

THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST IN HARTFORD  
*An Open and Affirming Congregation of  
The United Church of Christ*

**THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST**  
**THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY**

January 12, 2014

10:30 AM

Welcome ~ Bienvenidos

WELCOME TO WORSHIP AT CENTER CHURCH. We are glad you have joined us for this service of worship and the fellowship of this congregation. We hope that you will be both comforted and challenged by the Word of God for us today. If you are new to our community, we hope you will consider making this your church home. Any of our worship leaders or ushers will be able to help with your questions. If you are already a member, be sure to extend a friendly greeting to those around you, starting with someone you don't know...yet.

*Please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices  
before the service of Worship begins.*

*A comfortable nursery is available in the basement of the Meeting House  
where parents may take young children who are restless.  
The service can be heard through a speaker system in the nursery.*

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

*"I am fundamentally an optimist. Whether that comes from nature or nurture, I cannot say. Part of being optimistic is keeping one's head pointed toward the sun, one's feet moving forward. There were many dark moments when my faith in humanity was sorely tested, but I would not and could not give myself up to despair. That way lays defeat and death."*

~ Nelson Mandela,  
*Long Walk to Freedom:*  
*Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*

PRELUDE

Freu dich sehr, o meine Seele (Rejoice greatly, O my Soul)

Sigfrid Kerg-Elert, Op. 65

## CHIMING OF THE HOUR and GREETING

### COMING BEFORE GOD

#### INTROIT

Holy Ground

Geron Davis (b. 1964)

#### \*CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: God is great and awesome.

**People: In the light of God's great gift in Jesus Christ,**

Leader: Let us join now together in joyous celebration.

**All: Our God is a mighty and wondrous God, and in this season of light and hope, we worship and give God praise.**

#### \*HYMN of Praise

Praise to the Living God

No. 8

DIADEMATA

stanza 4 harmonization: Eric Thiman (1900-1975)

#### PRAYER OF INVOCATION and THE LORD'S PRAYER

Leader: Darkness descends earlier. Winds rattle naked trees. Winter landscapes push us to the hearth -- to the warmth of a blazing fire, to the depths of a thoughtful heart. There, in the interior, in the midst of shadows and worries, you have placed your Word like a lamp, your Spirit like a bright star, your Truth like a crescent moon. Every darkness is punctured by light.

**All: God of the day and the night, God of winter darkness, we praise you for your Epiphany lights. In the name of Jesus, the Light of the World. Amen.**

Leader: Let us pray together the words our savior taught us:

*\* Those who are able are invited to stand.*

**Our Father\***, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

(\* = traditional wording but you may use alternative wording, such as "God," "Creator," or "Mother," as seems fitting.)

## CONFESSION

CALL TO CONFESSION AND RECONCILIATION

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND RECONCILIATION

**Guiding Light**, who leads us on the bright path, who makes the way level before us, we confess our misunderstandings of the journey. We find it easy to see who doesn't belong on the path and miss seeing Christ's hand extended to all. Shine in the dark caverns of our hearts, where we hide our secret thoughts and desires. Make us radiant with your love, that others may see our good works and glorify you now and forever. Amen.

SILENCE FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

**Leader:** Friends, in Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

**People:** **Thanks be to God!**

## RESPONSE

\*Congregational Response

Glory to God the Creator

music: Ronald A. Nelson, 1986  
text: *Gloria patri*, 3<sup>rd</sup> century, transl.

## \*THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

Leader: The love of God, the Peace of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you always.

**People: And also with you.**

Leader: Since in Christ we have been reconciled, let us share his peace with one another.

## CHILDREN'S SERMON

Jana Priestley,  
Director of Faith Formation

*Church School Students and Teachers will leave the Meeting House during the singing of "We Are Marching in the Light of God" in order to walk to the Church House for their classes.*

## \*HYMN for Faith Formation

We Are Marching in the Light of God

No. 526  
SIYAHAMBA

*We will sing this South African song twice, as printed in the hymnal: the first time in Swahili, the second time in English. Church School Students and Teachers will leave the Meeting House during the singing of "We Are Marching in the Light of God" in order to walk to the Church House for their classes.*

## PROCLAIMING GOD'S LIVING WORD

## \*HYMN of Witness

This Little Light

No. 524  
THIS JOY

*Please note that stanzas 2 and 3 of "This Little Light" are printed in the upper left column of the right-hand page.*

## PSALTER READING

Psalm 27

NRSV: Old Testament, p. 493

READING “How To Be a Poet”

Wendell Berry, *Given Poems*

Make a place to sit down.  
Sit down. Be quiet.  
You must depend upon  
affection, reading, knowledge,  
skill – more of each  
than you have – inspiration,  
work, growing older, patience,  
for patience joins time  
to eternity. Any readers  
who like your work,  
doubt their judgment.

Breathe with unconditional breath  
the unconditioned air.  
Shun electric wire.  
Communicate slowly. Live  
a three-dimensioned life.;  
Stay away from screens.  
Stay away from anything  
that obscures the place it is in.  
There are no unsacred places;  
there are only sacred places  
and desecrated places.

Accept what comes from silence.  
Make the best you can of it.  
Of the little words that come  
out of the silence, like prayers  
prayed back to the one who prays,  
make a poem that does not disturb  
the silence from which it came.

SERMON The Gospel of Poetry

The Reverend Van Parker

RESPONDING IN FAITH

HYMN of Discipleship

No. 164

Arise, Your Light Is Come

FESTAL SONG

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH AND RENEWAL OF BAPTISMAL VOWS

The Reverend Damaris D. Whittaker

The Reverend Joseph W. Bradley

Minister: Friends, baptism is a moment in the Christian community when we recognize the grace of God among us. Baptism is an act of naming and knowing our identity as followers of Christ. Baptism is a recommitment that we make individually and communally to love God and to live in the unity of the Spirit. Today, I invite you to recall the promises of your own baptism, made either by you or on

your behalf by your parents and loved ones when you were still an infant.

**People:** **Let us affirm once again the faith of the Church in which we all have been baptized.**

Minister: Do you believe in God, our Maker?

**People:** **We believe in God, Creator of all that is visible and invisible. God is in our midst calling us to care for one another and to work for justice and peace.**

Minister: Do you believe in the Son of God, our Lord and Savior?

**People:** **We believe in Jesus Christ, God-with-us. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of Mary's womb. Jesus walked the roads of Galilee, healed the sick, befriended the poor, comforted the broken-hearted and proclaimed the Good News. He was condemned by the guardians of religious rules, was crucified by the political establishment, died and was buried. On the third day, Christ was raised and now he is with the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

Minister: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

**People:** **We believe in the Holy Spirit, who is as close to us as our heartbeat. The Spirit spoke through the prophets and apostles and continues to inspire us to follow Christ. The Spirit calls us into the holy catholic church, to acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins, and to hope for the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting with God.**

Minister: Do you renew and affirm the promises made at your baptism?

**People:** **We do, with God's help.**

Minister: Do you recognize the call of God to be God's people always?

**People:** **We do.**

Minister: Do you embrace the way of Jesus in faith and ministry?

**People:** **We do, with God's help.**

Minister: Do you accept the guidance of the Holy Spirit who renews your spirit each day?

**People:** **We do.**

Minister: In renewing your baptismal vows, remember your baptism as a mark of acceptance and welcome into the care of Christ's church where you may begin again your Christian faith and life.

*Those who would like to renew their baptismal vows are invited to come forward,  
as they are able, to receive water from the font on their foreheads  
as a sign of reaffirmation of their baptism.*

## ACT OF RENEWAL OF BAPTISMAL VOWS

Music for Organ

## THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

## THE OFFERING OF GIFTS AND TITHES

Music for Offering

Prelude VIII from The Well-Tempered Klavier

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

\*Epiphanytide Hymn of Presentation

music: Conrad Kocher, 1838;  
adapt. William H. Monk, 1861  
text: William C. Dix, 1861

## \*UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION

**Giver and Sustainer of Life, pour out your blessing upon these gifts and upon all who give from their hearts. Multiply them so they reach farther than our imaginations can carry them. In the blessed name of our Redeemer, we pray. Amen.**

## GOING FORTH INTO GOD'S WORLD

\*HYMN of Commitment

I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me

I'M GONNA LIVE

\*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

# BEING THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

## HIGHLIGHTING OUR MINISTRIES

### DISMISSAL

Leader: Go forth in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God!**