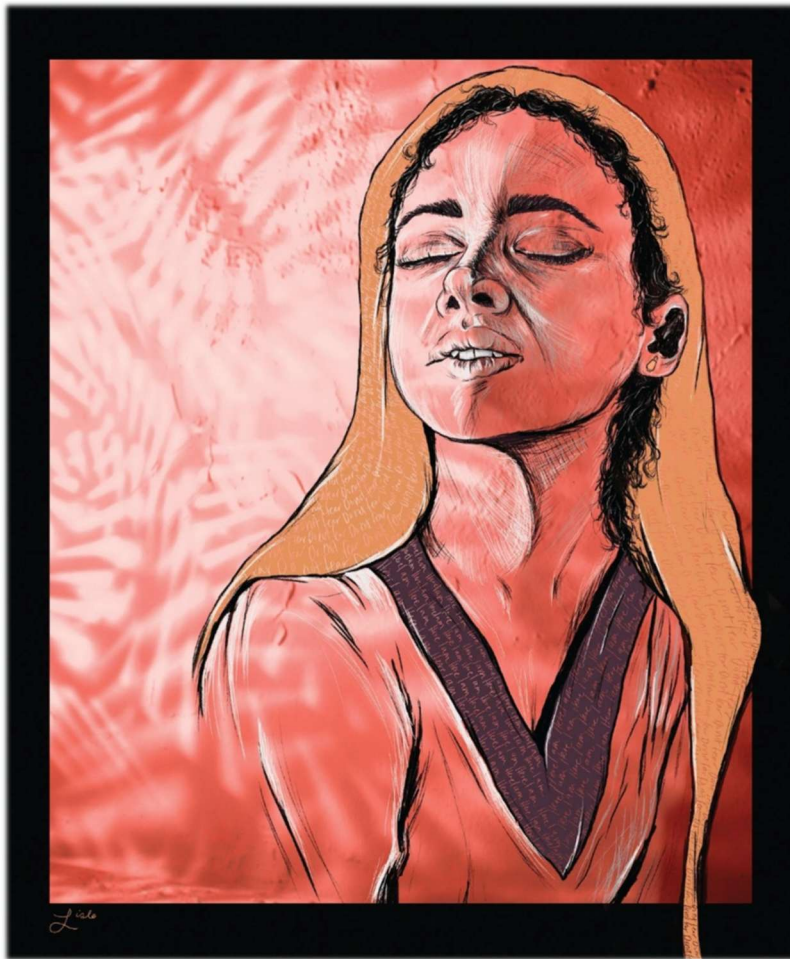




*An Open and Affirming Congregation
of The United Church of Christ*



Order of Worship for
December 14, 2025 10:30 am

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



The Third Sunday of Advent | What do you fear?

**EVEN IN OUR FEAR,
WE ARE CALLED FORWARD**

The First Step

Watch any parent. It starts with the first step.
They kneel down. They smile with anticipation.
They reach for their baby, calling and cooing them forward.
And then before they know it, they're running behind a bike.
They're yelling,
"Keep pedaling! You got it! I'm right here!" And they're jumping up
and down,
because that little red helmet passed the mailbox.
And then, just like that, they're driving circles in the church parking lot.
They're giving instructions about easing on and off the pedal.
They're having conversations about curfew and heartbreak.
And then, before they know it, they're standing in a hospital room.
Their heart is bursting. And they say, *"Put her head right here.
Rock her gently. Do you remember the nursery rhymes?
You were born for this."*

The first step is always the hardest,
but you, beloved, were born for this.

Poem by
Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT - WHAT DO YOU FEAR?
Even in our fear, we are called forward.

**Please rise in body or spirit.*

CHIMES

PRELUDE Do You Hear What I Hear?

arr. N. Simone

Sarah Hanahan Jazz Quartet

WELCOME & LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT*†

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE – The Candle of Joy

The Hernandez-Maturo Family

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

**All: We see glimmers of joy in birthday
candles and homemade cards. We see joy
in the laughter of children and the delight
of grandparents. We see joy in meals
around the table and in the singing of
Christmas songs.**

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

Light candle.

All: Thanks be to God for that Good News! Amen.

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Jeremiah said, "I am only a boy."

All: Moses said, "Who am I to do this work?"

Mary said, "How can this be?"

We often say, "But God, I am afraid."

Even when we are afraid, God invites us closer.

So may we trust the Inviter.

May we heed God's invitation.

May we summon our courage and sing God's praise.

Let us worship our courageous, inviting, calling God. Amen!

With hope, we sing, we worship, we pray. Amen!

*OPENING HYMN (*Insert, next page*) O Come All Ye Faithful (v. 1, 2, 4)

*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...

JAZZ ANTHEM *White Christmas*

I. Berlin

O Come, All Ye Faithful

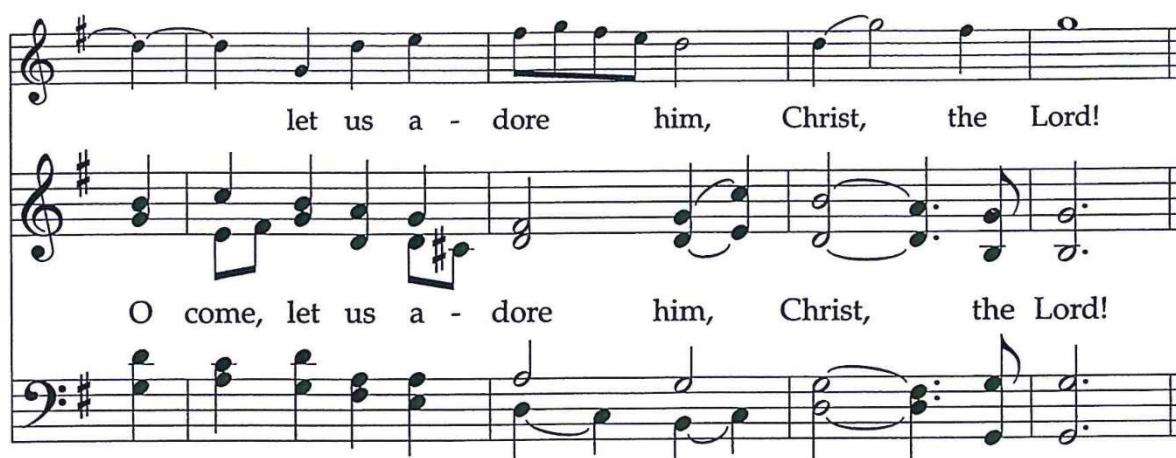
1. O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful, and tri - um - phant,
 2. Sing, choirs of an - gels, sing in ex - ul - ta - tion,
 3. Child, for us sin - ners poor and in the man - ger,
 4. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born for our sal - va - tion,

O come ye, O come ye to Beth - le - hem;
 sing, all ye cit - i - zens of heaven a - bove!
 we would em - brace thee, with love and awe;
 Je - sus, to thee be all glo - ry given;

come and be - hold him, born the King of an - gels;
 Glo - ry to God, all glo - ry in the high - est;
 who would not love thee, lov - ing us so dear - ly?
 Word of the Fa - ther, now in flesh ap - pear - ing;

Descant
 3. O come, O come,

Refrain
 O come, let us a - dore him, O come, let us a - dore him,



PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Holy One,
the story of this season is not a new one.
We've heard this tale before.
We've seen the nativities, watched the plays, sung the songs,
witnessed the children act it out.
The story of this season is not a new one,
and yet we long to hear it as if it is.
So spark our spirits awake.
Call forth awareness, attention, and reverence in us.
Allow us to hear this ancient tale with brand new ears.
With hope we pray, amen.

JAZZ CAROL *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*

FIRST LESSON: Luke 1: 26-28 – *The Birth of Jesus Foretold*

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

JAZZ CAROL & SOLOIST *Away in a Manger*
Emily Gillespie, soprano

SECOND LESSON: Luke 1: 29-40 – *Mary Responds to the Angel*

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her,

"Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered,

"The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled."

Then the angel left her. At that time, Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth.

JAZZ CAROL & DUET *What Child is This?*
Mica Guzman & Ian Duncan, duet

THIRD LESSON : Jeremiah 1:4-10 – *A Prophet is Called*

The word of the LORD came to me, saying,
“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
before you were born I set you apart;
I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

“Alas, Sovereign LORD,” I said, “I do not know how to speak; I am too young.”

But the LORD said to me,
“Do not say, ‘I am too young.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the LORD.

Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me,
“I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.”

JAZZ CAROL & SOLOIST *Go Tell It on The Mountain*
Steward Battle, soloist

MEDITATION “What do you Fear? Even in our fear we are Called Forward.”
The Rev. Liza Arulampalam

*CAROL (*Insert, next page*) Angels, From the Realms of Glory (v. 1 & 2)

Angels, from the Realms of Glory

149



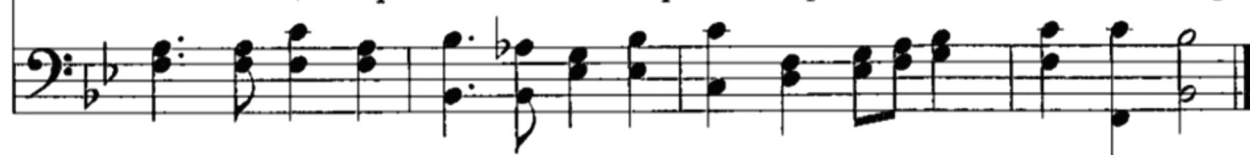
1. An - gels, from the realms of glo - ry, wing your flight o'er all the earth;
2. Shep - herds, in the fields a - bid - ing, watch - ing o'er your flocks by night,
3. Sag - es, leave your con - tem - pla - tions bright - er vi - sions beam a - far;
4. Saints be - fore the al - tar bend - ing, watch - ing long in hope and fear,



you who sang cre - a - tion's sto - ry, now pro - claim Mes - si - ah's birth:
God with us is now re - sid - ing, yon - der shines the in - fant light:
seek the great De - sire of na - tions, you have seen the na - tal star:
sud - den - ly the Lord, de - scend - ing, here a - mong us shall ap - pear:



Come and wor - ship, come and wor - ship, wor - ship Christ, the new - born King.



CALL TO CONFESSION

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Courageous God,
you invite us to live into our call.
You invite us to act, to serve, and to trust.
Instead of responding with a resounding “yes,”
we often hide our face.
We dig our heels in.
We look for someone else to volunteer.
Spark courage in us.
Remind us that every person is capable of making a difference.
Remind us that even when we’re scared, we are not alone.
You invite us forward.
With baby steps we hope,
we pray, amen.**

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

One: Family of faith,
no matter where your path has led you in the past, today is a new day.
So join me in declaring this good news:
All: We are known. We are forgiven! We are sent to serve.
May we step forward in faith, always moving closer to God’s call.
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 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
Sarah Hanahan Jazz Quartet

*DOXOLOGY NCH 135

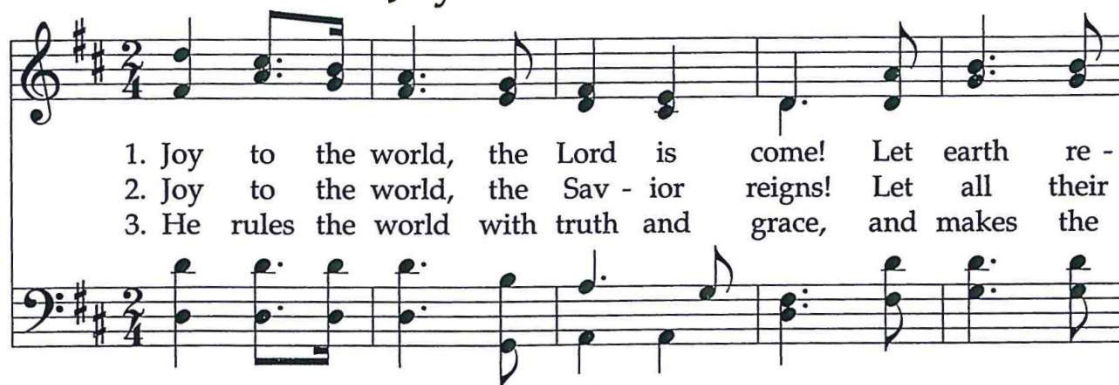
*O Come let us adore Him,
O Come let us adore Him,
O Come let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord!*

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

*CLOSING CAROL (*Insert, next page*) Joy to the World (v. 1-3)

Joy to the World

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1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re -
 2. Joy to the world, the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their
 3. He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the



ceive her King; let ev - ery heart pre - pare him room,
 songs em - ploy; while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
 na - tions prove the glo - ries of his right - eous - ness,



and heaven and na - ture sing, and heaven and na - ture
 re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing
 and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his

And heaven and na - ture sing, and
 Re - peat the sound - ing joy, re -
 And won - ders of his love, and



sing, and heaven, and heaven and na - ture sing.
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
 love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

heaven and na - ture sing,
 peat the sound - ing joy,
 won - ders of his love,

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 Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas
Sarah Hanahan Jazz Quartet

Thank you for all who participated in worship today! Go in Peace and Joy!

Center Church Music and Arts is grateful to seasonal contributors who have helped underwrite The Sarah Hanahan Jazz Quartet's appearance in worship today. Thank you to all who support Music and The Arts at Center Church.

About Sarah Hanahan:

Sarah Hanahan is a dynamic and soulful alto saxophonist rapidly emerging as one of the most compelling new voices in jazz. A graduate of both the Jackie McLean Institute of Jazz and The Juilliard School, Hanahan fuses the deep-rooted swing and bebop traditions with a bold, modern intensity. This approach reflects both her rigorous training and her fearless artistic vision. Hanahan has performed alongside an extraordinary range of jazz luminaries including Jeff "Tain" Watts, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Nicholas Payton, Peter Washington, and Joe Farnsworth.

The Sarah Hanahan Quartet is
Sarah Hanahan, Saxophone
Akin Hobson, Drums
Matt DeChamplain, Piano
Matt Dwonszyk, Bass