak to us in the cup. Speak to us through these star
words. Let them be invitations and challenges for the year ahead; let them be like stars
above helping us look for you.

Holy God, you were the God of yesterday and we know you'll be the God of
tomorrow, for you have loved us from generation to generation. So with
grateful hearts, we pray, Amen.

**As you come forward to receive the elements, we invite you to draw a star from the
basket. If you are worshiping on line with us, we have a numbered list of star words.
Please choose a number between 1-100 and type it into the chat and you will receive a
reply with your star word.)**

Prayer After Communion

One: God of open horizons and open roads, like the Magi so many years ago, we are here,
seeking you. Step by step, we have wandered into this hour with the hope of feeling you
in our midst. Step by step, you have claimed us, loved us, and fed us.
Today we have drawn star words. For some, these words are full of meaning, challenge
and invitation already.

For others, these words are a blank canvas – inviting you into our lives.
So as a new year dawns, we pray that just as you have spoken to the generations before
us, you would speak to us again. Allow us to use these star words as a tool that might
help us hear you more clearly.

May they guide us, as the star guided the Magi.
And in a year, may we find ourselves, here, together again, with mouths full of praise for
the ways in which you have been present with us.
Together we pray, with the saints before us. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN**

Always Seeking

Tune UMH #220

**1. As the wise men scanned the heavens,
there they saw Christ's natal star, then
began the long procession seeking him
in country far. (Refrain)**

**3. Fleeing from the wrath of Herod,
Joseph led his family seeking in the
desert arid safety there as refugees.
(Refrain)**

*Refrain: Always seeking, moving onward,
following where God may lead*

**4. Seeking signs or seeking power,
seeking safety, seeking home. Day by
day and hour by hour we press on
toward the unknown. (Refrain)**

**2. When they reached King Herod's
palace asking where to find the child
Herod schemed in all his malice, this
new king himself to find. (Refrain)**

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BENEDICTION AND SENDING FORTH

***BENEDICTION**

Rev. Dr. Jill Hardt Zundel

Blessed are you who turn your face up to the sky,
who open your arms to feel the wind,
who notice all the things that we should notice.

Blessed are you who are fluent in wonder
and familiar with awe.

Blessed are you who, even now, dream dreams,
who have not lost hope,
who swear the glass is still half-full.

Blessed are you who plant trees
and sing the harmony,
who tell the children how this world can be magic.

Blessed are you who
walk and seek
and turn over every stone,
pointing out all the corners and colors

That God lives in.

Blessed are you. 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
23 East Adams, Detroit, Michigan 48226 ~ 313.965.5422
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, Interim Music Director

Bobbi Thompson, Accompanist

Debra Cox, Office Administrator

Andrew Cox, Building Superintendent

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)