



Central United Methodist Church

A Reconciling Congregation

Organized 1810—Incorporated 1822—Sanctuary completed 1867

December 24, 2023

4th Sunday of Advent

How does a weary world rejoice? We sing songs of hope.

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.

W&S=Worship & Song Hymnal Guide: UMH = The United Methodist Hymnal.

TFWS = The Faith We Sing

PRELUDE

Gerald Furi, Guest Organist

***CALL TO WORSHIP** (from A Sanctified Art)

ONE: How does a weary world rejoice?

ALL: We sing songs of hope.

We allow hope to change us, to strengthen us.

We tell the stories of what could be.

We listen for God's word.

We resist the temptation to give up or give in.

We remember Mary's song.

We gather for worship.

We hope.

We hope.

Against all odds, we hope.

ONE: Friends, this is the day that the Lord is still making.

Let us worship holy God.

***OPENING HYMN**

O Come, All Ye Faithful

UMH #234

1. O come, all ye faithful joyful and triumphant, O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem. Come and behold him, born the King of angels; (Refrain)

(Refrain) **O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.**

3. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation; O sing, all ye citizens of heaven above! Glory to God, all glory in the highest; (Refrain)

4. See How the shepherds, summoned to his cradle, leaving their flocks, draw nigh to gaze; we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps; (Refrain)

WORDS: John F. Wade, ca. 1743; trans. by Frederick Oakeley, 1841, and others; MUSIC: John F. Wade, ca. 1743; harm. from *Collections of Motets or Antiphons*, 1792; CCLI 2815228

ACTS OF SHARING

GREETINGS AND WELCOME OF FIRST TIME VISITORS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING (from A Sanctified Art)

The Oatley Family

ONE: How does a weary world practice love?

ALL: By sending cards and picking up the phone.

ONE: By practicing empathy, and assuming the best in others. By learning people's stories and finding common ground.

ALL: By advocating for justice, and saving a place at the table.

ONE: There are a million ways to practice love. So today we light the candle of love as a reminder and a charge.

ALL: With God's help, may we bring love into a weary world. Amen.

CHILDREN'S MOMENT

Deaconess Anne Hillman

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

OFFERTORY

O Whisper! Whisper! By Jay Althouse



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. Amen.**

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

A SERVICE OF LESSONS & CAROLS

THE FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 35: 1-4, 8-10

Let the desert and the wilderness exult! Let the Arabah rejoice and bloom like the crocus! Let it blossom profusely, let it rejoice and sing for joy! The glory of Lebanon is bestowed on it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon. They will see the glory of God, the splendor of our God. Strengthen all weary hands, steady all trembling knees. Say to all those of faint heart: “Take courage! Do not be afraid! Look, God is coming, vindication is coming, the recompense of God—God is coming to save you!”

And through it will run a highway, a road called the Sacred Path. The unclean may not travel by it, but it will be for God’s people alone; and no traveler—not even fools—will go astray. No lions will be there, nor will any fierce beast roam about it, but the redeemed will walk there—for those whom God has ransomed will return. They will enter Zion shouting for joy, with everlasting joy on their faces; joy and gladness will go with them, and sorrow and lament will flee away.

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)**

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

(Refrain) **Gloria, in excelsis De-o!
Gloria, in excelsis De-o!**

WORDS: Trad. French carol; trans. *Crown of Jesus*, 1862, alt.; MUSIC: French carol melody; arr. by Edward Shippen Barnes, 1937; harm. by Austin C. Lovelace, 1964; Harm. © 164 Abingdon Press, CCLI 2815228

THE SECOND LESSON *Luke 1: 26-38*

Six months later, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a young woman named Mary; she was engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. Upon arriving, the angel said to Mary, “Rejoice, highly favored one! God is with you! Blessed are you among women!”

Mary was deeply troubled by these words and wondered what the angel’s greeting meant. The angel went on to say to her, “Don’t be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God. You’ll conceive and bear a son, and give him the name of Jesus—‘Deliverance,’ His dignity will be great, and he will be called the Only Begotten of God. God will give Jesus the judgment seat of David, his ancestor, to rule over the house of Jacob forever, and his reign will never end.”

Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have never been with a man?”

The angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you—hence the offspring to be born will be called the Holy One of God. Know too that Elizabeth, your kinswoman, has conceived a child in her old age; she who was thought to be infertile is now in her sixth month. Nothing is impossible with God.”

Mary said, “I am the servant of God. Let it be done to me as you say.”

With that, the angel left her.

HYMN

Mary, Did You Know arr. Jack Schrader

Choir

MESSAGE

Rev Paul Perez

THE THIRD LESSON *Luke 2:1-7*

In those days, Caesar Augustus published a decree ordering a census of the whole Roman world. The 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.

HYMN

O Holy Night by Adolphe Adam

Megan Mueller, Alto
Laura Berger, Soprano

THE FOURTH LESSON *Luke 2: 8-20*

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.

CANDLE LIGHTING

HYMN

Silent Night, Holy 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 afar, 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!**

BENEDICTION & SENDING FORTH

BENEDICTION & SENDING FORTH

(After candles are extinguished, you are invited to leave quietly)



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.

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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, Music Director

Bobbi Thompson, Accompanist & Brandon Reeves, Choral Accompanist

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)