

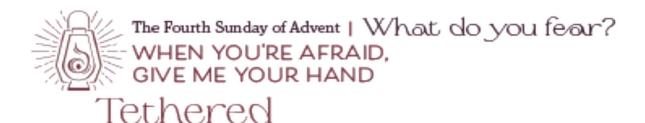
An Open and Affirming Congregation of The United Church of Christ



Order of Worship for

December 21, 2025 10:30 am

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



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 Revnolds

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!"



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



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



be - cause feel know your fear it, too_____ Per - son we'll find strength to - geth - er by per - son, in _____ sib - lings sol - i - dar - i - ty Stand with our 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 Hark the Herald Angels Sing! Center Church Young People's Choir

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.

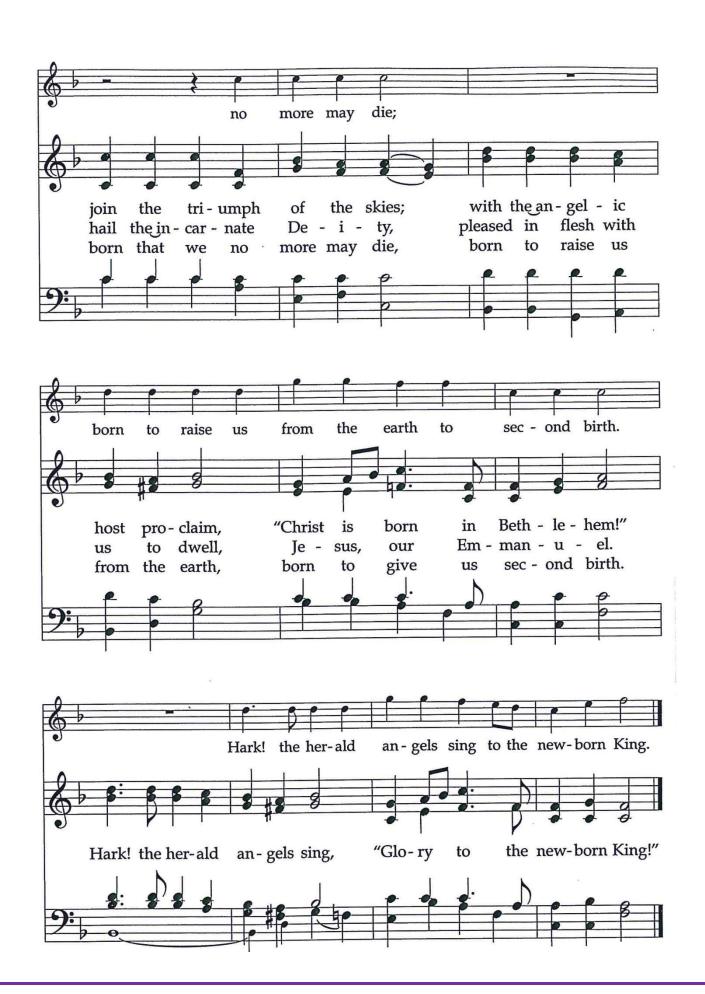
Amen.

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

STUTTGART

Hark! the Herald Angels Sing





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!