As Center Church, we respond to God by nurturing faith, and building authentic connections and relationships.
THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST IN HARTFORD
An Open and Affirming Congregation of
The United Church of Christ

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Welcome ~ Bienvenidos

December 15, 2019 10:30 AM

WELCOME TO WORSHIP AT CENTER CHURCH. Thank you for being here today! 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 silence all cell phones and other electronic devices before the service of Worship begins.

CHIMING OF THE HOUR

COMING BEFORE GOD

Please be seated.

Prelude
Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus
Calypso version
St. Luke’s Steel Band

Welcome and Announcements

Choral Introit
Pastores a Belén (As Shepherds Filled with Joy)
Traditional Puerto Rican Melody
GATHERING WORDS

Leader: From ancient times, the third Sunday of Advent has been Joy Sunday! Put aside whatever is weighing you down, and give into the possibility of joy this morning! Let us worship God!

PLEASE STAND.
OPENING HYMN
    No. 116
    O Come, O Come Emmanuel
    St. Luke’s Steel Band and Congregation
    Please sing verses 1, 2, 6, & 7.

PLEASE BE SEATED.
THE LIGHTING OF THE THIRD ADVENT CANDLE:
    Where do you find Joy?

THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

PLEASE BE SEATED.
ANTHEM
    Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence
    St. Luke’s Steel Band and The Center Church Choir

PROCLAIMING GOD’S LIVING WORD

PLEASE REMAIN SEATED.
INTRODUCTION TO SCRIPTURE

HEBREW SCRIPTURE
    Isaiah 11:1-9
    The Rev. Dr. Rochelle A. Stackhouse
    NRSV: Old Testament, pg. 627

CAROL
    Calypso Noel
    St. Luke’s Steel Band

HEBREW SCRIPTURE
    Isaiah 9:2-7
    Ivan Edafiogho
    NRSV: Old Testament, pg. 624
CAROL
  Borning Day
  St. Luke’s Steel Band

HEBREW SCRIPTURE
  Isaiah 35:1-10
  NRSV: Old Testament, pg. 649

CAROL
  Mary’s Little Boy Child
  St. Luke’s Steel Band

HEBREW SCRIPTURE
  Micah 5:2-5
  NRSV: Old Testament, pg. 849

RESPONDING IN FAITH

PLEASE STAND.
THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE LORD’S PRAYER (“debts”)

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, for ever. Amen.

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

PLEASE BE SEATED.
THE OFFERING OF GIFTS AND TITHES
(We encourage you to use offering envelopes when giving.)

OFFERTORY MUSIC
  Angels We Have Heard on High
  St. Luke’s Steel Band and The Center Church Choir
PLEASE STAND AS THE OFFERING IS BROUGHT FORWARD.

Hymn of Presentation

O Come, Let Us Adore Him          ADESTE FIDELIS (ENGLISH MELODY)

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (unison)

O Mighty One, you have done and are doing great things for and through us, and you are holy and amazing. Bless all we offer you – time, possessions, passions – that your grace and favor may be made known in all the world. In Jesus’ name; Amen.

GOING FORTH

PLEASE REMAIN STANDING.

HYMN

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus          Traditional version

St. Luke’s Steel Band and Congregation

BENEDICTION

Please be seated for the postlude. Go in peace!
Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

1. Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free; from our fears and sins release us, yet a King, born to reign in us forever,

let us find our rest in thee. Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art; dear desire of spirit rule in all our hearts alone; by thine all sufficient merit, raise us to thy glorious throne.

2. Born thy people to deliver, born a child and King, born to reign in us forever,

now thy gracious kingdom bring. By thine own eternal

WORDS: Charles Wesley, 1744
MUSIC: Rowland H. Pritchard, 1830; harm. from The English Hymnal, 1906

HYFRYDOL
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POSTLUDE

Go Tell It on the Mountain

St. Luke’s Steel Band

Calypso version

OUR THANKS TO THOSE WHO PARTICIPATED IN TODAY’S SERVICE AND MINISTRIES

The Rev. Shelly Stackhouse, Worship Leader
Robert Gilbert, Director of Music

St. Luke’s Liturgical Steel Band of New Haven, Guest Musicians
Danisha Collins, Michael Gittens, Kyle Wiley, Tenor pans
Joy Scott, Marcia Wilkinson, Double seconds
Donna Johnson, Guitar pans
Montrell Seay, Tenor bass
Lisa Yarbor, Six bass

Hayden Worrell, Kareem Victory, Engine room (percussion)
Debby Teason, Director

John Conley, Jr., Worship Coordinator
John Border, Usher
Ivan Edafiogho, Reader
The French Family, Coffee Ministry
Jim & Jane Macomber, Refreshments Coordinators

There is no flower memorial this morning.

After Worship, please stop by the Remembrance Area to sign cards for Mary Hawkes and Lita Rathnam (speedy recoveries, both.)

“Let There Be Light” Memorial

December 15 ~ In loving memory of George H. Hernandez, III by his family
December 17 ~ In loving memory on the birthday of our dear friend and one of Center Church’s most exemplary members, the late Carolyn S. Arvidson, by Joyce and Harold Buckingham
December 21 ~ In memory of Dorothy Tuthill, Dwight Tuthill and Irene Schneiderman, given by their daughters Deborah Tuthill, Sarah Schneiderman, and Barbara Sodergren.

If you would like to light up the steeple in honor or memory of a loved one, please contact the Church Office for details.
This Week at Center Church

Today - 9:00 Adult Education Class (Church House);
- 10:30 Worship Service and Church School;
followed by CET Meeting and
Children’s Choir Rehearsal;
- 3:00 Sunday Community Meals

Monday - 12:00 1636 Heritage Partnership Meeting

Tuesday - 11:00 Staff Meeting

Wednesday - 7:30 Choir Rehearsal

Saturday - 4:00 Homeless Persons’ Memorial Service

The 2019-2020 Season of Music and the Arts at Center Church is made possible through monies received as admission for each event (ticket sales, suggested donations, freewill offerings), and by the generosity of the donors listed below:

**MOTIVATOR ($250 and above)**
Harold and Joyce Buckingham
Robert and Eileen Gilbert
Alvin and Lesley Morgan Thompson
William and Dorothy Wurts

**ENCOURAGER ($175-$249)**
Kathryn Lewis

**SUPPORTER ($100-$174)**
Bruce Bidwell and Robin Roy
Isabelle Bohman
Chris and Dectora Jeffers
Suzanne Gates
The Rev. J. Alan and Joan McLean
Timothy Otte
Donald and Shirley Sanders
Rochelle Stackhouse and Gavin Ferriby

**SUSTAINER (up to $99)**
Joseph Bradley
Lauren Delch
Melissa DeForge and Marie Ferrantino
Sally Dengenis
Jane Foxall
Van and Lucille Parker
WELCOME TO CENTER CHURCH!
Would you like to learn more?
Have our pastor contact you?
Interested in volunteering?
Please fill out this form and drop it in the offering plate.
We look forward to speaking with you!

IN CASE OF FIRE OR OTHER EMERGENCY
Exit swiftly by the nearest safe door - two exits are located near the pulpit, and three exits are located at the rear of the sanctuary.
Help people around you who may have children or mobility challenges.
Call 911. Don’t assume someone else has already done so!
Move to the Church House, so we can be sure everyone is accounted for.

Center Church
The First Church of Christ in Hartford
Member of
The United Church of Christ
Welcome!
¡Bienvenidos!

☐ I am searching for a church home, and would like more information about Center Church.
☐ I would like to learn how I can help with the ministries of Center Church.
☐ I would like the minister to contact me.

Name ____________________________________________________________
Address __________________________________________________________
Telephone # _________________________________________________________
Email Address ______________________________________________________

Please fill out this card and place it in the offering plate.

December 17 ~ Robinson & Clara Buck
December 20 ~ Theodore Ververis

CELEBRATE THIS HOLY SEASON!
TODAY AT WORSHIP!
WEST INDIES/CARIBBEAN CHRISTMAS
St. Luke’s Steel Band joins the Center Church Choir!

FAMILY CHRISTMAS
WORSHIP SERVICE
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22, 10:30pm

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 24,
5:00pm (Musical prelude begins at 4:40pm)

14TH ANNUAL GREATER HARTFORD HANDEL’S
MESSIAH COMMUNITY SING/CONCERT
(Christmas Portion)
SUNDAY, JANUARY 5, 4:00PM
Sunday Adult Education Faith Formation
Classes: Advent Series

First-floor parlor of the Church House:
December 15 & 22 at 9:00am

We are doing an Advent Series about the meaning of Christmas -- to us and to others. We will use (1) some pieces from Advent and Christmas: Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen, and (2) materials suggested by class participants. The following is a piece from the Nouwen book:

Temptation to Power

One of the greatest ironies of the history of Christianity is that its leaders constantly gave in to the temptation of power--political power, military power, economic power, or moral and spiritual power--even though they continued to speak in the name of Jesus, who did not cling to his divine power but emptied himself and became as we are. The temptation to consider power an apt instrument for the proclamation of the Gospel is the greatest of all... With this rationalization, crusades took place; inquisitions were organized; Indians were enslaved; positions of great influence were desired. Every time we see a major crisis in the history of the Church... we always see that a major cause of rupture is the power exercised by those who claim to be followers of the poor and powerless Jesus.

What makes the temptation of power so seemingly irresistible? Maybe it is that power offers an easy substitute for the hard task of love. It seems easier to be God than to love God, easier to control people than to love people, easier to own life than to love life.

In January, we will continue with the series The 1619 Project as we prepare for Martin Luther King Day. If you have any questions or suggestions, please see Alvin Thompson or Rev. Shelly.
**AN OPEN AND AFFIRMING Congregation.** "We include into full participation in the life of this church persons of any age, race, economic status, gender, sexual orientation, marital status and physical, emotional and mental capacity" (from the statement adopted October 23, 1994.) In recognition of the richness of backgrounds of our congregation, a **DIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES** will find expression in our worship services. Center Church offers an **OPEN COMMUNION.** Adults and children from all religious backgrounds are invited to partake.

**TEXT ALERTS** To receive text alerts regarding church activities and cancellations, please text the word CENTER to (860) 300-3697. (Message and data rates may apply according to your data plan.)

**FACEBOOK LIVE** We livestream our worship services on Facebook each week, and your presence here constitutes your permission for your image to be shown. If you prefer not to be seen, speak with the minister or whoever is operating the phone up front to determine where a good seat might be to avoid the camera. Our viewership is growing and we are excited to welcome a congregation in cyberspace!

**FREE PARKING** is available during Sunday Worship Services at the Travelers Plaza Garage off Prospect Street (next to the Hartford Club.) The garage closes at 1:00pm (12:00pm during Summer services). On-street parking is also available on Gold Street and on the west side of Lewis Street, and is FREE on Sundays.

**REST ROOMS** are located in the basement of the Meeting House. Please use the stairs in the southeast corner of the building. For safety, please have an adult accompany your child to the restroom.

**CHURCH SCHOOL** is held at the Church House (60 Gold Street) for preschool to 12th Grade. Children are to remain with their families in the Meeting House during worship until they depart for Church School following the Children’s Moment. Please pick your child up promptly at 12:00pm. For their safety, children will remain with their Church School instructor until an adult picks them up.

**CHILDCARE and NURSERY** care are provided by trained, capable, and nurturing staff and volunteers, and is available in the Meeting House basement for infants and toddlers (up to two years of age.) A nursery without staff is also located on the second floor of the Church House.

**CURRENT SUNDAY ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CLASSES** are held in the Church House (60 Gold Street) at Noon. Announcements regarding Adult Education classes are announced in our publications.

**HANDICAPPED ACCESS** to the sanctuary is via the lift outside at the south end of the portico. If possible, please call the church office in advance for assistance in using the lift.

Please feel free to confer with a minister regarding our **INQUIRER'S CLASSES** for **POTENTIAL MEMBERS, BAPTISMS, WEDDINGS or COMMITMENT CEREMONIES.** The latest issue of **CENTER CHURCH NEWS** is available in the literature rack at the back of the Meeting House and at the Church House (60 Gold Street).