



*An Open and Affirming Congregation
of The United Church of Christ*



**Order of Worship for
December 31, 2023, 10:30am
Kwanzaa Worship Service**

**Welcome to Worship at Center Church!
We are delighted that you are with us today.**

Habari Gani

**Please rise in body or spirit.*

WELCOME

PRELUDE: Video, *A Kwanzaa Song*

CALL TO WORSHIP

Dr. Eric Hearst

Leader: God, You have called us into community — a global community.

All: A scattered community, a fractured community

A unique community, a hybrid community

A rainbow-hued community — rich in culture and creativity

A diverse and dynamic community endowed with agape

Teach us our common roots, different gifts and characteristics.

Though we have a variety of colors, creeds and customs,

Though we reside in the north, south, east or west

Though we came off the boat, out the bush, on the train, through the refugee camp

We are made in your image. We are called into your purpose

Teach us your common vision for us!

Help us commune rightly and respectfully with one another —

to speak loving words of hope, healing and wholeness —

Help us to know and speak your truth —

the truth of liberation, not exploitation.

Cultivate within us a new appreciation for difference.

Lead us to establish a new commune,

Your commune of peace through justice.

Lead us to welcome strangers in our midst,

And to understand the true meaning of neighbor.

God, you have called us to unity.

A call not so much to be like-minded,

But to unite for your purpose.

Let it start with us as we worship together.

OPENING HYMN: NCH 593 *Lift Every Voice and Sing*

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

We encourage you to greet each other verbally or by a friendly wave of peace

What are you looking forward to in 2024?

INTRODUCTION TO KWANZAA'S 7 PRINCIPLES

Andre Keitt

CANDLES - UMOJA AND KUJICHAGULIA

Reader 1: First, we light the candle of **umoja**, which means unity. This first principle stresses the importance of uniting the family, as well as the community and nation as a whole. This candle is also relit during each of the six remaining nights of Kwanzaa.

Reader 2: Psalm 133:1-2 "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe."

Reader 1: Next, we light the candle of **kujichagulia**, which means self-determination. This principle encourages celebrants to define themselves through their words and creations.

Reader 2: 1 Corinthians 9:26 "Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air."

STORY: *Great Joy* by Kate DiCamillo, an adaptation

Andre Keitt

MUSIC: *Sweet Little Jesus Boy*

spiritual
Chris Dukes, tenor

CANDLES - UJIMA AND UJAMAA

Reader 3: We light the candle of **Ujima**. Ujima means collective responsibility, where people are encouraged to become their brother's keeper and work together towards solving each other's problems.

Reader 4: Proverbs 27:17 "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."

Reader 3: Next, we light the candle of **ujamaa**, or cooperative economics. This principle promotes the creation and support of community businesses.

Reader 4: Exodus 17:12. "When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset."

AFFIRMATION OF BELIEF (*responsive*)

Written by The Rev. Marilyn E. Thornton

Many: Umoja!

One: I believe in the Unity of the community of Triune God, the Three-in-One God who creates, saves, and sustains, who expects us to practice Umoja, unity in diversity, and build up our communities, stand together, pray together, worship together, fight injustice together, and love one another as Christ loves us.

Many: Kujichagulia, Ujima!

One: I believe in the self-determining Triune God, who determined the measurements for the foundation of the earth, who determined to create humanity by saying, "Let us make

humankind in our own image," expecting us to practice Kujichagulia, defining ourselves according to the will of God and speaking for ourselves the words given by the Holy Spirit. Our God expects us to practice Ujima and assemble ourselves that we may edify one another. God expects us to take responsibility for collectively aiding one another to work out our own salvation, knowing that it is God working in us, re-creating in us the perfect image of Jesus Christ.

Many: Ujamaa, Nia!

One: I believe in Provider God who wants us to have our own vine and fig trees, enjoining us to practice Ujamaa, earning all we can, saving all we can, and giving all we can so that our communities will be self-sustaining and reflect the blessing and favor of God. I believe in God, who provides for our need and not our greed, and has given each child of God purpose, Nia, which is to be in communion and relationship with God and with the children of God.

Many: Kuumba!

One: I believe that God is so creative that a virgin did bear a son by the Holy Spirit; so creative that Jesus Christ did suffer and die on a cross for my sins, rise from the dead for my salvation, and return to heaven for my hope. I believe that God is so creative that Jesus will come back and gather all the saints to him. I believe that being created in the likeness of God means that we have the imagination, the intelligence, and the capacity to envision peace, to carry out justice, to do acts of mercy, and to love our neighbor.

Many: Imani!

One: I have the faith to believe that with God all things are possible. I will practice Imani, hoping that the teachers and leaders of our community and nation will remain true to the cause of freedom and faith. I will practice Imani, knowing that it takes a village to raise children, and in my hands and heart lie the ability to help raise up children for God. I believe that God lives in me and in you; and together we can show forth the kingdom until Christ shall come again.

All: Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

CANDLES - NIA AND KUUMBA

Reader 5: Next, we light the candle of **nia**, which means purpose. This principle promotes a collective purpose to build and restore the community

Reader 6: Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Reader 5: Next, we light the candle of **kuumba**, which is defined as creativity. On this day, celebrants are encouraged to be creative and work to beautify the community.

Reader 6: "Proverbs 22:29, "Do you see someone skilled in their work? They will serve before kings; they will not serve before officials of low rank."

CALL TO OFFERING

OFFERTORY MUSIC: *Give Me Jesus*

spiritual
Chris Dukes, tenor

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

CANDLE - IMANI

Reader 3: The last candle is **imani**, which is Swahili for faith. On this day, celebrants strengthen their belief in parents and teachers, as well as community leaders.

Reader 4: Hebrews 11:1 “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”

MUSIC: *If I Had a Hammer*

If I had a hammer
I'd hammer in the morning
I'd hammer in the evening
All over this land
I'd hammer out danger
I'd hammer out a warning
I'd hammer out love between
My brothers and my sisters, ah-ah
All over this land

If I had a bell
I'd ring it in the morning
I'd ring it in the evening
All over this land
I'd ring out danger
I'd ring out a warning
I'd ring out love between
My brothers and my sisters, ah-ah
All over this land

If I had a song
I'd sing it in the morning
I'd sing it in the evening

All over this world
I'd sing out danger
I'd sing out a warning
I'd sing out love between
My brothers and my sisters ah-ah
All over this land

I got a hammer
And I've got a bell
And I've got a song to sing
All over this land
It's the hammer of justice
It's the bell of freedom
It's the song about love between
My brothers and my sisters
All over this land
All over this land
All over this land
All over this land
All over this land
All over this land

BENEDICTION: A Kwanzaa Prayer

Andre Keitt

POSTLUDE: *If I Had A Hammer* (REPRISE OF FIRST VERSE)

Thank you to our readers

Robin Roy, Stacia Parkes, Aenicia Parkes, Martha-Rae Nelson and Dr. Eric Hearst

Center Church News & Announcements

Subscribe to our E-News newsletter for up-to-date news and happenings at Center Church: <https://centerchurchhartford.org/>
<https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/OzymYij/CenterChurch>

And, don't forget to follow us on FB!



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: Tuesday thru Friday, 9:30am to 3:30pm

Library Hours by Appointment

P 860.249.5631 F 860.246.3915 www.centerchurchhartford.org

Senior Pastor: The Reverend Liza Arulampalam (ext. 202)

Coordinator for Justice & Faith Formation Ministries: Dr. Eric Hearst (ext 209)

*If you'd like to meet with Pastor Liza,
please schedule a time by
sending her an email at pastor@cchartford.org*

Minister Emeritus: The Reverend J. Alan McLean

Director of Music/Organist: Robert F. Gilbert (ext. 204)

Church Office Manager: Emily McKenna (ext. 200)

Bookkeeper: Brenda Russell (ext. 201)

Sexton: Thomas St. Amant

Meals Program Coordinator: Carrie Howe (ext 205)

Nursery Care: Tina Franklin

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[Would you like to learn more about Center Church? Email us at info@cchartford.org](mailto:info@cchartford.org)

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!

Church Information

ON STREET PARKING is available during Sunday Worship Services on Gold Street and on the west side of Lewis Street, and is FREE on Sundays. The church is maintaining our relationship with the Traveler's Garage which is temporarily closed due to Covid-19. Stay tuned as we partner with other garages in the area.

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. Church School is not held during the Summer.

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 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.

The latest issue of **CENTER CHURCH E-NEWS** is available on our church website. If you would like a paper copy mailed to you, please contact us at info@cchartford.org / 860-249-5631