



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



Order of Worship for

March 9, 2025

10:30 am

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



Never Met a Stranger

When we talk about God, we say
she's never met a stranger.
She makes friends at the airport.
She waves to babies in the check-out line.

When we talk about God, we say
she'll leave the porch light on.
She'll have warm bread in the oven.
She'll have all the time in the world.

When we talk about God, we say
she'll look you in the eye.
She'll love you as you are.
She'll call you by your name.

When we talk about God,
we never have to talk about
which side of the road she might walk down.
Wherever you are,
that's where she'll be.

*Poem by
Rev. Sarah Speed*

ORDER OF WORSHIP FOR MARCH 9, 2025
FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT – ASH SUNDAY
EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN: STRANGER & NEIGHBOR

**Please rise in body or spirit.*

CHIMES

CHORAL INTROIT Lord, I Want to Be a Christian African American Spiritual
Sabrina Russotto, Mica Guzman & Ian Duncan, Warburton Music Interns, and Dan Theriault

ORGAN PRELUDE Abide with Me arr. D. Bish

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Here in this place, we can ask big questions.

All: Who is my neighbor?

How can I help?

What do I have to learn?

Where is God in it all?

One: Here in this place, we can ask big questions.

All: So may we listen. May we learn.

May we stay curious, and may we look for God.

One: This is our invitation to lean in. Let us worship our holy God.

*OPENING HYMN NCH 361 Your Love, O God, Has Called Us Here GERMANY

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

Do you know where your neighbors live?

CHILDREN'S MOMENT Rev. Liza Arulampalam

Congregation sings:

Amen, Amen! Amen, Amen! (2x)

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine! (3x)

Let it shine, let it shine to show my love.

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

One: God meets us in the night—

**All: before the sun rises,
before the wound heals,
before there are answers,
before there is closure.**

One: God meets us in the light—

**All: where joy is effervescent,
where laughter is contagious,
where flowers bloom from cracks in the sidewalk,
where people gather around tables.**

One: God meets us in between—

**All: at the edge of the water,
at the beginning of the wilderness,
at the start of something new,
on the edge of faith.**

One: And if God meets us in all those places,

**All: then surely God meets us everywhere—
at the water's edge, at the start of something new,
after the baptism, and before the call.**

One: We are not alone. God is all around.

All: Let us worship the God of everything.

SCRIPTURE Luke 10: 25 – 37

SERMON *In Between Stranger and Neighbor*

Rev. Liza Arulampalam

HYMN (*Insert*) I Saw a Stranger

KINGSFOLD
Text by Anna Strickland, 2024

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

All: Holy God, You have told us to love our neighbors as ourselves, but we get tripped up on logistics. We want to know: who is our neighbor? Do we have to love the stranger? Must we have compassion for our enemy? Forgive our human tendency to create exceptions in the face of love. Rewire our hearts so that we might see the face of a neighbor in every stranger we pass. With hope we pray, amen.

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

Family of faith,
When we set limits on love, God loves extravagantly.
When we forget that we are neighbors, God claims us as God's own.
When we judge, hold back, or harm, God surrounds us with grace.
There is nothing we can do or leave undone that could separate us from the love of God.
This is the good news of the gospel.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

CALL TO OFFERING

OFFERTORY The Lord is my Light

C. Courtney

Center Church Choir

*DOXOLOGY NCH 780

OLD HUNDRETH

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God, all creatures here below!
Praise God, above, you heavenly hosts,
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost!*

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

One: Church, if God asked you, “Who is your neighbor?”
what would you say?

**All: We would say,
every child, every person,
every weeping willow,
and every morning lark.
Every freckled face,
every wrinkled pair of hands,
every tail-wagging dog,
and every crisp ripe apple.
We would say,
we are connected—
to one another, to all of God’s creation.
There are no strangers in God’s house.
We are all family here.**

One: I think God would delight in that answer. For it is said,
“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,

**All: with all your soul,
with all your strength,
with all your mind,
and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
We believe. Help our unbelief. Amen.**

*CLOSING HYMN NCH 290 Spirit of God, Descend Upon my Heart

MORECAMBE

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BENEDICTION

As you leave this place,
may you find God in every messy middle.
May you know that the world is bigger than two sides.
May you trust that you are made in the image of God,
and therefore, you contain multitudes.
So may you move through this world with an open heart,
with a curious mind, and with the confidence that you do not go alone.
God is with you in the mountains,
in the valleys,
and everywhere in between.
Believe that good news, and go in peace.

CHORAL BENEDICTION

ORGAN POSTLUDE Toccata in G Minor

J. S. Bach

Thank you to everyone who participated in worship this morning. Go in Peace!

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 Thursday, 9:00am to 4:00pm;

Friday, 9:00am to 3:00pm

Library Hours by Appointment

P 860.249.5631 F 860.246.3915 www.centerchurchhartford.org

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

Minister for Justice & Faith Formation: The Rev. Dr. Eric J. Hearst (ext. 209)

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

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

Church Office Administrator: Steven Lewis (ext. 200)

Bookkeeper: Brenda Russell (ext. 201)

Sextons: Thomas St. Amant & Gilberto Mercado

Outreach 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

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 tech deacon 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 the west side of Lewis Street, and is FREE on Sundays. Stay tuned as we try to partner with other garages in the area.

RESTROOMS are located in the basement of the Meeting House (675 Main Street). Please use the stairs in the southeast corner of the building. There are also restrooms located just outside the 2nd-floor parlor space in our Church House building at 60 Gold Street. 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 12:00 pm. 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