



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



Order of Worship for

**November 30, 2025      10:30 am**

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



The First Sunday of Advent | What do you fear?

IN THE TIME OF HEROD,  
WE LONG FOR GOD TO BREAK IN

## In the Time of Herod

I didn't live during Herod's time—that brutal, murderous king,  
*God save his soul.*

But even hundreds of years later, I know the prayers of his people.

I know the prayers of the mothers and the children under  
his rule.

I know the prayers of the young men under his angry arm.

I know their prayers, because anyone who has ever lived in this  
soft world for more than two days knows how to pray for a miracle.

We rub our hands together.

We fold weary shoulders in,

a cage of bone to protect our bleeding hearts.

We sing, *we shall overcome and bind my wandering heart to thee.*

We walk across bridges and in front of powerful buildings.

We cover our cars in stickers that scream, *we will not give up!*

We allow a hungry cry to slip from our lips,

giving our lament a life of its own (with room to dance!).

And when all of that is said and done, we whisper to our creator,

*God, break through the yelling and the fear. Break through the  
violence and the oppression.*

*Get past the Herods of this world, and come be here.*

Like every bleeding heart before, we pray for a miracle.

Poem by

Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

COVER ART:

DEPTHS, CARMELLE BEAUGELIN CALDWELL

*BASED ON LAMENTATIONS 3: 55-57*

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT - WHAT DO YOU FEAR?  
*In the time of Herod, we long for God to break in...*

*\*Please rise in body or spirit.*

CHIMES

PRELUDE Weaving Greensleeves (What Child Is This?)  
*Catherine Thompson Maclean, flute soloist*

Arr. J Nishimura

WELCOME & LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT\*†

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE – The Candle of Hope  
*The Arulampalam Family*

One: In a world full of fear, where do you see  
hope?

**All: We see hope when we look to the next  
generation.  
We feel hopeful when we gather together.  
We know hope, deep in our bones, when  
we dream of a better world.**

One: You are right. Even in a fearful world,  
hope is all around us.  
Today we light the candle of hope as a  
reminder of this good news. May this  
flicker of light help us remember that we  
have reason to hope.

*Light candle.*

**Together: Thanks be to God! Amen.**

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: On Sundays and Mondays,

**All: on good days and bad days,  
early in the morning and very late at night,  
here in this room, and out in the world,  
God, we long for you to break in.  
Meet us in this space.  
Surprise us with your presence.  
Fill this room with your good news.  
With hope, we sing, we worship, we pray. Amen!**

\*OPENING HYMN NCH 117 Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates

TRURO

\*PASSING OF THE PEACE

A TIME FOR CHILDREN

*Children are dismissed to classrooms as the congregation sings...*

*This little light of mine,  
I'm gonna let it shine;  
This little light of mine,  
I'm gonna let it shine.  
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine...*

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

*With-us God,  
in the time of Moses,  
you spoke through water in the desert and a pillar of smoke.  
In the time of the judges,  
you spoke through the prophets.  
In the time of Herod,  
you spoke through angel choruses and unlikely miracles.  
In every time you have been speaking.  
So today, in our time,  
we ask that you would speak again.  
Break through the chatter and the distraction of our weary minds  
and speak to us once more.  
With hope we pray,  
amen.*

SCRIPTURE      Luke 1:5-13  
                     Lamentations 3:55-57

SERMON    “What do you fear?”

*The Rev. Liza Arulampalam*

MUSICAL RESPONSE (Insert, next page) In the Time of Herod  
*To the tune of In the Bleak Midwinter; words by Anna Strickland, 2025*

CRANHAM



In the time of Her - od, fear had ta - ken hold  
Thick as fog the fear grew, slow - ly creep-ing in  
Pierc-ing through the stra - tus comes the an - gels' song  
In the time of Her - od, fear has ta - ken hold

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Hope was bur - ied deep and hid - den, rare as gold  
Day by day the peo - ple bent and drew with - in  
"Do not fear!" rings hol - low when we've feared so long  
Still we share a long - ing for a glimpse of hope

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Or - di - na - ry peo - ple dared not speak a - loud  
With the clouds so hea - vy, who could see the stars?  
Still in the re - cess - es of our wea - ry souls  
Or - di - na - ry peo - ple shout the truth we trust:

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Dreams of the Mes - si - ah break-ing through the clouds  
Hope - less-ness had trapped them, strong as pris - on bars  
Some - thing is a - wak - ened— could it be our hope?  
God will stop at no - thing to be here with us

## CALL TO CONFESSION

### UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Ever-present God,  
we long to feel you close.  
We long to feel your presence in our lives.  
We long for you to break through the chaos and suffering of this world.  
However, if we're honest, we rarely stand still long enough to feel you in our midst.  
Forgive our rushing and distractions.  
Forgive our wandering hearts, and center us in this space.  
Remind us that even in the time of Herod,  
even on the longest nights, you are always there. Amen.**

### WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

**One:** Family of faith,  
even when we doubt God's presence,  
even when we fail to notice God's fingerprints in this world,  
God is always moving closer to us.  
Hear and believe the good news this Advent season:  
**All:** **Nothing can keep God's love away.  
We are seen. We are forgiven. We are not alone. Amen.**

### MUSICAL RESPONSE NCH 126 (verse 4)

***Saints, before the altar bending,  
watching long in hope and fear,  
Suddenly, your prayers attending,  
Christ beside you shall appear.  
Come and worship, come and worship,  
Worship Christ, give thanks and sing.***



## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & THE LORD'S PRAYER

### CALL TO OFFERING

OFFERTORY      Nothing to Fear

Audrey Assad

*Arunan Arulampalam, soloist*

*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you  
And the depths of the river shall not overwhelm  
When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned  
I am the Lord, I am the Lord*

*And there is nothing to fear, nothing to fear  
There is nothing to fear, nothing to fear  
For I am with you always*

*In the depths of your sorrow, I wept beside you  
When you walked through the shadow, I drew you near  
And yesterday, today, tomorrow, always the same  
I am the Lord, I am the Lord*

*What can separate you from my perfect love?  
What can separate you from my perfect love?  
What can separate you from my perfect love?  
Do not fear, do not fear  
Do not fear*

\*DOXOLOGY NCH 135

***O Come let us adore Him,  
O Come let us adore Him,  
O Come let us adore Him,  
Christ the Lord!***

**\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION (Responsive)**

One: Holy One, this Advent season we wait in hope.

**All: And we give in hope.**

Hope for your coming reign;

**Hope because of your presence with us even now.**

Receive these generous offerings,

**And use them for your work of healing and hope in our world.**

*Amen.*

**\*CLOSING HYMN NCH 122 Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus**

**STUTTGART**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**BENEDICTION**

In a fearful world,

may you look for God's spirit.

May you reach for each other's hands.

May you choose courage whenever you can.

And in all things, may you remember

that good news is louder than fear.

In the name of the one who calls,

the one who sends,

and the one who journeys with —

Go in peace and

Be not afraid.

Amen.

**POSTLUDE "Gigue" from Sonata in C Major**

**J. B. de Gant**

*Catherine Thompson Maclean, flute soloist*

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