



Central United Methodist Church

A Reconciling Congregation

Organized 1810—Incorporated 1822—Sanctuary completed 1867

March 30, 2025

Fourth Sunday in Lent

Seeding the Soil: (Contemplative Practices for Sustaining our Spirits)

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

PRELUDE

Brandon Reeves

THE COMMUNITY GATHERS

INVITATION TO WORSHIP

Welcome to week 4 of our Lenten journey. Our worship theme this year, guiding our way toward Holy Week in these most wilderness of days, is "Seeding the Soil: Contemplative Practices for Sustaining Our Spirits."

A labyrinth is a simple, circular pattern, laid out on the ground—indoors or outside—intended for walking. Labyrinths are older than Christianity and have been part of most world religions. This contemplative practice is a form of embodied prayer, an exercise in mindfulness, a time of personal reflection, vocational discernment, and spiritual exploration.

Labyrinths are not mazes. There are no wrong turns or dead ends, just a continuous path that eventually takes every traveler to the center. The journey begins with a prayer or intention. It may also begin with a question, making each step an act of listening for an answer.

Let us begin worship today with a moment of silence. Take a deep breath. Wiggle your toes. Move your feet. Tighten or loosen your laces. Take a moment to gather your prayers, intentions, or questions. Imagine what it is you seek in the center. Prepare your heart to receive it.

I Am an Acorn

1. D Em7 (or G) D Em7

2. I am an a-corn, the packet, the seed
 3. God is with-in me and God is the tree I am un-
 4. fold-ing the way I should be Carved in the palm of God's
 5. ha-nd Carved in the palm of God's hand

- 1. I am an acorn, the packet, the seed
 - 2. God is within me, & God is the tree
 - 3. I am unfolding the way I should be
 - 4. & 5. Carved in the palm of His hand (2x)
- [Sown in the soil of God's land (2x)]

- Carol Johnson

© 1981 Carol Johnson. Noeldner Music (BMI), PO Box 6351, Grand Rapids, MI 49506). All rights reserved. Used by permission. On her "Might As Well Make It Love".

OPENING PRAYER

God our guide, we are here and ready for another week of the journey. Give us direction and grant us strength. Pour out the nourishment and sustenance we need as we move toward the center in search of deeper meaning and greater purpose. Amen.

OPENING HYMN

Thy Word is a Lamp

UMH #601

(Refrain) Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

**1. When I feel afraid, think I've lost my way,
still you're there right beside me,
and nothing will I fear as long as you are near.
Please be near me to the end. (Refrain)**

**2. Now I will not forget your love for me
and yet my heart forever is wondering.
Jesus, be my guide and hold me to your side,
and I will love you to the end.**

Words: Amy Grant, 1984, MUSIC: Michael W. Smith 1984; arr. by Keith Phillips;
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THE COMMUNITY PREPARES

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

PASSING THE PEACE

CHILDREN'S MOMENT

Deaconess Anne Hillman

TRANSGENDER DAY OF VISIBILITY AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (See Insert)

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

OFFERTORY

Kristi Crago
Isaiah Thomason-Redus, Lydia Thomason-Redus

***DOXOLOGY:** *Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days, V. 4 & 5* UMH #269

**4. And through these days of penitence, and through your passion-tide,
yea, evermore, in life and death, Jesus, with us abide.**

**5. Abide with us that so this life of suffering over past,
an Easter of unending joy, we may attain at last!**

WORDS: Claudia f. Hernaman, 1873; MUSIC: USA Folk melody; arr. by Annabel Morris Buchanan, 1938;
harm. by Charles H. Webb, 1988; Music © 1938. Renewed 1966 J. Fischer and Bro. Co.; harm. © 1989 J. Fischer and Bro. Co.; CCLI 2815228

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

God, we walk these tithes and offerings to you. We are grateful for your presence on our journey and for the provisions you so generously provide. May our gifts bring health, hope, and healing to all those who travel in this weary world. Amen.

CHOIR ANTHEM

You Do Not Walk Alone by Elaine Hagenberg

THE COMMUNITY SEEDS

CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE

Labyrinths

Preparation

- Sit quietly to reflect before walking.
- Bring a prayer or spiritual question to contemplate.

Steps

- Enter the labyrinth.
- Follow the path to the center.
- Pause in the center.
- Turn around and follow the same path back out.

Tips

- Go at your own pace.
- Let others move around you.
- Be mindful of your surroundings.
- Focus on your steps.
- Use a mantra to refocus.
- Bring an image to mind, like a spiral or heart.
- Focus on the soles of your feet.
- Avoid looking ahead of where you are walking.

CONTEMPORARY READING

"The land carries the stories of our ancestors and the dreams of our children. To walk it with reverence, to fight for its protection, is to stand for justice and dignity."

Source: Menchú, R. (1984). *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*. Verso Books.

SCRIPTURE*Luke 15: 1-3, 11b-32*

Meanwhile, the tax collectors and the "sinners" were all gathering around Jesus to listen to his teaching, at which the Pharisees and the religious scholars murmured, "This person welcomes sinners and eats with them!"

"A man had two sons. The younger of them said to their father, 'Give me the share of the estate that is coming to me.' So the father divided up the property between them. Some days later, the younger son gathered up his belongings and went off to a distant land. Here he squandered all his money on loose living.

"After everything was spent, a great famine broke out in the land, and the son was in great need. So he went to a landowner, who sent him to a farm to take care of the pigs.

The son was so hungry that he could have eaten the husks that were fodder for the pigs, but no one made a move to give him anything. Coming to his senses at last, he said, 'How many hired hands at my father's house have more than enough to eat, while here I am starving! I'll quit and go back home and say, "I've sinned against God and against you; I no longer deserve to be called one of your children. Treat me like one of your hired hands.'" With that, the younger son set off for home.

"While still a long way off, the father caught sight of the returning child and was deeply moved. The father ran out to meet him, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, 'I've sinned against God and against you; I no longer deserve to be called one of your children.' But his father said to one of the workers, 'Quick! Bring out the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. Take the calf we've been fattening and butcher it. Let's eat and celebrate! This son of mine was dead and has come back to life. He was lost and now he's found!' And the celebration began.

"Meanwhile the elder son had been out in the field. As he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the workers and asked what was happening. The worker answered, 'Your brother is home, and the fatted calf has been killed because your father has him back safe and sound.'

"The son got angry at this and refused to go in to the party, but his father came out and pleaded with him. The older son replied, 'Look! For years now I've done every single thing you asked me to do. I never disobeyed even one of your orders, yet you never gave me so much as a kid goat to celebrate with my friends. But then this son of yours comes home after going through your money with prostitutes, and you kill the fatted calf for him!'

"'But my child!' the father said. 'You're with me always, and everything I have is yours. But we have to celebrate and rejoice! This brother of yours was dead and has come back to life. He was lost and he's found.'"

MESSAGE*Finding the Center and Beginning Again*

Deaconess Anne Hillman



CLOSING HYMN

Lead Me, Guide Me

TFWS #2214

(Refrain) **Lead me, guide me along the way.
For if you lead me I cannot stray.
God let me walk each day with Thee.
Lead me, oh God lead me.**

- 1. I am weak and I need Thy strength and power
to help me over my weakest hour.
Let me through the darkness Thy face to see.
Lead me, oh God lead me. *(Refrain)***
- 2. Help me tread in the paths of righteousness.
Be my aid when guilt and sin oppress.
I am putting all my trust in Thee,
Lead me, oh God lead me. *(Refrain)***
- 3. I am lost if you take your hand from me,
I am blind without Thy light to see.
Lord just always to me thy servant be,
Lead me, oh God lead me. *(Refrain)***

THE COMMUNITY WATERS

WORDS OF BENEDICTION

CHORAL BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Kristi Crago
Isaiah Thomason-Redus, Lydia Thomason-Redus

Central United Methodist Church
23 East Adams, Detroit, Michigan 48226, 313.965.5422

cumcdetroit1810@centralumchurchdetroit.org / www.centralumchurchdetroit.org

Rev. Paul Perez, Lead Minister

Rev. Edwin Rowe, Pastor Emeritus

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

Guest Choral Director, Jennifer Peugoske

Margaret Reese, Director of Music & Brandon Reeves, Collaborative Pianist

Debra Cox, Office Administrator / Angela Bakeley, Receptionist

Dave Wilson, Building 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 Waawiyataanong (“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)