



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



Order of Worship for
April 6, 2025 10:30 am

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



Righteousness & Mercy

As children, we were taught to tell the teacher.

(Justice was dealt when we spoke up.)

As children, we were taught to always be kind.

(Friends were made when we spoke with love.)

As children, we were taught that Zaccheaus climbed
a tree.

(But we cut that tree down a long time ago.)

So what are the rules for this day and age?

Can we turn black and white into shades of gray?

Do we call each other out, for righteousness' sake?

Do we call each other in? Do we grab something to eat?

As always, love is somewhere in between.

*Poem by
Rev. Sarah Speed*

ORDER OF WORSHIP – APRIL 6, 2025
FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT – BETWEEN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND MERCY
Cover Art: "Zacchaeus," Lauren Wright Pittman

**Please rise in body or spirit.*

CHIMES

ORGAN PRELUDE I Call to Thee, Lord Jesus Christ

J. S. Bach

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: We come to worship because we long for mercy.

All: We long for community.

We long for God.

We come to worship because we need a good word.

We need connection.

We need moral reminders.

We come to worship because we are in between:

hope and grief,

faith and doubt,

joy and longing,

curiosity and conviction.

So we come to worship and God meets us here.

Surely, we are not alone. Thanks be to God for meeting us in the middle! Amen.

*OPENING HYMN NCH 182 Beneath the Cross of Jesus

ST. CHRISTOPHER

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

A TIME FOR CHILDREN

The Rev. Deb Moyer

Congregation sings:

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

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine! (2x)

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

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Loving God,
Week after week, we return to this space,
because we long to see you.
Like Zacchaeus, who climbed a tree
to get a peek at you as you walked by,
we come to this sanctuary hoping to get a peek
of your goodness,
of your joy,
of your light.
So, speak to us through these ancient words.
Let us get a peek of the love that lingers here.
Gratefully we pray, amen.

SCRIPTURE Luke 19: 1-10

SERMON *Between Righteousness and Mercy*

Rev. Liza Arulampalam

*MUSICAL RESPONSE (*Insert*) Righteous Mercy

HYFRYDOL

Words by Anna Strickland, 2023

Music by Rowland H. Prichard, 1830;
harm. Ralph Vaughn Williams, 1906



Since our child - hood you have taught us what is wrong
Though there's wide - ness in your mer - cy, let us not
Far too of - ten we hold on - to an - ger dressed



and what is right Nur - tur - ing our sense of
a - buse that grace Called in - to this Chris - tian
as righ - teous - ness We for - get we serve a

8



jus - tice, fuel - ing us to work and fight Keep that
jour - ney, let our lives re - flect our faith When we
God who calls us to re - la - tion - ship So when

14



fire for jus - tice burn - ing in the sha - dow
fal - ter and fall short of our com - mit - ment
those who caused us harm re - pent and choose a

19



of our fear E - ven there your Spi - rit's stir - ring,
to your will Hold us, wrap - ping us in your love
bet - ter way Spi - rit move our venge - ful hearts

25



light - ing us a path that's clear
as we work toward whole - ness still
to choose love in - stead of wrath

RITUAL OF CONFESSION

Call to Confession

Unison Prayer of Confession

**Merciful God,
When we fail to be righteous,
show us mercy.
When we fail to be merciful,
show us what is right.
Again and again,
bring us closer to you.
Again and again,
show us the way.
Amen.**

Words of Forgiveness

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table

The Great Thanksgiving

One: God be with you.

All: And with your spirit.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to God.

Let us give thanks to God.

It is good and right to give God thanks and praise.

A Prayer for All of God's Creation

One: Here in this place, we join Jesus in the sacred space between
his last supper and his last breath.

We'll stick with him through his suffering
just as God is present in our own liminal moments,
sharing our pain, feeling all we feel with us.

One: Trusting in God's eternal solidarity, let us pray:
In the limbo of uncertainty, when all we can do is wait—
with those between paychecks, between jobs, between meals,
with those in hospital rooms or prison cells,

All: Ever-present Jesus, abide.

One: With those who fight to be believed by doctors,
who wait for diagnosis, treatment, or results,
and with those who have Long COVID or other serious conditions,

All: Jesus the Suffering Savior, abide.

One: With those in the closet and those who have just come out,
with those waiting for surgery, or hormone replacement therapy, or radical acceptance,

All: Queer God, abide.

One: With those who are sick of waiting:
Indigenous people whose loved ones disappear in silence,
Black communities urged to wait for justice in an onslaught of brutality,
and all those who find themselves burning out
in the endless efforts to resist injustice,

All: Black Christ, native of occupied land, abide.

One: With all who scramble between
life and death, survival and thriving:
immigrants and refugees,
border crossers and ICE detainees,
the people of Palestine—
bombed, displaced, and denied aid—

All: Jesus the refugee, abide.

One: With those enduring the worst of climate change,
and all whose homes or whole communities
have been ravaged by natural disasters,

All: Creator God, abide.

One: With all whom our society fails to protect:
those who are unhoused,
and those whose homes are fractured by violence,
those experiencing mental illness or addiction,
and all who are shoved to the margins,

One: Persecuted Christ, abide.

One: And when the in-between becomes permanent
with no going back to how things were,
in our moments of despair at the world's pain,
we cry out, "HOW LONG, O LORD?!"

All: Abide with us, everlasting God. Abide with us.

One: Co-creating and co-suffering God,
we can count on your steadfast presence
even when we doubt and demand answers.
Teach us to share in one another's pain,
becoming your hands and feet on earth.
And now, as we break this bread and drink from this cup,
may this meal nourish us.
Pour out your Spirit upon this holy feast,
the one you shared with friends and betrayers
not long before you took your last breath.
May it give us courage,
just as it surely gave you courage on that night many years ago.

All: Amen.

Words of Institution

Sharing of the Bread and Cup

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CALL TO OFFERING

OFFERTORY Surely, He Hath Borne Our Griefs (from *Messiah*)
Center Church Choir

G. F. Handel

*DOXOLOGY NCH 780

*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

**In a world that loves to cast blame
and point fingers,
Jesus loved by different rules.
He offered mercy.
He invited people to dinner.
He told stories of love.
He chose to see the best in others.
We believe that small acts of mercy
and compassion have ripple effects in our lives.
We believe that small acts of righteousness
and justice are integral to a life of faith.
So, like Christ, we believe in
offering mercy,
inviting people to dinner,
telling stories of love,
and choosing to see the best in others.
With God's help, may it be so. Amen.**

*CLOSING HYMN NCH 197 Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross

NEAR THE CROSS

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.

ORGAN POSTLUDE Toccata in E Minor

J. S. Bach

Thank you to everyone who participated in today's worship!