



Central United Methodist Church

A Reconciling Congregation

Organized 1810—Incorporated 1822—Sanctuary completed 1867

December 13, 2020
Third 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

Daniel Dillingham

INTROIT

Bobbi Thompson

ACTS OF PRAISE

WELCOME

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

This week, we turn to Luke's writing, which is an account in two acts: The Gospel biography of Jesus and then the story of the early church – the "Jesus" community. Whether you were a Jew or gentile in those days, deciding to become a part of this illegal early Christian movement could bring punishment for your allegiance. Surely the message in both Luke and Isaiah that the downcast, lowly, and oppressed would rise up is a welcome and inspirational account. Like the Jewish exiled people of Isaiah's time and like the early Christians, we also wonder where God is in our suffering. We long to hear the promise that a reason for joyful praise is the good news on the way!

THRESHOLD MUSIC

(Solo) I believe in God, I believe in God, even when, even when God is silent.
I believe in God, I believe in God, even when, even when God is silent.

ONE: The loneliness of fear

ALL: The loneliness of fear

ONE: The invisibility of the next step

ALL: The invisibility of the next step

ONE: The yearning for presence

ALL: The yearning for presence

PRAYER:

ONE: Holy One, we thank you for the glimpses we catch of your gift of the depths of joy.

Even in the midst of fear, of challenge, of struggle – even when we are not sure of your presence, ignite the flame of joy within us.

ALL: That we might glow with its brilliance from the inside out.

(Congregation joins soloist in unison)

I believe in God, I believe in God, even when, even when God is silent.

ONE: Help us face the silence of unknowing and embrace it as the pregnant pause before joyful new beginnings.

ALL: Amen.

ONE: You are invited to light your Advent 3 candle of joy at this time.

OPENING HYMN

We Hail You God's Anointed

Adapted from UMH # 203

1. We hail you God's anointed, the long
awaited One! Hail in the time
appointed, your reign on earth begun!
You come to break oppression, to set
the captive free; to take away
transgression, and rule in equity.

3. The wise shall bow before you and
gold and incense bring; all nations
shall adore you, and praise all peoples
sing; to you shall prayer unceasing and
daily vows be said, your realm is still
increasing, with you, O Christ as head.

2. You shall come down like showers
upon the fruitful earth; and joy and
hope, like flowers, spring in your path
to birth. Before you on the mountains
shall peace, the herald go and
righteousness, in fountains, from hill to
valley flow.

4. O'er every foe victorious, you on your
throne shall rest; from age to age more
glorious, all blessing and all blessed.
The tide of time shall never your
covenant remove; your name shall
stand forever, your change-less name
of Love.

CCLI 2815228

ACTS OF SHARING

GREETING AND WELCOME OF FIRST TIME VISITORS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ACTS OF PROCLAMATION

CHILDREN'S TIME TO SHINE

(children first sing "This Little Light of Mine")

Rev. Dr. Jill Hardt Zundel

HEBREW SCRIPTURE LESSON

Isaiah 57:14-19

Cameron Davis

The Common English Bible

It will be said, "Survey, survey; build a road!
Remove barriers from my people's road!"
The one who is high and lifted up,
who lives forever, whose name is holy, says:
I live on high, in holiness,
and also with the crushed and the lowly,
reviving the spirit of the lowly,
reviving the heart of those who have been crushed.

I won't always accuse,
nor will I be enraged forever.
It is my own doing that their spirit is exhausted-
I gave them breath!
I was enraged about their illegal profits;
I struck them; in rage I withdrew from them.
Yet they went on wandering wherever they wanted.
I have seen their ways, but I will heal them.
I will guide them,
and reward them with comfort.

And for those who mourn,
I will create reason for praise;
utter prosperity to those far and near,
and I will heal them, says our God.

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

ALL: Thanks be to God.

THE WITNESS OF MUSIC

PASTOR: Each week we are presenting a musical piece to fill our worship with music and our dark nights with the light of joy. What a gift this has been when we were afraid we would have no music this Advent! We have also been witnessing the power of music through documentaries that open us to lives transformed by the presence of instrument and song.

This week, I am hosting a discussion of another amazing documentary film that tells the story of one piece of music whose composer, Beethoven, could not have imagined how it would ring out around the world as a testament of an undying spirit of the people – an Ode to Joy. “Following the Ninth” tells the story of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, created when the aging and deaf Beethoven himself could not hear it at all. His silence was transformed into echoes through the ages as this music was used in protest marches against evil dictators and as hope in the midst of natural disaster. I am excited about sharing this film with you. You can watch the film on Youtube for free and then join with us on December 16th at 7:00 for our discussion. I will share the link on facebook and send it out in our weekly e-mail blast.

For this moment, we are going to sing a rallying call, much like Mary’s Magnificat which we will hear in our Gospel reading today. She lifts her voice and says that God will show mercy and lift up the lowly. This simple song overlays the idea that we must resist the injustices of the world and, at the same time, pray for our enemies, welcome the stranger, and show love to our neighbors

GOSPEL READING *Luke 1:1-4, 26-56* The Common English Bible Cameron Davis

Many people have already applied themselves to the task of compiling an account of the events that have been fulfilled among us. They used what the original eyewitnesses and servants of the word handed down to us. Now, after having investigated everything carefully from the beginning. I have also decided to write a carefully ordered account for you, most honorable Theophilus. I want you to have confidence in the soundness of the instruction you have received.

When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee, to a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David's house. The virgin's name was Mary. When the angel came to her, he said, "Rejoice, favored one! God is with you!" She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and we will be called the Son of the Most High. God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over Jacob's house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom."

Then Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen since I haven't had sexual relations with a man?" The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the one who is to be born will be holy. He will be called God's beloved. Look, even in her old age, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son. This woman who was labeled "unable to conceive" is now six months pregnant. Nothing is impossible for God."

Then Mary said, "I am God's servant. Let it be with me just as you have said." Then the angel left her. Mary got up and hurried to a city in the Judean highlands. She entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. With a loud voice she blurted out, "God has blessed you above all women and he has blessed the child you carry. Why do I have this honor, that the mother of my God should come to me? As soon as I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. Happy is she who believed that God would fulfill the promises God made to her."

Mary said, "With all my heart I glorify God! In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior. God has looked with favor on the low status of God's servant. Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored because the mighty one has done great things for me. Holy is God's name. God shows mercy to everyone from one generation to the next, who honors God. God has shown strength with God's arm. God has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations. God has pulled the powerful down from their thrones and lifted up the lowly. God has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty-handed. He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, remembering his mercy, just as God promised to our ancestors, to Abraham and to Abraham's descendants forever."

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then returned to her home.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

ALL: Thanks be to God!

WE RESPOND

LITANY OF BELIEF

ONE: I believe that we have sometimes been silent in the face of injustice AND

ALL: I believe that we are capable of raising our voices and insisting on goodness for all.

ONE: I believe that we have been afraid of feeling deeply, making our joy small AND

ALL: I believe that the deep joy of community can always be present, even in hard times.

ONE: I believe that sometimes we wonder if we can make a difference AND

ALL: I believe that small acts of kindness and help do make a real difference.

ONE: We believe, even when we are discouraged.

ALL: We believe, that when we are discouraged, raising our voices for justice will offer us joy!

PRAYERS IN THE STILLNESS

Pastor: I invite you to get in a comfortable position of rest. I invite you to a deep breath and a deep listening posture – perhaps eyes closed or fixed on a candle – as we prepare for a time of prayer. (Breathe)

(Song by soloist)

The gentle pull of God
is often lost amidst the rush
of all the obligations which lay a claim on us.

Yet just beyond the frantic pace
our restless feet have roved
lie deep still pools of quietness-
the dwelling place of God.

Meet me in the stillness, God,
Be the air I breathe
Meet me in the stillness, God
Free me to receive

O take me to that secret place
where lost in wonder and in awe,
the moment comes and I rejoice
to be and be with God.

Meet me in the stillness, God,
Be the air I breathe
Meet me in the stillness, God,
Free me to receive

PASTORAL PRAYER

INVITATION TO OFFERING

OFFERTORY

DOXOLOGY (Sung to TFWS 2036)

Believe, with a hopeful heart!
Believe, and shine your light!
Believe, because the song we sing is sung for all!

And now let the weak say, "I am strong,"
let the poor say, "I am rich,
Because of what our God, has done for us." Believe!

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

CAROL OF RESISTANCE

Ode To Joy

adapted from UMH# 89

As you will witness in our documentary this week, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, which is the basis for the tune of our hymn, "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee, has been a powerful witness to the human spirit to overcome adversity in many instances around the globe. British punk rock star, Billy Bragg, once wrote an alternative translation of the original German choral score for a school teacher to teach the children in her classroom and it soon became a popular anthem, even being performed for the Queen. In the words you can hear the call to resist division, to raise our voices, to "furnish every heart with joy and banish all hatred for good."

So today as we sing this hymn, we will sing the first verse from our hymnal and the rest of the verses from British punk rock star Billy Bragg. Let us sing this powerful anthem.

1. Joyful, joyful, we adore you, God of glory, God of love. Hearts unfold like flowers before you, opening to the sun above. Melt the clouds of sin and sadness, drive the storms of doubt away. Giver of immortal gladness fill us with the light of day.
2. See now like a Phoenix rising from the rubble of the war, hope of ages manifested peace and freedom evermore. Brothers, sisters stand together, raise your voices, now as one, Though by history divided, reconciled in unison.
3. Throw off now the chains of ancient bitterness and enmity. And in hand let's walk together on the path of liberty. Hark...a new dawn is breaking; raise your voices now as one. Though by history divided, reconciled in unison.
4. What's to be then all my brothers, sisters; what is in your hearts? Tell me now the hopes you harbor, what's the task and where to start. Those speak ten million voices; every word is understood. Furnish every heart with joy and banish all hatred for the good.

BENEDICTION AND SENDING FORTH

*BENEDICTION

Rev. Dr. Jill Hardt Zundel

We wait for justice but we do not wait to work for change;
We wait for restored health but we do not wait to work to heal;
We wait for wholeness but we do not wait to work at binding brokenness.
We wait for peace but we do not wait to work to eliminate hatred.

And so, my friends, like bells ringing out the news
that the sun still shines even on cloudy days,
fill the night left by sadness with messages of joy.
Go into your lives humming the tunes that keep that joy alive in you
and that spur you on in your work of justice and reconciliation.
Raise your voices and repeat after me....Do not be afraid!
Do not be afraid! Amen.

BELL BENEDICTION

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

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

Daniel Dillingham, Minister of Music

Nina Scott, Ensemble Director

Bobbi Thompson, Accompanist & Soloist

Debra Cox, Office Administrator

Andrew Cox, Building Superintendent

Yvette Meadows and Angela Bakeley, Receptionists