



Central United Methodist Church

A Reconciling Congregation

Organized 1810—Incorporated 1822—Sanctuary completed 1867

December 19, 2021
Fourth Sunday of Advent

OUR WELCOMING STATEMENT

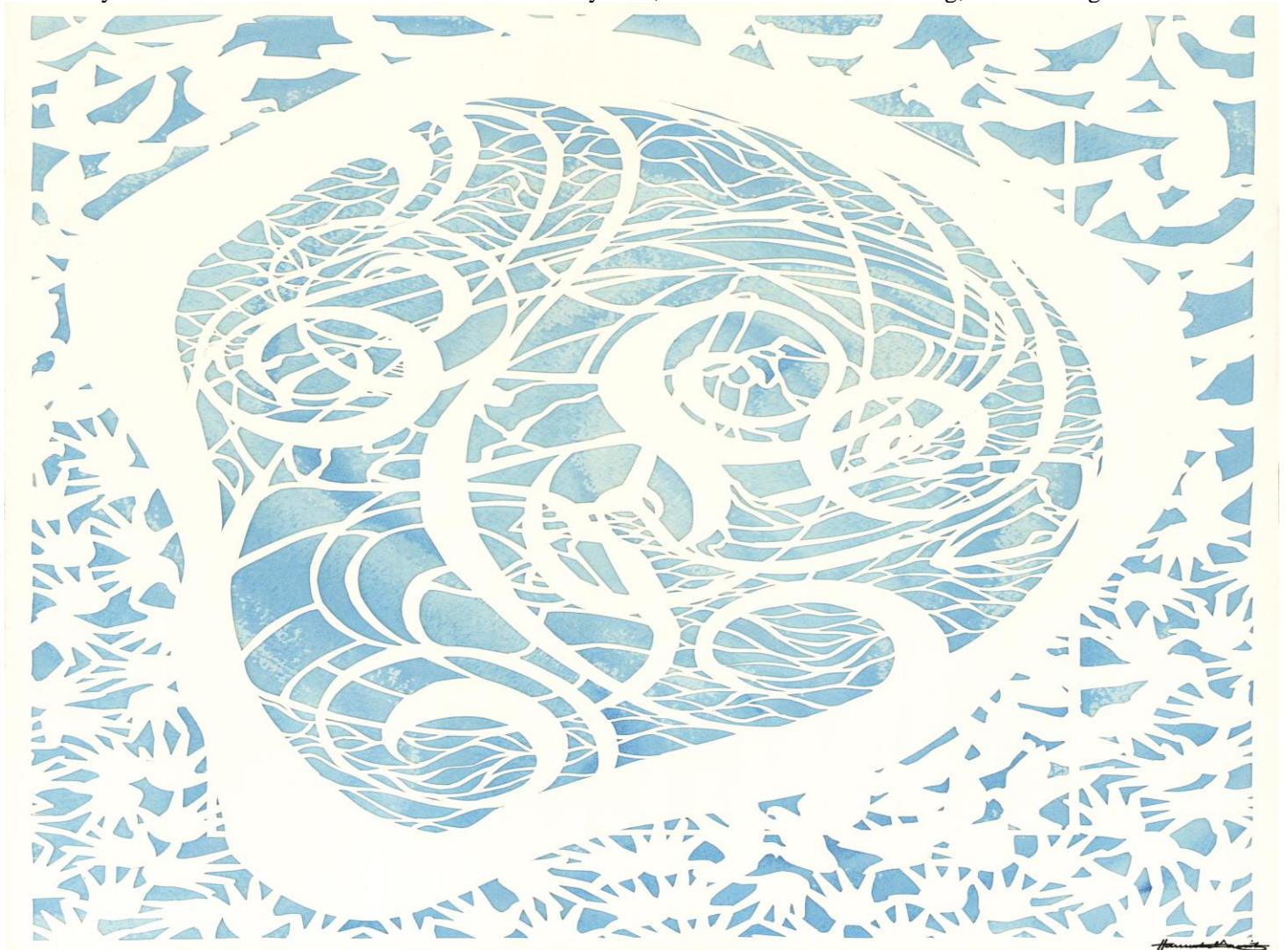
Central United Methodist Church is a Reconciling Congregation. Regardless of your race, ethnicity, immigration status, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic situation, age, ability, belief, or background, whether you are single or partnered, you are God's beloved and you are welcome here.

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

Bobbi Thompson

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: We are seeking –

ALL: Deeper faith, a place to belong, the feeling that God is here in this room.

ONE: We are seeking –

ALL: Joy that overflows, the movement of the Spirit, a hand to hold, when alone in the dark.

ONE: We are seeking –

ALL: The freedom to be, the courage to Love, the conviction to act in the face of injustice.

ONE: We are seeking, but here in this space,

ALL: We are found.

ONE: Take a deep breath. This is your sanctuary.

ALL: God is here. We are found. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN**

Chosen Home

(Tune *O Come All Ye Faithful*)

1. As Jesus family traveled back to Nazareth, he stayed and claimed a space inside temple walls. Seeking a place where he could show his true self.
(Refrain)

(Refrain): A place that truly sees us, a place that loves and frees us, like tables set by Jesus is our chosen home.

2. In later years he called his chosen family, Fishers and tax collectors, women and men. Leaving his home to eat with saints and sinners *(Refrain)*

3. We may not find home where it is expected. Sometimes we have to leave to be who we are: Wholly created in God's holy image *(Refrain)*

4. May this be a brave space for all people. Where all are seen and loved among family space to grow and follow in our callings *(Refrain)*

Music: John Francis Wade (1743); Text: Anna Strickland
2021 Commissioned by A Sanctified Art, LLC; CCLI2815228

ACTS OF SHARING

GREETING AND WELCOME OF FIRST TIME VISITORS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

Love

ONE: God's love is like an open door.

ALL: God's love is the streetlight that guides us home.

ONE: God's love is a warm bed to fall into.

ALL: God's love is a table with room for you.

ONE: God's love is a crackling fireplace.

ALL: God's love is the sun that streams through the windows.

ONE: God's love is the roof over our heads and the floor beneath our feet.

ALL: God's love is a home for you and me, for neighbors and strangers, for family and friends, for enemies and partners.

ONE: God's love is a home for all.

ALL: Today we light the candle of love to remind us of this truth.

ONE: May it burn brightly in this space and even brighter in our hearts.

ALL: Amen

ADVENT SONG

Sung to the tune of UMH #420

1. Kindle this flame of love. 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: Mary's world turned upside down with the visit of an angel.

This is a moment we can relate to, because over the course of the last year and a half, our world has seemed to turn upside down more than once.

When those moments come, we hope to respond with grace; but more often than not, fear can get the best of us. So today we turn to God in prayer, asking for God's guidance and grace in the places and moments we need it most.

Let us pray together now...

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of safe spaces, we wish we were more like Mary, who in the face of great change, went and sought help. She did not wait for help to find her; she walked to the shelter she needed. Too often we wait silently for the world to change around us instead of speaking up for the things we need. Forgive us for failing to care for ourselves the way you would care for us. Give us the courage to be more like Mary.

God of safe spaces, we wish we were more like Elizabeth, who greeted Mary with laughter and contagious joy. How many people have crossed our doorstep and how many times have we failed to see them? Give us the courage of Mary, and the grace of Elizabeth. Gratefully we pray, Amen.

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

ONE: Family of faith, even if we miss the person standing on our doorstep, even if we fail to care for ourselves the way God would care for us, even if we forget and ignore, turn away and shut down, God still loves us. There is nothing we can do to lose God's love.

ALL: Rest in this promise.

ONE: If we get lost

ALL: we will be found.

ONE: If we mess up,

ALL: We are forgiven.

ONE: If we withhold love,

ALL: God is lavish in loving us.

ONE: We are claimed. We are loved. We are forgiven.

ALL: Thanks be to God. Amen.

INVITATION TO OFFERING

Elizabeth offers her home.

She offers her arms.

She offers her joy.

She offers her affirmation and confidence.

Elizabeth offers everything she has when Mary shows up at her door, and it just feels holy, doesn't it?

Part of our call as people of faith is to give when and where we can. So today we are invited to be a little more like Elizabeth. Today we are invited to give generously, trusting that God will take these gifts and build a better world here. Let us give with joyful hearts.

OFFERTORY

***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**

**Good and gracious God,
We give these gifts for the seekers.
We give these gifts for those who need sanctuary.
We give these gifts for those who build sanctuaries.
We give these gifts for those who have lost sanctuary,
and for those who find sanctuary all over the place
Use these gifts to bring us closer to home.
With joy and hope in our hearts we pray, Amen**

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

PASTORAL PRAYER

***CENTERING HYMN**

Love Came Down at Christmas

UMH #242

- 1. Love came down at Christmas, Love all lovely, Love divine; Love was born at Christmas; star and angels gave the sign.**
- 2. Worship we the God-head. Love incarnate, Love divine; worship we our Jesus, but where-with for sacred sign?**
- 3. Love shall be our token; love be yours and love be mine; love to God and neighbor, love for plea and gift and sign.**

WORDS: Christina G. Rossetti, 1885; MUSIC: Trad. Irish melody; harm. by Avid Evans, 1927; alt. Harm. by permission of Oxford University Press; CCLI2815228

ACTS OF PROCLAMATION

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Holy God,
We come to your Scripture today
hoping that it will feel a bit like an open door,
like Elizabeth welcoming Mary,
like coming home.
We want to fall into it.
We want to find sanctuary here.
We want to breathe easier just hearing these words.
And we want to find ourselves laughing
because this good news is just too good to keep inside.
So hover close to us now, we pray.
Open the door to our hearts
so that we might find sanctuary in your words.
Gratefully we pray, Amen.

***GOSPEL LESSON**

Luke 1:39-55

from the Inclusive Bible

Within a few days Mary set out and hurried to the hill country to a town of Judah, where she entered Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth.

As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!

But why am I so favored, that the mother of the Messiah should come to me? The moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who believed that what our God said to her would be accomplished!"

Mary said: "My soul proclaims your greatness, O God, and my spirit rejoices in you, my Savior. For you have looked with favor upon your lowly servant, and from this day forward all generations will call me blessed.

For you, the Almighty, have done great things for me, and holy is your Name. Your mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear you. You have shown strength with your arm; you have scattered the proud in their conceit; you have deposed the mighty from their thrones and raised the lowly to high places.

You have filled the hungry with good things, while you have sent the rich away empty. You have come to the aid of Israel your servant, mindful of your mercy – the promise you made to our ancestors – to Sarah and Abraham and their descendants forever."

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

ALL: Thanks be to God!

MESSAGE

Seeking Sanctuary

Rev. Dr. Jill Hardt Zundel

CLOSING HYMN

O Little Town of Bethlehem

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.
2. For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above, while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love. O morning stars together, proclaim the holy birth, and praises sing and voices ring with peace to all on earth.
3. How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given! So God imparts to human hearts the glorious love of heaven. No one discerns God's coming, but in this world of sin. Where yearning souls long to be whole 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!

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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