



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



Order of Worship for
December 21, 2025 10:30 am

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



The Fourth Sunday of Advent | What do you fear?

WHEN YOU'RE AFRAID,
GIVE ME YOUR HAND

Tethered

When we were children, we fell asleep
with walkie talkies tucked under our pillows.
All that separated us was a bathroom,
a hallway, a few feet of empty space,
but as children, even small distances can feel like miles.

So after the parents whispered prayers over our skinned knees
and spelling tests, after they kissed our sweaty foreheads
and tucked us into bed,
we'd pull the walkie talkies out from under our pillows.
We'd roll the dial on the top of the transceiver.
We'd sputter that invisible tether to life.

And with a few crackles in the quiet of the night,
you'd whisper my name.
I'd press down the button.
I'd promise I was close.

As an adult, I don't know what ever happened
to those blue-grey walkie talkies.
But I know,
that even today,
if the monsters in the closet feel too real,
and you whisper my name,
I promise I'll be close.

Poem by
Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT - WHAT DO YOU FEAR?
When You're Afraid, Give Me Your Hand...

**Please rise in body or spirit.*

CHIMES

PRELUDE Oh, Good Grief!

Vince Guaraldi

*Jazz Trio: Anthony Soscia, Austin Tewksbury
& David Reynolds*

WELCOME & LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT*†

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE – The Candle of Love
The Reynolds Family

One: In a world full of fear, where do you see the presence of love?

**All: We see love all around us. We see love
when people hold open the door. We see
love in a warm embrace, a homemade
casserole, a phone call after a long day.
We see love in random acts of kindness
and intentional acts of empathy. We see
love all around us.**

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

Light candle.

**Together: Thanks be to God for a love like that!
Amen.**

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Here in worship—

All: we pray together,
we stand together,
we sing together,
we listen together.

Here in worship—
we are not alone.

So when life gives you reason to grieve, to fear, or to worry,
remember this moment.

We are not alone.

Let us worship our with-us God.

*OPENING HYMN (Insert, Next Page) We're Not Alone

ADESTE FIDELES

Words by Anna Strickland, 2025; to the tune of "O Come All Ye Faithful"

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

We invite you to greet your neighbor with a friendly gesture of Christ's Peace, saying,
"The Peace of Christ be With You!"



Fear all a - round you tells you you're a - lone ____
Give me your hand to hold when you feel frigh - tened
When peo - ple live in fear ____ for their safe - ty
For - ward we march to - geth - er toward God's kin - dom



Urg - ing you to build walls and i - so - late
We can up - hold each o - ther in ____ our fear
Let us put priv - ilege on the line ____ for them
Build - ing a big - ger ta - ble, not tall - er walls



I know your fear be - cause I feel it, too ____
Per - son by per - son, we'll find strength to - geth - er
Stand with our sib - lings in ____ sol - i - dar - i - ty
Work - ing to - geth - er, no - thing is im - poss-i - ble



When fear grows deep in - side us, re - mem - ber what u - nites us



No, no - thing can di - vide us; we're not a - lone

CALL TO CONFESSION

LITANY OF CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS

One: When you were afraid,
did I stay by your side?
Did I offer my hand,
or did I leave you alone?
When you were afraid,
did I choose solidarity?
Did I see your fear,
or did I only see mine?

**All: Friend, none of us are perfect. We all make mistakes.
Fortunately, God offers grace, and we do too.
So take a deep breath, and let's start again.**

One: Thank you. Your mercy is a gift.

**All: Now we must ask—
when you were afraid,
did we stay by your side?
Did we offer our hands,
or did we leave you alone?
When you were afraid,
did we choose solidarity?
Did we see your fear?
Or did we only see ours?**

One: Friends, none of us are perfect. We all make mistakes.
Fortunately, God offers grace, and I do too.
So take a deep breath, and let's start again.

**All: Thank you. Your mercy is a gift.
We accept your grace and would love to start again.**

One: May it be so, with God's help.

All: Alleluia, 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.*

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 Matthew 1:18-25
 Isaiah 41:5-10

MEDITATION FOR ALL AGES

The Rev. Liza Arulampalam

MUSICAL RESPONSE *This Little Light of Mine*

*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...*

A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS PAGENT

Featuring the Center Church Young People; Music Arranged by Vince Guaraldi

Linus and Lucy

Jazz Trio

Scene 1: A Big Commercial Racket

Christmastime is Here

Jazz Trio

Scene 2: The Meaning of Christmas

O, Tannenbaum

Jazz Trio

Scene 3: Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown!

Away in a Manger

Center Church Young People's Choir

Hark the Herald Angels Sing!

Christmas is Coming

Jazz Trio



PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & THE LORD'S PRAYER

CALL TO OFFERING

OFFERTORY White Christmas Irving Berlin, Arr. D. McKenzie
 Jazz Trio: Anthony Soscia, Austin Tewksbury
 & David Reynods

*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 (*Insert, Next Page*) Hark, the Herald Angels Sing!

STUTTGART

Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

Descant

3. All hail the Sun of

1. Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the
 2. Christ, by high - est heaven a - dored; Christ, the ev - er -
 3. Hail the heaven - born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of

Righ - teous - ness! He is risen with heal - ing

new - born King; peace on earth, and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners
 last - ing Lord! Late in time be - hold him come, off - spring of the
 Righ - teous - ness! Light and life to all he brings, risen with heal - ing

in his wings. His glo - ry by,

rec - on - ciled!" Joy - ful, all ye na - tions, rise,
 Vir - gin's womb. Veiled in flesh the God - head see;
 in his wings, mild he lays his glo - ry by,

no more may die;

join the tri-umph of the skies; with the an-gel - ic
hail the in-car-nate De - i - ty, pleased in flesh with
born that we no more may die, born to raise us

born to raise us from the earth to sec - ond birth.

host pro-claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"
us to dwell, Je - sus, our Em - man - u - el.
from the earth, born to give us sec - ond birth.

Hark! the her-ald an-gels sing to the new-born King.

Hark! the her-ald an-gels sing, "Glo-ry to the new-born King!"

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.

ORGAN POSTLUDE Swiss Noel

L. Dacquin

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