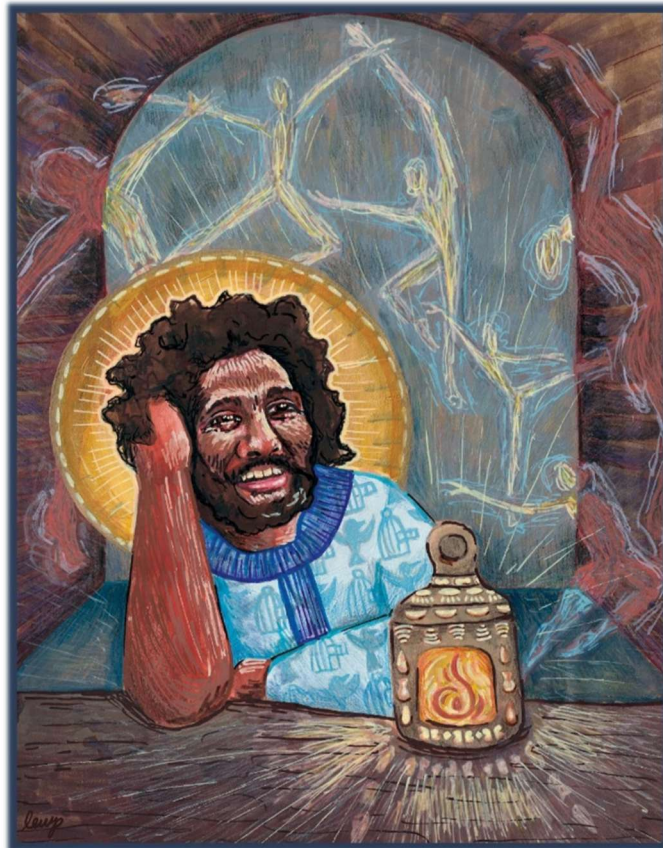




*An Open and Affirming Congregation
of The United Church of Christ*



Order of Worship for

December 7, 2025 10:30 am

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



The Second Sunday of Advent | What do you fear?

WHEN WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF HOPE,
GOD IS AT WORK

God in the Kitchen

I called home my first semester of college. I told my mom I was fine,
but I was homesick. She must have heard the truth in my voice.
The ache ate at me. It was a long, slow song, a million tiny ants
slurping the juice from a peach. I was tender and bruised,
in the doldrums of it all. But she could hear all of that.

So three states away,
she preheated the oven. Three states away,
she tossed blueberries in a thin layer of flour. Three states away,
she dusted a layer of streusel over the soft peaks
of a dozen warm muffins. And three days later,
I unboxed a package from home—
a dozen blueberry muffins, a love letter with my name on it,
a reminder that I was not alone.

If you're running out of hope, count to three.
God is in the kitchen. She's just waiting for yeast to rise.

Poem by
Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

COVER ART:

HOPE LIKE A DANCER, LAUREN WRIGHT PITTMAN

BASED ON MATTHEW 1: 1-11

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT - WHAT DO YOU FEAR?
When we're running out of Hope, God is at work...

**Please rise in body or spirit.*

CHIMES

ORGAN PRELUDE Noël

H. Mulet

CHORAL INTROIT Fanfare for Christmas

G. Holst

WELCOME & LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT*†

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE – The Candle of Peace
Nilsa Cierpikowski and family

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

**All: We see glimmers of peace in the quiet
of early morning, when people shake
hands, when loved ones say they're sorry,
and when the church sings together.**

One: You are right. Even in a fearful world,
peace is all around us.
Today we light the candle of peace as a
reminder of this good news.
May this flicker of light help us remember that
even in a fearful world, peace is present.
We only have to look for it.

Light candle.

Together: Thanks be to God! Amen.

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Family of faith, God is at work!

**All: God is healing and creating,
redeeming and dreaming,
calling and sending,
listening and loving.
Yes, indeed, God is at work!
So may we worship our God who never gives up.
May we worship our God who holds onto hope.
Amen.**

*OPENING HYMN NCH 116 O Come, O Come Emmanuel (vs. 1-2, 6-7) VENI EMMANUEL

*Hand Bell Ensemble: Anita Hawkins, Norman McFarlane,
Lesley Morgan-Thompson & Andrea Olson*

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

A TIME FOR CHILDREN

Ms. Ioanna Kyrkou

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

*Merciful God,
we need bread and we need laughter.
We need music and we need a hand to hold.
We need a chair to sit in and we need work to do.
But maybe more than anything,
we need your Word and a reason to hope.
So move through this space today
and speak to us as only you can.
Speak a word of hope deep into our weary bones.
For we need bread and we need laughter,
but most of all, we need you.
Amen.*

SCRIPTURE Matthew 11:1-11
 Isaiah 43:19-21

SERMON "What do you fear?"

The Rev. Liza Arulampalam

MUSICAL RESPONSE (Insert, next page) Looking Out a Prison Window
To the tune of Once in Royal David's City, Words by Anna Strickland, 2025

IRBY



Look - ing out a pri - son win - dow, who can
All the things that keep us cap - tive shrink our
To our sib - lings still im - pris - oned be - hind
We are called to li - ber - a - tion, to be



see the flow - ers bloom? Hope dis - solves like dreams at
op - ti - mis - tic faith We must prac - tice hope on
bars of steel or fear Bring the mes - sage from our
freed and to set free Break - ing chains of world - ly



day - break leav - ing us an emp - ty room Still be - yond what
pur - pose e - ven when our spi - rits break 'Til at last our
Sav - ior: hope is real and dawn - ing near Tell the gos - pel
pow - ers who would claim our li - ber - ty Bo - dy, spi - rit,

10



we can see God is al - ways plant - ing seeds
free - dom comes And we fin - ally see the sun
all a - round New life springs up from the ground
mind and heart Li - ber - ate each cap - tive part

CALL TO CONFESSION

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**On-the-move God,
we have every reason to hold onto hope.
We have every reason to believe that spring will come,
that flowers will bloom, that the sun will rise.
And yet, too often hope slips through our fingers.
With anxious hearts we cry out to you,
“Will change ever come? Will things ever get better?
Will I ever make a difference?”
Soothe our wandering hearts and show us the places where the sun is shining.
Show us the places where you are on the move.
With open hearts we pray,
amen.**

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

One: Family of faith,
in our honesty,
All: we are heard.
In our worries,
we are held.
In our failings,
we are forgiven.
In our fear,
we are not alone.
Friends, this is the good news of the gospel!
When we're running out of hope, God is still at work.
Thanks be to God!
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.*

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table

The Great Thanksgiving & the Lord's Prayer

Words of Institution

Sharing of the Elements

Prayer After Communion (Unison)

**Loving God,
In a world racked with fear,
you gather us together.
You set the table.
You meet us here.
You nourish our bodies
as you nourish our spirits.
You remind us that this is a joyful feast,
and that fear cannot win every time.
So with renewed courage,
with renewed hope,
with renewed conviction,
send us out into the world.
Help us to feed others as you have fed us.
With gratitude we pray,
amen.**

CALL TO OFFERING

OFFERTORY Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent

G. Holst

*Center Church Choir
Emily Gillespie & Stewart Battle, soloists*

*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 peace,

All: And we give in peace.

A peace deeper than our anxiety and fear.

A peace growing from our trust in your loving power.

Receive these generous offerings,

And use them to bring your peace to our world.

Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN NCH 125 Angels We Have Heard on High**

GLORIA

*Hand Bell Ensemble: Anita Hawkins, Norman McFarlane,
Lesley Morgan-Thompson & Andrea Olson*

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.

CHORAL BENEDICTION

ORGAN POSTLUDE

Vom Himmel Hoch, da Komm Ich Her
(From Heaven Above, to Earth I Come)

arr. W. Held (1914-2015)

Norman McFarlane, Organist

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