As Center Church, we respond to God by nurturing faith, and building authentic connections and relationships.
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.

COMING BEFORE GOD

PLEASE BE SEATED.

PRELUDE
I Call To Thee, Lord Jesus Christ                     J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHORAL INTROIT
Spirit of the Living God

GATHERING WORDS
Leader: We come thirsty for God's word, thirsty for hope and truth and justice, thirsty for peace. Bring all your thirst to the waters of God's grace. Let us worship God.
LENTEN CANDLE UN-LIGHTING

Leader: Let us pause this third Sunday in Lent, and consider the times when we have been asked for help and turned away, even though the ability to help was in our power. Let us ask forgiveness as we extinguish this third candle of Lent.

(silence)

THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

Please refrain from physical contact during the Passing of the Peace; instead, a bow or verbal gesture is appropriate.

SOLO

Pie Jesu

G. Fauré (1845-1924)

Mary McCue, Soprano

PROCLAIMING GOD’S LIVING WORD

INTRODUCTION TO SCRIPTURE

GOSPEL READING (dramatization)

John 4:7-26

NRSV: New Testament, pg. 971

MEDITATION

The Rev. Dr. Rochelle A. Stackhouse

GOSPEL READING (dramatization)

John 4:27-30, 39-42

NRSV: New Testament, pg. 971

MEDITATION

The Rev. Dr. Rochelle A. Stackhouse
RESPONDING IN FAITH

PLEASE STAND.

HYMN

Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove

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

Jesu, Word of God Incarnate

W.A. Mozart (1756-1791)

The Center Church Choir

PLEASE STAND AS THE OFFERING IS BROUGHT FORWARD.

Hymn of Presentation

OLD HUNDREDTH

text: Thomas Ken, 1674; alt.
music: Louis Bourgeois, 1551

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, you heav’nly host:
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost.
PRAYER OF DEDICATION (UNISON)

Forgive us, merciful God, when we give more out of duty than passion. Stir up in us such love for you and such need to work for the Beloved Community that we work hard to find new ways to give of ourselves to you. The gifts we give today are yours, for the mundane and the miraculous of repairing the world. Amen.

GOING FORTH

PLEASE REMAIN STANDING.

HYMN

No. 290

Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart

MORECAMBE

BENEDICTION

CHORAL BENEDICTION RESPONSE

Sevenfold Amen

Please be seated for the postlude. Go in peace!

POSTLUDE

Toccata in E Minor

J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

LOVING OUR NEIGHBORS:
Put Center Church in the Center of Hartford
Spiritually, Socially, Morally, Ethically.
TODAY’S SERVICE & MINISTRIES PARTICIPANTS
Worship Leader: Rev. Shelly Stackhouse  Usher: John Border
Musician: Bob Gilbert  Reader: Harold Buckingham
Worship Coordinator: John Conley, Jr.  Coffee Ministry Volunteers

FLOWER MEMORIAL & CARD RECIPIENT
The flowers on display today are given in loving memory of the Reverend Thomas E. Otte from the Otte Family.

Please stop by the Remembrance Area after Worship to sign a card for Hannah Maynard (recovering from car accident.)

LET THERE BE LIGHT MEMORIALS
March 20 ~ In memory of Doris P. Newell by her husband, Frederick Newell, and Jane Newell Macomber

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES
March 17 ~ Julia Thompson  March 17 ~ Olivia Otte  March 19 ~ Andre Keitt

THIS WEEK AT CENTER CHURCH
Today 9:00 Adult Education Class (Church House);
       10:30 Worship Service & Church School; followed by Children’s Choir Rehearsal (note – after-Worship refreshments are suspended until further notice);
       12:00 Music & Arts Team Meeting (Meeting House);
       3:00 Sunday Community Meals (Church House)

Monday 12:00 1636 Heritage Partnership Meeting (Church House);
        6:30 CET (Coordinating Executive Team) Meeting

Tuesday 11:00 Staff Meeting

Wednesday 7:30 Choir Rehearsal

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER
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 (corner of Gold & Lewis), so we can be sure everyone is accounted for.
We are discussing *Inspired* by Rachel Held Evans.

Evans writes concerning Midrash:

“For Jewish readers, the tensions and questions produced by Scripture aren’t obstacles to be avoided, but rather opportunities for engagement, invitations to join in the Great Conversation between God and God’s people that has been going on for centuries and to which everyone is invited. . . . Our relational God has given us a relational sacred text, one that, should we surrender to it, reminds us that being people of faith isn’t as much about being right as it is about being part of a community in restored and restorative relationship with God.

Evans observes: “While Christians tend to turn to Scripture to *end* a conversation, Jews turn to Scripture to *start* a conversation.”

*If you have any questions or suggestions, please see Alvin Thompson or Reverend Shelly.*
MINISTRY OF EASTER FLOWERS

Would you like to contribute to the Ministry of Easter Flowers in memory of a loved one, or in honor of a cherished friend or family member? Please complete the form below and send it with a check in the amount of $15.00 per plant. You may place your order in the offering plate, or mail it to the Church Office by Wednesday, April 8. Please indicate below whether you would like to take one home after our Easter Worship service, or have your order delivered to a homebound person.

EASTER FLOWERS ORDER FORM

Your Name:______________________________________________________

Your Phone #:__________________________________________________

Check one:  □ In memory of   or   □ in honor of:______________________

_________________________________________________________________

How many?        ___________ @ $15.00 each

Total amount enclosed:    $__________

I will (check one):  □ take my plant(s) home   or   □ donate to a homebound person.

Please return this order form, along with your check, to the Church Office. Make your check payable to The First Church of Christ in Hartford and write “Easter Flowers” on the check memo.

Questions? Call (860) 249-5631.
We Can Help Erase Medical Debt!

Medical debt is an economic justice issue. It causes people to cut back on necessities, lose needed medical services, and sink into a poverty trap.

Together with the other 600 churches across the new Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ, our church can help fight this injustice.

Working with the non-profit RIP Medical Debt, every $100 our Conference collects through this initiative by April 17 will be used to eliminate $10,000 in medical debt in some of the neediest communities in our region, including Springfield, MA, Bridgeport and Hartford, CT, and Providence, RI.

Read more at: sneucc.org/RIP-medical-debt

Our Conference has asked every congregation to contribute to this effort. Won’t you help by contributing to our church’s gift?
Center Church celebrates the return of

“FAITH & FAMILY DAY”
at Dunkin’ Donuts Park

Yard Goats Baseball Game

Hartford Yard Goats vs. Richmond Flying Squirrels
Saturday, August 29
Game begins at 6:10pm

We have a supply of 25 tickets available at a very reduced rate of just $5 each (section 123.) Please make checks available to “The First Church of Christ in Hartford”, write “Yard Goats” on the check memo, and send to Marie’s attention at the Church Office. Join in for this memorable day!
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).

THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST IN HARTFORD
A member of the United Church of Christ (UCC)
CENTER CHURCH, 60 Gold Street, Hartford, CT 06103
Office Hours: Monday thru Friday, 8:30am to 4:00pm
Library Hours: Wednesdays, 10:00am to Noon, or by appointment.
P 860.249.5631  F 860.246.3915  www.centerchurchhartford.org
Transitional Minister: The Reverend Dr. Rochelle A. Stackhouse (ext. 202)
Minister Emeritus: The Reverend J. Alan McLean
Director of Music/Organist: Robert F. Gilbert (ext. 204)
Sunday School Administrator: Ilieia Belton (ext. 210)
Church Administrator: Marie Ferrantino (ext. 209)
Bookkeeper: Brenda Russell (ext. 201)
Receptionist/Office Assistant: Monique Young (ext. 200)
Sextons: Thomas St. Amant and Ilieia Belton
Sunday Meals Program Coordinator: Carrie Howe
Nursery Care: Tina Franklin
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LARGE-PRINT BULLETINS ARE AVAILABLE ~ PLEASE REQUEST FROM AN USHER.