



Central United Methodist Church

A Reconciling Congregation

Organized 1810—Incorporated 1822— Sanctuary completed 1867

March 14, 2021

Fourth Sunday in Lent



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

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

ONE: Before we were born,

ALL: Before we took our first breath,

ONE: Before the week started,

ALL: Before the year started,

ONE: Before we said, "I love you,"

ALL: Before we said, "I'm sorry,"

ONE: Before we figured out who we really are,

ALL: Before we figured out who we want to be,

ONE: Before it all –

ALL: God loved us.

ONE: Unconditionally and freely,

ALL: Fully and honestly –

ONE: God loved us.

ALL: Again and again, this is where our story begins.

ONE: Let us worship God!

***OPENING HYMN**

How Can We Name a Love

UMH #111

1. How can we name a Love that wakens heart and mind, in-dwelling all we know or think or do or seek or find? Within our daily world, in every human face, love's echoes sound and God is found, hid in the common-place.
2. If we awoke to life built on a rock of care that asked no great reward but firm, assured, was simply there, we can, with parents' names, describe, and thus adore, love unconfined, a father kind, a mother strong and sure.
3. When people share a task, and strength and skills unite in projects old or new, to make or do with shared delight. Our Friend and Partner's will is better understood, that all should share, create, and care and know that life is good.
4. So in a hundred names, each day we all can meet a presence, sensed and shown at work, at home, or in the street. Yet every name we see, shines in a brighter sun: In Christ alone is Love full grown and life and hope begun.

ACTS OF SHARING

GREETING AND WELCOME OF FIRST TIME VISITORS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

TIME FOR CHILDREN

Deaconess Anne Hillman

CALL TO CONFESSION

ONE: One of my favorite children's stories is the book, No David! by David Shannon. Are any of you familiar with this book? I'd love to read it to you today!

Family of faith, if we were to place ourselves in this story, we would be David. We mess up and make mistakes all the time. However, if we are like David, then God would be the mother in this story – constantly saying to us, “Yes, I still love you. I will always love you.”

So let us pray to the God of love, trusting that God loved us first.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of love,

We forget the beginning of the story –

that we were made from love, to be love, to give love.

Instead of rooting our narrative in the goodness refrain of creation,

we skip ahead and find our worth at the fall,

With Cain and Abel, lost in the wilderness.

We forget that first there was you, and you are love.

We forget that out of that love you created us.

We forget that from the very first day, you loved first.

We forget, because a love like that doesn't make sense to us.

Forgive our low self-esteem.

Forgive our resistance to love ourselves.

Forgive our hesitation to trust that even we could be made good.

And forgive our tendency to pass that doubt on – from generation to generation.

Write a new beginning for us that roots our confidence in your unrelenting love.

With hope we pray, again and again. Amen.

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

ONE: Family of faith, no matter what we do, where we go, or what we tell ourselves – God is love, and God is loving us.

ALL: Again and again, we are claimed, held, forgiven, and cared for. In the name of the Lover, the Beloved, and Love itself – thanks be to God. Amen!

INVITATION TO OFFERING

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

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

PASTORAL PRAYER

HYMN

I Was There to Hear Your Borne Cry

TFWS #2051

1. “I was there to hear your borne cry, I’ll be there when you are old. I rejoiced the day you were baptized, to see your life unfold.
2. I was there when you were but a child, with a faith to suit you well; in a blaze of light you wandered off to find where demons dwell.
3. “When you heard the wonder of the Word I was there to cheer you on; you were raised to praise the living god, to whom you now belong.
4. If you find someone to share your time and you join your hearts as one, I’ll be there to make your verses rhyme from dusk till rising sun.
5. “In the middle ages of your life, not too old, no longer young, I’ll be there to guide you through the night, complete what I’ve begun.
6. When the evening gently closes in and you shut your weary eyes,

WORDS: John Ylvisaker; MUSIC: John Ylvisaker; ©1985 John Ylvisaker; CCLI 2815228

ACTS OF PROCLAMATION

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

God of the here and now – we have heard the words, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only son,” time and time again. We have read them on billboards, heard them in worship, and seen them on signs and yet we know, there is a difference between hearing those words in passing and truly, deeply listening. We long to listen, God. We long to hear your truth. We long to know your love. Open our hearts and minds. We are listening. Amen.

GOSPEL LESSON

John 3: 14-21

The Inclusive Bible

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so the Chosen One must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in the Chosen One might have eternal life. Yes, God so loved the world as to give the Only Begotten One, that whoever believes may not die but have eternal life.

God sent the Only Begotten into the world not to condemn the world, but that through the Only Begotten the world might be saved. Whoever believes in the Only Begotten avoids judgment, but whoever doesn't believe is judged already for not believing in the name of the Only Begotten of God.

On these grounds is sentence pronounced, that though the light came into the world, people showed they preferred darkness to the light because their deeds were evil. Indeed, people who do wrong hate the light and avoid it, for fear their actions will be exposed, but people who live by the truth come out into the light so that it may be plainly seen that what they do is done in God.

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

ALL: Thanks be to God.

MESSAGE

Again and Again: God Loves First Rev. Dr. Jill Hardt Zundel

VIDEO

One Voice by Barry Manilow

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UbedxzcZGZA>

BENEDICTION AND SENDING FORTH

***BENEDICTION**

Rev. Dr. Jill Hardt Zundel

As you leave this space,
May your mouth speak of God's goodness.
May your arms hold those in need.
May your feet walk toward justice.
May your heart trust its worth.
May your soul dance in God's grace.
And may this be your rhythm-
Again and again and again,
Until God's promised day.
In the name of the Lover, the Beloved, and Love itself,
Go with courage, go with heart, go in peace. Amen.

Central United Methodist Church

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Rev. Dr. Jill Hardt Zundel, Senior Pastor

Rev. Edwin Rowe, Pastor Emeritus

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Daniel Dillingham, Minister of Music

Bobbi Thompson, Accompanist & Soloist

Debra Cox, Office Administrator

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